

Betrayed Partners Impact Letter

The goal of the **Betrayed Partners Impact letter** is to collect and organize the impacts you have experienced as the partner of someone whose romantic or sexual behaviors have wounded you. Remember, the story is about you and your emotions, your sexuality, your body, and your heart. Your words will be potent and compelling if you speak about what your experience has been. Be vulnerable but don't soften how it has hurt you.

To get the most benefit from this exercise, begin with the following general directions:

- Be specific and offer personal examples of your experiences.
- Be willing to describe your feelings, no matter how painful.
- Though your impact letter is an expression of your pain, avoid blaming, shaming, or berating.
- Since writing the letter can be a highly emotional experience, do this exercise with a therapist's support.
- Please review the final draft of your letter with your therapist, support group, or sponsor before sharing it..
- You may want to share the letter in a therapy session if that feels like a safe support to you, or if your partner has a tendency to use rage and abandonment to control.

Structure of Impact Letter

Part 1: Introduction

Explain why you are writing this letter and discuss how you hope this will be received. For example:

“Dear (Person who has hurt you),

Here is why I am writing this letter: to explain the process I have been going through ever since I learned about your (unfaithfulness, infidelity, porn addiction, etc.). I am hoping that you will hear this letter with humility and honor of where I am at with it. My hope is that as you listen to it, that you will allow any defensiveness that arises in you to be put aside so that you can step into my experience.

I am being vulnerable in this letter. I have worked hard to share it with you. It takes a lot of courage to share it with you. My hope is that through this process, you will have a better understanding of my experience.

Are you willing to listen to my story?”

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Part 2: My Experience

In this section, you are writing about the toll of your partner's actions. This section may be very long. You can use bullet statements for each section below to get started and then add more later.

1. Describe your chronology of events, highlighting the stages you have gone through – all of the highs and lows. You can use dates, estimated timelines that help you describe what it has been like to be faced with this pain. Describe how long your pain has been going on. Include the most difficult parts of the process, etc. This can include what was happening in your life prior to the discovery/disclosure (i.e., My mother had just passed and I have not been able to grieve because shortly afterward, I discovered your affair.)
2. Describe how the discovery and disclosure process affected you. How did you feel when you discovered the information? How did this affect your emotional stability? Was it a traumatic event for you? Share specific incidences that were particularly difficult.
3. Identify ways that your partner was intentionally deceptive and manipulative. Describe specific examples of crazy-making behavior. How do you feel about them? Did this behavior lead you to doubt yourself?"
4. Describe your thoughts about your partner's sexual behaviors. When you discovered his/her actions, what feelings came up for you? Is there a behavior that was particularly troubling? What has it been like to get this view of your partner's sexuality?
5. Describe any fears you have about others judging you or your partner. Many partners feel shame and embarrassment about the acting-out partner's behavior. Now that you know about this behavior, do you feel worthless at times or not good enough? Share those feelings with your partner now. When you think about people who know about the addiction or who might find out, what thoughts come to mind.
6. Describe how your partner's acting out affected your sexuality. How has this changed your sexual relationship with him/her? How about your individual sexuality? Do you have concerns about your body or your sexual functioning? Do you feel obligated to be sexual with your partner? Has this impaired your sexual functioning?

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7. Describe how your knowledge of the acting out affects your ability to trust in this relationship. What promises or vows that your partner made to you have now been broken? How do you feel about trusting him/her going forward? Do you feel that trust can be restored? If so, what will you need in order to learn to trust again?
8. State what you will do to continue to take care of yourself. List important boundaries you have set so you can reaffirm them with your partner.
9. Close by acknowledging this letter will likely be difficult for your partner to handle. Encourage your partner to share this letter with supportive people and to talk about any questions it raises. Let him/her know the letter's purpose was to share your feelings at this time. Thank them for reading or hearing the letter and omit endearing closings if not genuine. Just signing your name is appropriate.

There is so much more that you may wish to include. The list above is just to get you started. This letter is as much for you as for your partner. Writing and sharing this letter should bring the two of you closer because your partner will understand you – which is the first step to closeness, comforting and change.