



Top 10 wives/partners questions
Lisa Taylor, Author Beyond Betrayal

Lisa answers the top 10 questions she heard from wives/partners in her personal experiences, as well as from a previous series she ran on her website. The series, titled "Ask the Experts," featured questions from partners answered by partner trauma expert, Dr Barbara Steffens and sex addiction experts (including Jason Martinkus).

1. I've been lied to so often, how will I ever be able to trust my husband again?
Because your husband's sin (sexual acting out, lying) broke the trust, it's now up to him to fix it. A good guide on how he can go about this is the book *Worthy of her Trust*. In the meantime, because you are more aware of the addiction, you are not as likely to be deceived a second time. That doesn't mean your husband will never lie again, but that you can learn to watch for the overall patterns that show whether or not he is becoming a man of integrity worth trusting. If defensiveness, blame-shifting and denial continue to be part of his communications with you, you can probably assume that it's not yet time to consider trust. When his actions consistently match his words, check in with God about "if," and "how," to begin to open yourself up again.
2. How can I help my teenaged/young adult children heal from the pain of finding out their dad has a porn/sex addiction?
Discovery/disclosure of a parent's sex addiction can cause trauma in older children, as well as spouses. Helpful things you (and your husband, if he's in the right place) can do

<https://beyondbetrayal.community/top-questions-from-wives-of-sex-addicts/>

for your children are listen to how they are feeling, and allow them to ask questions—though use discernment about how much detail to give them about the acting out. Children often have concerns for your safety, their own/others' safety and need time and space to grieve the loss of their former happy (or happier) vision of the family. They may also need someone to talk to as they “put the pieces together”—because for many, learning about the addiction explains other patterns they have witnessed in their father/in the family for years. Some of this work is best done with a qualified sex addiction specialist, or other trusted professional. Keep in mind that there are some definite benefits to children knowing about the addiction. Some find a determination to stop the family pattern of addiction. Others feel more empowered to use boundaries with the parent with the addiction if he continues to behave in unhealthy ways. If your children do not yet know about their father's addiction, a specialist can help guide you in the process of disclosing to them.

3. If my husband has a sex addiction, why is it he never wants to have sex with me? It is so common for porn/sex addicts to avoid intimacy that the addiction is frequently referred to as an “intimacy disorder.” As the highest form of intimacy we can experience with another person this side of heaven, sexual intimacy (as opposed to sex addiction's exploitation of another) can feel extremely threatening to him. You may have noticed that your husband avoids other types of intimacy with you (and possibly others) as well—e.g., emotional, spiritual, recreational. Some key drivers of this problem are shame, past negative experiences with being vulnerable, and poor self-esteem. These are issues God wants to heal in your husband. In the meantime, it's recommended you seek help for the pain his rejection is causing you, and to consider what boundaries you might put in place to protect your heart until such a time as your husband finds healing.
4. Actually my husband wants to have sex regularly/frequently, but has trouble with it (i.e., getting/maintaining an erection, having an orgasm)... what should I do? Porn-induced erectile dysfunction (PIED) is a complex phenomenon with porn/sex addiction at its core. Many women have assumed that the issue is “them,” and that if they just did things more “his” way—like what he's viewing in porn— or looked more like a porn star, then the issue would resolve. After years of moving into more and more perverse behaviors (i.e., sex acts that are more emotionally isolating and/or physically painful) while his sexual issues continued to worsen, they realized that this problem was outside their control. However, the problem is absolutely within the husband's control. Giving up the sexual acting out has been shown in studies to reverse the physical symptoms associated with porn-induced erectile dysfunction. You are a daughter of the Most High God. Becoming part of your husband's sexual acting out harms both you and him and you would be well advised to begin using boundaries to protect yourself and help him. I recommend seeking support if you need help with setting those boundaries.
5. How do I know if my husband is doing enough in recovery? While I don't think a partner can ever fully know everything in the heart of the loved one who is in recovery, she surely can be alert to *signs* of good recovery work. A partner can also request (and I believe expect) *openness* on the part of the person in recovery as to what they are doing in their recovery work. Books like *Stop Sex Addiction* (Lisa adds:

and video series such as *Kitchen Convos*) provide a thorough description of what active recovery requires in terms of effort, healing, and support. Watch for your loved one to initiate telling you about their recovery work and what they are learning. Listen for vulnerability (a “soft” heart) and a desire to be who he was created to be. Notice if he is coming “alive” and enjoying his new-found freedom.

Recovery requires a life change, a heart change, and a direction change. You should start to see the person in recovery committed to therapy, to group or meetings, to reading, and to a life of integrity. These commitments often do not come immediately but there should be movement in those directions. Watch a trend line (there will be ups and downs) with steady (albeit slow) progress. A person in solid recovery is growing and moving forward because *they want to heal—they don’t want to relapse*. They desire integrity in their lives. You’ll find yourself trusting their heart—and trusting that THEY don’t want to relapse.

I want to encourage partners to also spend the needed time on their own healing; allow the wounds of betrayal to be attended to and healed through support and care from others. Look to areas in your life where you want to gain confidence and strength. *Strengthen your roots!* This helps you to heal, AND helps you get strong enough so that, even if there is a relapse, you will have strengthened your reserves and firmed up your resolve to be a survivor and a warrior to fight for yourself and your welfare.

6. Why aren’t I enough for him?

Porn and sex addiction aren’t about a need for more healthy, marital sex: it’s about an addiction to the high levels of brain chemicals released by surfing porn/acting out, etc. This brain chemical-mix is related to the brain chemicals released as part of healthy, marital sex, but with some distinct differences. His addiction can also be about re-enacting past sexual traumas or medicating negative moods. In any case, his acting out (or at least his habit of unhealthy self-soothing with sex) probably preceded your marriage, thus it truly has nothing to do with how you look or act. God says you are enough to be His daughter and your husband’s wife: and that is truth that can be helpful to hold on to throughout this journey.

7. Since finding out I can’t eat/sleep/stay present/remember anything/etc. What’s wrong with me?

Mental health researchers in the late 20th century began to consider that betrayed wives might experience trauma when they find out about their spouse’s infidelity. Later researchers, such as Dr. Barbara Steffens and Dr. Omar Minwalla, began to study whether the same might be true for the wives of sex addicts. Their studies (and others since) have concluded that the majority of wives of porn and sex addicts experience trauma from the disclosure/discovery of the addiction. What you are experiencing are common betrayal trauma symptoms, which will lessen over time, if you are not being re-traumatized and if you find safe people with whom to process the traumatic events.

8. How long does it take people to heal from betrayal trauma?

The healing journey is unique for every person. However, studies show that factors which promote healing are: finding support (e.g., counselor, a support group, friends, church

elder), using protective boundaries, getting validation and finding information (books, websites, counselor). Retraumatization (e.g., dribbled disclosure, relapses, uncovering of lies) obviously inhibits the healing. Without major retraumatization some experts say that women will move from betrayal trauma to healing within 3-5 years. Usually the most debilitating symptoms (disturbed sleep; dissociation; strong, negative emotional reactions) dissipate within the first year.

9. My husband just went into recovery, how long will that process take?

Most men working on achieving sobriety (i.e., living lives free of any sexual acting out), can get to that place within 18-24 months. That said, some men are sober from their first day in group/in counseling/after disclosure. However, sex addiction has other unhealthy patterns of behavior associated with it that often hang around a bit longer. These behaviors—e.g., habitual lying, hiding, anger, avoiding intimacy, lack of empathy—often take a few years of recovery work to conquer. As with wives, the more support a man seeks out (particularly from God and a group) the faster and more thoroughly he's likely to heal.

10. My husband was into (cybersex, violent porn, BDSM, homosexual porn, porn of women who look the opposite of me)... is there any hope for him to recover and to be satisfied with me again?

While sexual acting out does change a man's sexual template and cause him to prefer certain types of people and certain unhealthy behaviors, he can experience healing and go back to preferring sex God's way (i.e., being bonded to you alone and enjoying marital intimacy that is life-giving to you both). The need for novelty is normal with sex addiction, and your husband's tastes for the types of things mentioned above probably developed over time (or were influenced by an early, unhealed sexual trauma). However, the same brain plasticity that caused him to be "wired" to prefer the unhealthy, means he can be rewired back to the healthy. Likewise, he can get healing for unresolved traumas. Both of these take time and work, but many men have experienced it (particularly when they leaned into God) and are now quite well-bonded to their wife.