



The Red Flags of Infidelity

She comes to you with an unsettling story of betrayal. What do you need to know before taking the case?

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It sounds like the beginning of a seedy novel...

Susan had just dropped the kids off at school. To save time, she decided to swing by the dry cleaner before she went to the dentist. Her face went chalk white as she reached inside her husband's jacket to empty his pockets. Why would there be a condom in there? She'd had a hysterectomy four years ago. Once she caught her breath, she tried to formulate a reasonable answer. Maybe Todd was talking to their son about...probably not, he was only eleven. Their daughter? No, she was seven.

Tears of anger and sadness mixed as she considered the only other possibility. But that didn't seem to make sense. Everything at home was just fine. Or was it?

After wrestling with the turbulent emotions connected with uncertainty, Susan decided to grab the phone book instead of confronting her husband. She figured it was a good idea to determine whether or not she was jumping to an absurd conclusion based on the flimsiest of evidence. So she phoned my office and stopped in for an initial consultation.

As a family law investigator for over 15 years, I see this kind of case every day. Over 63 percent of my infidelity cases are females whose partner has given them a reason to be suspicious of their behavior. Before taking any serious action, they want to be certain they have a solid reason to be concerned. As infidelity investigations poured into my office, lengthy time-consuming interviews were gobbling up my day. And they kept turning up the same set of behaviors.

It occurred to me that I could save a lot of time in the initial interview process by looking for those behaviors first. Then I took it a step further and compiled the data collected from the hundreds of cases in my files and converted it into a fidelity assessment that a prospective client could self-administer.

The result was the creation of the Relationship Status Worksheet (RSW) which is a list of behaviors and warning signs that consistently point to unfaithful intentions and actions. Within the office, the RSW is known as the "Red Flags of Infidelity," because enough red flags make it easy to identify a pattern of marital misconduct.

I hand the RSW checklist to a prospective client and let her look it over. If she only checks off one of two behaviors, there may be a reasonable explanation; her husband should probably be given the benefit of a doubt. But if she starts checking box after box, I know immediately that her husband is deeply involved somewhere else, other than home.

Admittedly, it can be indicative of other aberrant behavior—drug use, prostitution, alcohol abuse, pornography, criminal activity—but more often than not, it's infidelity. Sordid, destructive, and ugly.

Susan solemnly handed back the list with a dozen boxes checked. She didn't need me for the answer; but she did need me for the evidence. The consultation was surprisingly brief, but accomplished the necessary task for both of us.

Your client needs you to help her settle the direction she's heading. If it's to court, she'll need solid evidence to bring to her attorney. But you don't want to waste your time on a wild goose chase; that does nothing for your credibility or your sanity. Determining whether or not to take a case like this can be tough. You need to keep an eye on profitability while striving to grow the client base for your professional investigative services. The Relationship Status Worksheet is a valuable tool in the sifting process. The information you collect can be used as the criteria for deciding if and when to take the next step with a prospective client as well as set the course for the investigation.

The RSW takes you and your client through eleven specific categories. The questions are obvious, but need to be asked; the answers are uncomfortable, but need to be given. The responses will tip you off to kind of cad you may be dealing with. Sometimes his slip into infidelity is sudden and impetuous, other times it is slow and calculated. Either way, a trail of clues and evidence is left behind.

Read through the following categories taken from the RSW. They should help you organize your thinking, develop a speedier assessment and establish your ability to be of assistance. Both you

and your client will appreciate the clarity that comes from establishing a behavioral baseline.

1. CHANGE IN MONEY HABITS

Carrying on an affair is an expensive proposition. If the man is leading a double life, he'll do anything to reduce suspicion. His wife may notice that he is being more secretive about income, expenses, and where money is being spent. He may try to cover his tracks by moving to cash-only transactions or getting a new credit card. The occasional odd receipt, bill, or package can be a tip off. He may purchase gifts of guilt for his wife to cover for his peccadilloes.

2. INCREASED SECRECY

Another layer of deceit to cover expenses can be to secure a PO box or mail drop. This is a pretty clear sign that something dishonest is going on. Strange phone numbers may appear on caller ID. If the husband is planning to leave he may start closing or moving bank accounts. His wife may also discover important family papers missing.

3. HOURS ON THE INTERNET

Often the husband thinks he can stay up late and maintain a relationship online without his wife being aware. Significant amount of time online can be a warning sign. And be on the lookout if he deliberately clears his history before signing out. Another signal of trouble is if he starts up any new email accounts without telling her.

4. CHANGE IN SCHEDULE

Finding blocks of uninterrupted time to maintain a clandestine relationship without creating suspicion is a challenge. A husband's unexplained whereabouts begin to accumulate as evidence. Time with his mistress will also cause a reduction in time spent with the children, which they will notice and comment on. It should be considered a warning when lame excuses are given for missing important family events or there are frequent last-minute schedule changes. The wife may find he calls more often to check on her whereabouts. If he showers first thing upon returning home, he may have been with someone else just prior and wants to remove any trace of scent.

5. INCREASED TRAVEL

To cover for an extra-marital affair, there may be new and unexplained business travel. Excessive

mileage on the car may indicate extra stops along the way. Business trips that fall on a weekend allow a tryst to become a business expense. He may give reasons that sound legitimate to travel with or be alone with females.

6. INCREASED HOSTILITY

When questioned by his wife, the husband may become increasingly defensive and belligerent. He may even accuse her of being paranoid and suggest that she needs counseling. Her faults and shortcomings become big issues as he becomes increasingly combative, argumentative, and even threatening or abusive.

7. TAKING ON A NEW IMAGE

One of the surest signs that a man is involved elsewhere (or on the prowl) is a sudden change in his appearance. The philanderer usually wants to look younger—tanning, weight loss, new wardrobe, working out, hair treatments—anything that will enhance his image and make him fit in with a younger crowd. He may also purchase a recreational vehicle (boat, ATV, sports car, snowmobile, etc.) to give the appearance of an active lifestyle and provide an explanation for where he is spending afternoons and weekends. Taking up drinking or doing so excessively can be a part of trying to blend in with his new friends. It can also lead to using illegal substances.

8. DISCONNECTING WITH HIS WIFE

Carrying on two separate relationships is a complex and difficult task. It is almost always accompanied by a substantial decline in intimacy with his wife and a decrease in simple affection such as handholding, kisses, and eye contact. He may also drop or change terms of endearment. Conversation may become awkward and diminish significantly. Phone calls and messages from his wife are often ignored. These are often the first things a wife notices and can generate a visit with a PI.

9. DISCONNECTING WITH OTHERS

Moral misbehavior can create significant guilt as well as worry about discovery. This can manifest in decreased family interaction and avoidance of simple family traditions. Another sign of infidelity is a reduction in accepting civic or church responsibilities. There's no time available for charitable service or community involvement.

Associating with good people may also be an uncomfortable reminder of the immoral behavior.

10. ESTABLISHING NEW CONNECTIONS

While disconnecting with his wife, family, and other previously close relationships, the husband may be establishing a whole new set of friends. They are often single friends—both never married and divorced—that frequently have a totally different set of values from his former life. His new haunts may leave traces of unfamiliar smells such as alcohol, tobacco, incense, marijuana, or strange perfume. To help facilitate this new lifestyle, he may purchase a pay-as-you-go cell phone with only a few people knowing the number. This may also explain his receiving or sending text messages at odd times or slipping into another room to take a phone call. If he furtively checks the message then deletes it before his wife can see it, there is probably a relationship he is trying to hide.

11. DISPLAYING BRAZEN BEHAVIOR

There comes a point when the husband wants to be caught in his deceit—at least that's the way it appears. His brazen behavior may be an indication that he is strangely proud of his conquest or just wants to get on with his life. He may exhibit flirtatious behavior in front of his wife, allude to an affair, or mention past relationships in glowing terms. In conversation, he may defend the infidelities of others as completely justifiable.

By reviewing these eleven categories or using the RSW with your prospective client, you will quickly discover whether you have a case to pursue or simply a misunderstanding that needs to be resolved. The time spent working through the RSW framework will establish your professionalism as well as quickly clarify what your client wants from you.

One word of advice from a PI who learned the hard way: If a woman is persistent in claiming that something “just doesn't feel right,” then you probably should take the case. A woman's intuition is the ultimate red flag.

For a FREE copy of the “**Relationship Status Worksheet**” (RSW) go to: www.TinsleyPI.com or send a request to: RSW@TinsleyPI.com

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