

# Dear Auntie Em

Dear Auntie Em,

I really need your help. Two years ago my husband of thirty years confessed to me he'd been having an affair with a coworker. Even though I suspected something was going on for a while I was devastated when he confirmed my suspicions. The affair was over long before he told me and he no longer works with this person but others had discovered the affair and he felt he should tell me before someone else did. In an effort to minimize the damage he lied to me about some of the details of the affair when I confronted him and I've had a difficult time trusting him about anything he's told me since then.



We've agreed we want to save our marriage. We love each other very much and he is truly sorry about what he's done. He has made real efforts to show me that he's changed and wants nothing more than to build a stronger relationship with me from this point. Our problem is I simply cannot let it go. We have long time periods where we get along just fine and things are better than they've ever been but then something will remind me of the affair, or a lie he told me, and I am heartbroken all over again. He becomes angry that I've brought it up again and the fight is on.

He wants me to just forget what has happened and start over from here. He believes it is just that simple. I'm not so sure. As I said, it has been two years and I still cannot find it in my heart to forgive him and move on. I feel like if I do just forgive him and pretend like this never happened, he will do it again. How can I begin to put things back together?

Heartbroken Wife

*Dear Heartbroken Wife,*

*First of all, cut yourself some slack. Affairs are a serious breach of trust and can seriously damage a marriage. You have every right to have some trust issues with your husband, in spite of his best efforts. That being said, you say he is making an attempt and you must give yourself permission to accept his olive branch.*

*It is possible to build a stronger, better relationship than the one you had before but you cannot sit back and just wait for it to happen. Put in the effort yourself. **This affair can be a defining moment in your marriage but it doesn't have to define it.** You've been married a long time and no doubt there have been plenty of ups and downs throughout*

*those thirty years. The two of you have managed to weather plenty of storms and this storm will pass as well.*

*Starting over is a difficult thing in a marriage as time-tested as this one. But starting fresh is completely possible. By remembering some of the other situations that have come up in your marriage that the two of you dealt with successfully – together – you can begin to rebuild that bond you once had. Share with one another the things you like about each other. Remind one another of each other's strengths and why it is you make such a good team.*

*I am a firm believer that any challenge you are presented with in your life is an opportunity to learn something new about yourself. Use this affair to learn new things about your husband, and about yourself. Ask him what was happening that led to the affair. Were there stresses at work that bonded the two of them? Were there problems at home at the time that sent him seeking solace somewhere else?*

*It is important for your husband to understand that the lies he's told you to protect you are causing you pain. Tell him you need him to come clean about the details you need to know about the affair in order for you to begin building that trust. When he does agree to tell you the truth, accept what he tells you. Don't ask questions you don't want the answers to and once that discussion has taken place, let that be the final answer on the subject.*

*There is no rule that says you must forgive him to move on. Forgiveness is not for him, but for you. Forgiveness will ease your sorrow and the feelings of inadequacy you are experiencing that no doubt leads to the arguments the two of you are having.*

*You mentioned you suspected the affair. Did you discuss your suspicions with him at the time or did you simply slap blinders on and hope you were wrong? Did sticking your head in the sand keep you from seeing signs that might have kept the affair from happening? No, I'm not blaming you, obviously your husband is a big boy and made a choice but it does take two to tango. What were you doing when the music played?*

*Finding out the why will help you figure out how the two of you can keep your marriage affair proof in the future.*

*Half the battle is already fought for you. You both want to save this marriage. That alone is the perfect place to start from. A stronger marriage is possible. Discuss with your husband what you believe that looks like and do what you must, together, to make that happen.*

*Good luck to you.*