

BEN AFFLECK: CAN YOU FORGIVE A BETRAYER IN A ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIP?



By Dr. Jane Greer

Ben Affleck and Jennifer Garner's celebrity divorce announcement may have sounded amicable, but allegedly their celebrity marriage was shattered by Ben's partying and inappropriate behavior with other women. There were rumors of cheating, which may have caused Jennifer's trust in Ben to be forever damaged. Insiders close to the couple say there was suspicion throughout their marriage, adding that Jennifer tried to leave him a few times, but Ben would always convince her to stay.

So what can a couple do if a cloud of suspicion is affecting their relationship and love life?

It can be incredibly difficult to forgive someone after a betrayal, and even more challenging to trust them again even after you've forgiven their infidelity. Sometimes, despite a couple's best efforts, it's

difficult to get past it and stay together.

Explore rebuilding the relationship.

After finding out your spouse has been unfaithful, or exhibited other negative behaviors that defy the vows you said to each other at your wedding, the knee-jerk reaction is often to get angry and get out. But a lot of times there is so much at stake – family life, financial situations, the fear of starting over – as well as so many attachments and good memories, that the one who was betrayed is willing to try to stick it out. Even in the face of hurtful behavior it is hard to balance that against what came before. Those who are able to deal with the anger and disappointment are even able to rebuild the relationship into a healthier and stronger connection than it was before. Maybe that's what Jennifer was hoping for, and why she stuck around so long.

Remember when Ben accepted the Oscar for best picture in 2012 and he thanked Jennifer, saying that marriage is hard work, but it is the best kind of work? He took a lot of heat for saying that, but in truth it is a lot of work, especially when it is peppered with things that lead to mistrust and betrayal. He was probably referring to all the effort it took to preserve the celebrity love they shared and their family life in the face of the things he had allegedly done.

Determine what needs to change and follow through.

It can take a long time before someone is ready to say it's over. The beginning of the healing process is the same for those who do get through a betrayal, as well as for those who try to but ultimately don't. That first step is determining what needs to change – whether it is keeping secrets, seeing other women, gambling, or some other addiction or behavior that might make it difficult for the other person to live with them. The most important step is the follow through. The person with the negative behavior has to demonstrate that he or she has stopped doing whatever it was that has brought them to this point. If that doesn't happen, then there are no grounds to keep the relationship going.

End the relationship if nothing changes and disappointment persists.

Ben might have promised he would change over and over again, and Jennifer most likely wanted to believe him. Maybe she gave him numerous chances to show he meant it. But in the end, evidently he did not do what he said he would. When you are left swimming in a pool of broken promises, disappointment and betrayal, it is inevitable that the time will finally come that you can no longer give the other person the benefit of the doubt and allow them to continue to try to earn back your trust. No matter how much you love them, you reach a point when you no

longer believe your partner can really change. This is when the relationship comes to an end.

That might explain Ben's speech at the Academy Awards, as well as why they persevered for as long as they did. Unfortunately, though, the damage was too great and perhaps the promises of change were too empty to keep them together in the end.

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