

Relationship Advice: Could You Cross Over Into The Cheating Zone?



Everyone likes to think of themselves as an upstanding person, one who would never break a vow or betray someone they love. Each individual who has ever been in my office to deal with infidelity has always prefaced it by saying, "I'm a good person, but..." How does that but come about in the face of the expectation that you will be honest and faithful to the person you have committed to? In other words, what is it that puts you on the path from faithful to unfaithful? Recently it was revealed that this may have played a part in the break-up of Olivia Wilde and Jason Sudeikis. It has been reported that Wilde was involved with Harry Styles before she and Jason

split after spending nine years together and having two children. This raises the question of how someone, in many cases even the best-intentioned person, ends up actually having or flirting with the idea of having an affair?

The pandemic has made this even more prevalent as people are connecting through texting, sexting, and video chats. You might think you are innocently talking to an ex-girlfriend or co-worker across the country, but if you are sharing intimate thoughts and feelings you could be easing your way toward an emotional virtual tryst. So, what are the signs that you may be at risk of heading that way, online or

in person?

In this case it is important to think about what you are not getting from your relationship that could be leading you to feel resentful, angry, and neglected. It can be one big event or a series of smaller issues that take you to that place. Do you think you are always shot down when you suggest something, or believe your opinion doesn't matter? Do you feel repeatedly overpowered by your partner, and there seems to be no room for compromise? Does your partner barely look up from their phone anymore when you tell them about your day, or even worse, they have no interest in hearing about it at all and shut you down when you bring it up? These repeated negative behaviors can cause your self-esteem to take a hit, as well as leave you to feel you are just a burden or a nag. Additionally, have they stopped showing interest in having sex with you? Not only do they not initiate sex, but are they unresponsive to any overtures you make as well? If so, this can impact your sexual-esteem, leaving you feeling rejected and undesirable.

Put all of this together, and you are likely to believe you are not important and just don't matter to your partner because you are feeling so deprived, ignored, and unappreciated. This is when you are in the most danger of entering what I call The Cheating Zone, the arena between potentially cheating and actually cheating. It is the point where you shift from what is seemingly an innocent conversation to a truly meaningful relationship with someone other than your committed partner. Faced with a feeling of futility and the defeated sense that whatever you do your relationship isn't going to change, combined with running on emotional empty, can make you particularly vulnerable. If someone else pays attention to you, offers you a compliment, or just wants to talk, you may feel a strong attraction because anything that begins to feed your self-esteem can be grist for the infidelity mill. If you find yourself feeling

unhappy a lot, fantasizing about this new person that you are interacting with, or imagining ending your relationship, it is easy to go from contemplating to actually falling into an affair. Very often people think the paramour happened to come along and that's how the infidelity came about, but, in reality, that other person likely gained entrance because of all the things going on that were driving you and your partner apart. That third person is able to enter the equation because there is already so much distance between you.

If you want to avoid this, acknowledge the feelings you are having and take them seriously. Use them to guide you to action, whether that means negotiating specific changes in behavior or deciding to see a counselor. Rather than resigning yourself to being miserable, talk to your partner and let them know how distressed you are and how dire you think things could be for the relationship if you don't deal with these problems head on. Let your partner know what needs to be different for you in order to remain in the relationship. Before you do something that may lead you to the point of no return, give them a chance to work with you to make things better.

It is impossible to know what exactly took place between Wilde and Styles, or when it happened. However, if you are dealing with any of the above, then by communicating and recommitting to each other you can hopefully steer clear of The Cheating Zone.