

Partner
BETRAYAL TRAUMA

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Table of Contents

<i>Introduction</i>	5
<i>One:</i> Trusted	11
<i>Two:</i> Discovery Day	21
<i>Three:</i> Betrayed	37
<i>Four:</i> Your Body	55
<i>Five:</i> Esteem	63
<i>Six:</i> Intimacy Anorexia	71
<i>Seven:</i> Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)	87
<i>Eight:</i> Betrayal Trauma	103
<i>Nine:</i> Trauma Reset	111
<i>Ten:</i> Responsibility	125
<i>Eleven:</i> The Twelve Steps	133
<i>Twelve:</i> Find a Counselor	167
<i>Conclusion</i>	185
<i>Appendix</i>	187

Introduction

Every book has a story. Let me tell you my story as a leader in the Partner Movement, giving a voice to partners of betrayal trauma.

In the early 1980s, there was a huge recovery awakening (not just alcohol and drugs), but codependency, sex addiction, and food addiction. The process addiction movement was different than drugs and alcohol addiction because chemicals aren't involved.

Sex addiction started in the height of the codependency movement. Patrick Carnes wrote the first book on sex addiction called *Out of the Shadows* (1983). Dr. Carnes' research was groundbreaking for sex addiction and he introduced the co-addict model for partners of sex addicts. The core beliefs of a co-addict are:

1. I am a bad and unworthy person
2. No one would love me as I am
3. My needs are never going to be met
4. Sex is the most important sign of love

This is where I come in. In 1993, I wrote the book *Women Who Love Sex Addicts* (one of only a few books for spouses of sex addicts). This book provided validation of trauma betrayal, grief, and anger that a partner of a sex addict goes through and how to recover. Since the prevailing model 26 years ago used the co-addict language for partners of sex addicts, this book contained that language.

However, since my first year as a clinician (and almost daily

counseling partners of sex addicts), the co-addict model just wasn't working for me. I was counseling women married to sex addicts, but they were strong, smart, and attractive. They were also spiritually, emotionally, and sexually mature. I kept thinking there has to be a better term for women married to, or in a significant relationship with, a sex addict.

Therefore, I created the Partner Movement and renamed these women "partners" instead of "co-addicts." In 2001, I wrote the books, *Partners: Healing from His Addiction*, as well as the *Partners Recovery Guide*, and *Beyond Love: A 12- Step Guide for Partners of Sex Addicts*. These resources give dignity back to the courageous women who happen to marry sex addicts.

In the *Partners* book, I begin to outline the impact from the trauma of living with a sex addict. In the workbooks, I empower partners to heal.

As the President of the American Association for Sex Addiction Therapy (AASAT), we produced the first certification to treat partners of sex addicts. The principles of the Partner Movement that we have utilized for more than 30 years are:

1. Every partner is absolutely unique and worthy of honor for whom they presently are.
2. The partner has no responsibility for the addict's addiction or acting out.
3. Partners come from anywhere on the continuum of spiritual, emotional, physical, financial, sexual, and social health.
4. Any partner who takes responsibility for herself can heal and grow in areas she deems necessary.

5. The addiction often creates collateral damage that is best to heal from as early as possible.
6. There are no core beliefs or attributes for partners. They are all unique beings.

As in any healthy movement or family, voices with influence need to be heard and validated. In 2009, Barbara Stefens and Marsha Means wrote the book *Your Sexually Addicted Spouse: How Partners Can Cope and Heal*. The authors highlight from a post-traumatic stress model that some partners experience the betrayal involved in sex addiction like post-traumatic stress. They brought the terms “trigger” and “gaslighting” to the movement.

In the partner camp another voice emerged from Jennifer Freyd’s work on sexual abuse. Dr. Freyd brings two important insights to the Partner Movement. First, the level of intimacy between partner and addict determines the level of partner trauma. For example, a father sexually abusing his daughter is different than a stranger. Second, because of the need to survive, the child will have to minimize, suppress, and cope with the trauma to survive within the father-daughter relationship.

Let me validate the voices of partners when it comes to sex addiction, infidelity, and intimacy anorexia—partner betrayal trauma is absolutely real. I have been working with partner betrayal trauma for over 30 years. I’ve seen women like you convulse, retch, scream like animals, go blank, tremble, and yell “No, No” over and over again as they hear the truth of how their husband betrayed them. I get it. Prior to marriage, I lived with a woman who cheated on me and it ripped my young heart to pieces.

The interdependence in marriage is a real dynamic, and a woman’s circumstances as well as economic or emotional

dependence, can all be factors in her partner recovery process.

As a father in this movement, I welcome all the voices of partner recovery. This is not an either/or discussion but a both/and for partners and their recovery choices. Not all partners are alike. Not all sex abuse survivors react to the same recovery process as others. Most partners do well in the general recovery process for partners of sex addicts. Others benefit greatly from some of the PTSD or betrayal information.

I believe as a Partner Movement we can learn and love each other as we continue to grow. My heart is that we respect and grow together.

This book is a validation of what I have been talking about, defending and treating partners of sex addicts. This book looks at betrayal, something partners of sex addicts, infidelity survivors, and spouses of intimacy anorexics will need to address.

This book is based upon research (not whims, theories, or biases from other theories). In 2018, we conducted a research study of 154 women who have experienced betrayal trauma. These women were asked to complete a 2-hour questionnaire with valid measures to assess the Partner Betrayal Model. Interestingly, regardless if the trauma came through infidelity, sex addiction, or intimacy anorexia, there were no statistically significant differences in the study. Therefore, the study reveals the outcome wasn't about what happened to the partner, but who did it. The husband or significant other betrayed her and that is what causes trauma.

As women work through the betrayal, and embark on the journey of partner recovery, they can be the amazing person they were meant to be. I have seen thousands of women