

Kick that Dirty Snake to the Curb!

How to Protect Yourself After Your Husband Cheats

1) Is my husband cheating on me?

You have the sinking feeling in the pit of your stomach that there is that disconnect. His behavior and interactions towards you have changed. You know the signs. You wonder why he brings his cell phone with him into the bathroom and shower. There is always an explanation from him, he is expecting a work call, he didn't realize he had it in his pocket.

You may have noticed that he has a sudden change in his appearance. He is dressing younger, shaving more often; perhaps he is using a new cologne. When he comes home from work, he looks and smells like he has just showered or comes home from work and immediately runs into the shower. He may tell you he was at the gym, but you have that sick sinking feeling that something just isn't right. He may be overly kind to you, caring, but not sexual towards you. You may have noticed that your relationship seems more platonic than anything else. He is up late on his computer often and seems to be distracted when you attempt to interact. He may password protect his computer, check his email in secret or you may notice that there is no internet history in his web browser.

There may be something even more glaring, such as lipstick or make up on his shirt, dog or cat hair when you don't have a pet or finding condoms in his drawer, wallet or car. When I was 6 months pregnant with my son, I found condoms in my husband's drawer. His explanation was that we might need them after we had the baby. The following day they were gone. His explanation was that I was right, we didn't need them so he threw them out in the dumpster. Oddly, no other trash was taken out.

2) What am I going to do about it?

You can pretend that nothing is wrong and accept that is your lot in life. For me personally, there is nothing less appealing than this option.

You can tell him that you know he is cheating and confront him, but you must be prepared for a number of possible outcomes. He will either deny it or give you all sorts of explanations to his behavior. He may attempt to turn it around on you and accuse you of being paranoid or insecure. He will act insulted that you don't trust him. Alternatively, he may confess and state that he has no intention of ending the affair. At that point you will either need to accept the truth and live with his open affair or you need to pick up the pieces and move on. Your husband may tell the truth and beg you to stay. Only you can decide whether to stay or to go.

You may have decided that you want to leave and that you are not interested in listening to any of his explanations or excuses.

Whatever your decision is, you must protect yourself and get everything in order before you confront him. This is regardless of the outcome. You must make sure that you and your children (if you have them) are able to take care of yourselves. It is always best to wait until you are calm and prepared.

3) How do I protect myself?

You should consult a family law attorney immediately. Many attorneys will offer you a free initial half hour consultation to discuss the law in general. My office offers a half hour consultation to discuss general legal issues.

You should open a checking account in your name only, if all of your accounts are joint accounts. You can put a small amount of money into it after each check. While it is legal to have a separate account, you will have to disclose the account once you have started the divorce process. The goal is not to transfer or hide assets but to protect yourself from that happening to you. If you cannot trust your husband to remain faithful to you, you should not trust him to be honest and forthcoming about what you own.

You should know what you and your husband own and owe, either jointly or individually. Make copies of all deeds, car titles, boat titles. Make copies of all important financial information. You should have the last three income tax returns and at least one year worth of bank statements for all hidden accounts. Gather up copies of all credit card statements and any statements from student loans that have not fully been paid off yet. The goal is to have a complete picture of your assets and debts so that your attorney can help you protect your interests.

I know from experience how difficult this is, but if you take the correct steps, at least you won't have the added pressure of financial insecurity.



About Patricia C. Van Haren: Prior to attending law school and obtaining her degree, Patricia C. Van Haren worked in the legal industry for over 20 years as an Office Manager, Paralegal and Law Clerk. She also had her own business as a family law paralegal and mediator. She has assisted numerous couples through uncontested dissolutions. She has also worked extensively with law firms and attorneys through highly litigious contested dissolutions and custody battles. Ms. Van Haren went through her own divorce in the 90s, so she knows firsthand how difficult and trying a divorce can be. She uses this knowledge to help her clients deal with both the legal and emotional issues involved in getting a divorce. In addition to handling a divorce, Patricia can help in matters such as paternity matters, child custody and visitation, child support, spousal support, adoption, guardianship, and estate planning. She serves all of the Los Angeles area.