



STAY
happily married
.com

Unfaithful: Hope and Healing after Infidelity

This is episode 89 for Stay Happily Married, "Unfaithful: Hope and Healing after Infidelity."

Welcome to Stay Happily Married, your source for weekly updates on the latest tips and advice to build a happy and healthy marriage.

Today's episode of Stay Happily Married is brought to you by the Rosen Law Firm. For more information, visit us at Rosen.com.

Lee Rosen: I'm Lee Rosen. I'm your host today. Welcome to the show. I'm really excited to have on the telephone with us today Gary and Mona Schriver.

Responding to the need for couple's counseling after infidelity, the Schriver's co-founded Hope and Healing Ministries. It's an adult recovery peer support ministry. Gary owns an audio and video production facility and Mona is a former nurse active in women's ministries. They've been married for 33 years and they have three grown sons. They live out in California.

And they're written this book, *Unfaithful: Hope and Healing after Infidelity*. And I've been through it and I will tell you it took courage to write this book and I'm really pleased that they're willing to join us and talk with us about their story.

Gary and Mona, welcome to the show.

Gary Schriver: Well, thank you for having us today, Lee.

Mona Schriver: Thank you for having us.

Lee Rosen: You know, I've read a bunch of the book. I haven't made it through 100 percent of it yet. But you really -- you told your story and you let people into your lives in a way that is hard. I mean, I would have

a hard time having told the stories that you guys told. What was the motivation for writing the book?

Gary Schriver: Well, Lee, first of all we just want to thank you for allowing us to come on the program today and to be able to hopefully speak hope into couples out there that might be going through this right now. That's our entire message is that adultery is not a death sentence to a relationship, where I think society in general might just say that that is the case. So we're here to tell you that it's not. And hopefully in today's interview we'll be able to get to some of that hope for the people.

But the motivation behind writing *Unfaithful* -- you're absolutely right. That was a hard place to go to even think that. But Lee, when we were going through our own -- I came home in 1993 and confessed to Mona that I'd been having an affair and that just absolutely devastated our relationship. I mean, it was just the most traumatic thing that we had ever been through. It was something that was -- I can't tell you how deep of a wound that is to a relationship. And the people out there that might be hearing this, they know exactly what I'm talking about. This is on the order of like a death of a very close loved one; that's how traumatic this is when you go through this.

Well, one of the first things that surfaced in our own recovery was the need for another couple. We had a counselor at that particular time that he did a great job and we had also a pastor that was kind of coming along side us and we had support there. But boy, we just really wanted another couple. We didn't want -- okay.

What we wanted was a couple that was not necessarily another counselor or anything like that, just somebody that had been through this that can look across the table and say to us over a cup of coffee that, "You know what? You guys can get through this because we did too. And we have a relationship now that we are so glad that we did. We love each other. We have trust and all those things that you might not think you're ever going to get back."

And we just so needed that because all the people we saw were horror stories, that either they didn't make it through or they were not very happy. And so that's what we looked for.

Our counselor could come up with no couple. Our pastor could come up with no couple. We couldn't find anybody that would be willing to sit across from us. So we went through our process.

About two years after that our counselor called me one day and said, "Gary, do you remember that need that you had really early in

the process?" And we did. And he says, "Are you ready to be that couple for someone else?" And wow, we thought, and no; we don't want --

Mona Schriver: Not really.

Gary Schriver: Yeah. We don't really want to go back there and live there. But we also knew that if this was kind of God's tapping us on the shoulder saying, "Hey, there was no one there for you. Could you be obedient to just try?" And we're not counselors. We didn't claim to be anything more than just another couple that were a little bit further down the road. But we did say yes, we were going to step out of our comfort zone and go be that couple for someone else.

Well, the counselor saw a tremendous help in that and so when he saw that he basically after a few months said, "What do you guys think about us throwing couples at you in the sense of a support group setting?" And we were all in for that because that's a great thing. That was something to really be able to give back out of this and to help. And the support group was born and that's called Hope and Healing Ministries and that went on for about eight years.

But the thing of it is, is we saw tremendous -- we were helping so many couples in the Central Valley here in California but it wasn't available anywhere else. And we thought, how can we come alongside other couples in St. Paul or Maine or wherever? We were landlocked.

And so at that point we felt very led that we needed to share our story and really be honest with what we went through because that's what engages other couples. It's not a cakewalk here to come through adultery recovery but you can come through it.

And so as we shared our stories in the pages in this book, it's just been -- was published back in 2005. It's now available all over the world and we get -- in several languages -- and we get e-mails on a daily basis just from hundreds and hundreds of couples every year, affirming us that this is something that God is using to help other people.

Lee Rosen: Well, I'll tell you, when I've read it -- like, you talk about getting through the infidelity and confessing it to your wife. But boy, when you talk about sharing your story, just reading the first few pages of the book and getting a feel for what both of you went through, I can see why people are connecting with you, because you were really willing to open up and not -- you really let us get a feeling for what it was like. And I'm sure people really relate to what you went through because it was gut-wrenching to me to read your story.

Mona Schriver: And that came out of the groups, Lee. Because what makes the groups work is to share that part of yourself. And we've been doing the groups long enough to know that that's -- the people there connected when you shared your story and showed that you're a real person and it wasn't all hearts and flowers. And it certainly wasn't easy. And you share the reality.

But once you share that, you have that ability then to also share what helped and what worked. And they're ready to listen after they really recognize that you were there. So that's how that came about, because we pattern it in the group.

Gary Schriver: And they see a couple that has come through. And it's not just about Gary and Mona. We have several couples that we work with here in the Central Valley that have stepped into leadership positions in the ministry so --

Lee Rosen: Well, it's got to be so tough. And you talk about that counselor asking you if you were ready to be that couple.

Gary Schriver: Yeah.

Mona Schriver: Yeah.

Lee Rosen: What a huge step to be able to say, "Yeah, I am ready." Because you're letting -- all your dirty laundry is out there --

Gary Schriver: Yeah.

Lee Rosen: -- for everybody, and that's so hard.

Mona Schriver: The worst thing you ever did. Yeah.

Lee Rosen: Yeah.

Gary Schriver: You know, what's funny too, Lee, that you'd ask that is we have several couples, like I just said, that are willing to work with other couples, but they're still not willing to be public figures. They don't want to step out of the shadows. So our ministry is based on the fact that you maintain your anonymity. You maintain that. Mona and I are basically the only ones that have gone public on this.

Lee Rosen: Well, where are those folks? Why are they not out there? Because we read the statistics about the numbers of marriages that have infidelity going on or has gone on. Why is it so -- more people ought to be that couple for those other --

Mona Schriver: Right.

Lee Rosen: Why aren't they willing to do that?

Mona Schriver: Well, I think the reason they're not is the same reason that we needed that other couple. The only people that are out there got divorced and it was a huge blow-up scandal and everybody saw all the pain. Or they stayed together and everybody knows how miserable they are.

Lee Rosen: Right.

Mona Schriver: The ones that worked it through, typically they live next door to you. They work in the cubicle next to you. They may well be going through it right now. They sit in church next to you. They are in your clubs. But they're not sharing with you because everybody thinks that to be in an affair means there has to be a definite moral deficit or the marriage is so horrible there's no way you can make it through. And it's fear. It's fear of scandal. It's fear of shame. It's a lot of different things. But they're hiding because of that.

Lee Rosen: Right. It's unfortunate because you're making such a big difference just by your willingness to talk about it. And you've obviously rebuilt that trust and that connection. How do you do that? How do you rebuild that trust?

Mona Schriver: Oh, boy. My most concise answer to that is very slowly.

Gary Schriver: Yeah.

Mona Schriver: Because it can be destroyed in an instant but certainly not rebuilt that way. For me personally, I had to come to the grips that trust is not forgiveness; they're two entirely separate things, that it really takes time. And one of the most important aspects of rebuilding trust is transparent honesty between both of you.

And because the person who was unfaithful broke that trust, the onus is on them to initiate that process. But as it goes along, the one who has been betrayed is also going to have to take steps forward in becoming vulnerable again or the trust won't be rebuilt.

So we encourage our couples, just give it time, be transparently honest, adopt an attitude that every little thing counts.

Gary Schriver: Right.

Mona Schriver: Everything counts. It's not just about the adultery. It's not just about big things. It's about little things. It's about saying, "Oh, I'll

grab the bread and milk on my way home," and then grabbing the bread and milk on your way home. Because when you do that and you bring it in and you do what you say you're going to do, you're putting a trust coin, if you will --

Gary Schriver: Right.

Mona Schriver: -- in a bank. And those need to build up.

Gary Schriver: Right. And things that hinder that process of rebuilding the trust is not being honest. It's like I found that, for example -- I mean, this may be just a very simple thing, but say for example that you as a couple are going through this recovery process and then all of a sudden something about adultery shows up on the television.

Mona Schriver: Right.

Gary Schriver: And boy, you talk about being hypersensitive to infidelity. Watch TV and go through this process; it seems like every program has something to do with it.

Lee Rosen: Right.

Gary Schriver: But one of the things that can hamper that is to just go, "Oh, boy. Don't bring it up. Just keep it to yourself. Don't say anything. We're having a pretty decent night right now. Don't say anything." I've sat in that chair before. And I found that just not being honest with the elephant that's in the room can really hamper this process.

Where if you can try to get behind her eyes -- and I'm speaking from my own experience -- if I can try to get behind Mona's eyes and say, "Honey, is this bothering? Is this something that -- we can change the channel. We don't have to do that. Is this bothering you? Do we need to turn off the TV and just kind of talk?"

I mean, some people in my position might think, "What are you doing?" But no, if I can continue to try to reach out and get behind her eyes and feel her pain with that same empathy and she believes that I'm doing that and I'm going there for her, then that can really help. And not going there I feel is almost like being dishonest.

And also too is shutting down the process. Because so many people think that it's just a forgiveness issue, "Well, if you can just forgive me, we can just move on and we'd be done with this." But this is a long process. And if you just try to shut this down by saying, "Well, just forgive me," and we move on, that just basically shuts down the person to really kind of process through this whole hurt because it is such a trauma.

Lee Rosen: Gary, you could have gotten away with it. Your relationship went on for a couple of years --

Gary Schriver: Yeah.

Lee Rosen: -- before you told Mona. And you probably could have stopped it -- I guess, stopped it and never told it. Looking back on it now years later, did you do the right thing to come forward?

Gary Schriver: Absolutely. Absolutely. I can't underscore that enough. You're right. I was in a position -- and for the benefit of your listeners, it had gone on for several years and I was kind of caught in a cycle where both of us were Christians and we both knew that this was the wrong thing -- I'm talking about my affair partner now. But we were working in the same environment. And absolute revelation of this would destroy my life. I mean, it would destroy my marriage, my family, my ministries, my business. I mean, there wasn't an area that wouldn't have been touched by this. So I was really living in terror that this would ever get out.

But you're right. After the three-year process I was confronted by a young man that had said he believed that I was having an affair. But I was in such a turmoil, I was so ready to just get right with this. I knew that I needed to just get this out.

And to answer your question, I could have used my position of power and the business to probably just kind of put some mortar over the top of this crack and move on and never say anything to Mona.

But one thing that I know now in hindsight is that confession to her, yes, it did put a lot of things in turmoil. And you know what? It could have blow out our marriage. But I'll tell you what: There's always going to be that secret. It's always going to be in your relationship and it's going to be living under the surface with you. And it hampers your real sense of ability to get to that real deepest levels of intimacy with your partner or with your -- not your partner, but with your spouse.

And I know that right now if I hadn't have come clean with this whole thing and confessed everything to her that it would only get to a certain level of intimacy. And so my advice, if I can be so bold, would be to come clean. Just get it all out into the light and then rebuild on absolute, complete, transparent honesty.

Lee Rosen: Yeah.

Gary Schriver: I think you've got a much better chance of having a real truly, deeply intimate relationship that you'll cherish.

Lee Rosen: Now, the two of you have built this ministry in helping folks that have been through infidelity. How critical has your religion been to surviving all of this? What role has it played?

Mona Schriver: It played a huge role for us because it allowed us to look outside our own feelings and perceptions and look to the God that we believe is in control of everything. And it also allowed us to see something beyond our individual needs and wants, to keep His perspective, if you will.

What I could do for my Lord, I couldn't do for Gary. Because there were many days when I could have cared less about doing anything for Gary, much less be nice or working. I was angry. I was hurt. I wanted to strike out. But I knew that as a Christian my scriptures tell me how to live my life and tell me how to treat other people. So I had to make a choice of who I was going to be. And I have that counterbalance there. So it was essential to us.

Lee Rosen: Yeah.

Gary Schriver: It was helpful to me too, to know that even if Mona and I weren't going to get through this -- and there were times, I can tell you --

Mona Schriver: Right.

Gary Schriver: -- that in this process it was kind of touch and go at times. But I knew that I would be okay with my Lord, even though we didn't [inaudible]. So there's a real sense of peace that comes from that faith.

But I also want to underscore another thing for people out there that may not be of the same belief that we are. Truth is truth. And there's a lot of principles that happen in this book. And I'm not trying to sell this book; I'm just trying to state a fact, that we have stood on a soapbox here for several years saying you can get through this. You can have love and intimacy and you can get that relationship back in spades if you're just willing to go through this.

And in the pages of this book -- like you talked about earlier, Lee -- we can really connect with them not only with the gut-wrenching things that we went through -- because we pull no punches. We take you to where we were in our depth and our pain. But we also too -- truth is truth and there's a lot of principles that will come from the pages and tools that can help you to rebuild your relationship.

November 23, 2009 - Unfaithful: Hope and Healing after Infidelity

Lee Rosen: You know, Mona, Gary says near the end of the book -- and I thought he wrote a really touching letter to the reader at the end of the book. But he says that you as a couple are completely healed and that everything is back on track.

Mona Schriver: Yes.

Lee Rosen: Have you really now -- I mean, we're, what, 15, 16 years since the --

Mona Schriver: We're 15 years. Yeah. Almost 16.

Lee Rosen: Yeah. From your -- it's easy for Gary to say, "Oh, it's all great now."

Mona Schriver: Yeah. You know, actually, I was the one that said it first. When we are in our group setting, the first night we share our story. And that's just typical. And one night I was sharing it just like I had done hundreds of times before. And I ended my time of sharing with, "I can now sit in this chair and look every one of you in the eyes and tell you that we are completely healed." And I stopped and I went, "Oh, my goodness. Who said that?" I'm looking around the room.

Gary Schriver: Yeah. My jaw was on the floor.

Mona Schriver: And it was like, oh, it's happened.

Gary Schriver: Yeah.

Mona Schriver: It's happened. The thing that I feared that would never, ever be has happened. I don't know when it happened. It was not a moment in time. All I know was that Gary and I had finally come to a place where I could say we have healed. And that was miraculous to me.

Gary Schriver: Do you forget about this, though? No. This is something that will always be there. It's kind of like a scar. It's always going to be there. But it's something that Mona and I look back on now with more like you'd look back on a sad movie or something like that. It's not something that has any power over you anymore.

Mona Schriver: Right.

Gary Schriver: Now, it really does in the early stages when you're coming through; it can get very, very tumultuous. But in the case of 15 years -- and it doesn't take 15 years to get to that point.

Mona Schriver: No, it wasn't 15 years. I honestly don't remember when that night occurred, but it wasn't 15 years.

Gary Schriver: Yeah. It was --

Mona Schriver: It was before the book.

Gary Schriver: Right. Obviously.

Lee Rosen: You know, it's really tempting I think for most couples to -- you know, when this happens you just kind of want to sweep it under the rug --

Gary Schriver: Right.

Lee Rosen: -- if you're going to make it work. You know, you just kind of want to say, "Okay. We're back to normal. Everything's fine."

Gary Schriver: Right.

Lee Rosen: And is that a bad idea? Is it okay to do that?

Gary Schriver: Well, no. I'm sorry, because I think the temptation you say is, is to let's just forgive and move on. And I kind of hit on that a little bit earlier. And also too, I mean, I'd like to have a dime for every time I heard Mona in the very early stages say, "I just want my life back. I want it the way it was."

Mona Schriver: You just want the pain gone.

Gary Schriver: But when I came home, I really came home wanting to really rebuild this marriage. And one of my mantras from early on was I don't want to go back, because where we were, although it might have been good, it wasn't good enough to keep us from getting right where we are here today. So I was really kind of being very analytical and I wanted to turn over every rock and I really wanted to peel this onion.

Now, I need to say this really upfront. There is never, ever going to be a reason ever good enough for the choice of adultery. So don't hear me -- when I'm going to go on to say here.

But I really believe that every relationship has issues, okay? And I think that that was one of the important things for Mona and I to do is to go through this and to really look -- like I said, turn over every rock. Look at the issues in our relationship and to be able to determine what left me so vulnerable in this?

So to answer your question -- and I think I've probably gotten so far off track -- don't allow yourself to go to that level right there that'll happen in a couple of weeks where you'll think, "Well, let's just get

back to normal," because you could take the chance of never really healing through and going through the entire process of this.

And another thing too, an observation from the groups' standpoint - - and we've had several years of groups now -- we find couples that are coming to group have that particular MO in their past, where there was maybe an emotional affair or something that happened earlier in -- several years back -- but they never really processed through that. And then it never really got healed and so now here they are back again with another situation.

Mona Schriver: And I would add to that, Lee, that one of the things that happens when you just -- you do it for a while and you get tired --

Gary Schriver: Really.

Mona Schriver: -- because it's a grieving process. It's a long thing. And so things kind of get back to normal almost out of necessity and you quit doing the hard work of healing.

But I'll tell you what I see in a lot of spouses when you do that is they can't heal because they don't have that assurance. They didn't work it through enough to understand why it happened and what both of them are doing now to make sure it doesn't happen again. And so that confidence that they're safe -- that safety never really comes back.

Lee Rosen: Right. So now you're that other couple. For all these couples out there that need somebody to turn to, you're it. And I'm wondering in your ministry what are you doing for them? What is the process like when somebody does finally show up at your door and ask for your help?

Mona Schriver: Oh, you know, the process is simply one human being reaching out to another human being and saying, 'I have been through this experience. I can't pretend to understand what yours is like because I know yours is different. But I can tell you that I know how horrific it is and how deep the pain is.'

We've often said that one of the things -- or two of the things we do is reassure couples that they're not going crazy and then the second thing is we tell them, "You can heal. You can make it through this. It will probably be the hardest thing you ever do but you can do it." And we can validate for them that we can say "you can do it" because we did it. And it's worth it. It's worth everything it takes.

Lee Rosen: Don't you feel like they get a lot of feedback from other people that they shouldn't try to make it work?

Gary Schriver: Absolutely. That seems to be the general -- I would say general society's thing is adultery is an automatic death sentence to your relationship. And doggone it, it's not. It really isn't. We've seen so many couples come through this and -- all over -- that you can get through this. But they're not standing on soapboxes saying, "You can."

And I think that's what's so frustrating to us, especially in churches, we found churches that as soon as something will happen like this, the church will go, "Oh," and then put them into divorce care. Now, it's not that divorce care is bad. By all means, it's a wonderful ministry out there. But it's for people that are divorced, not people that are having issues in their relationship. Reconciliation is very, very much a possibility in this.

Mona Schriver: Right.

Gary Schriver: And boy, what Mona said earlier is so true, is we can validate the fact that you are in a very abnormal situation and we can bring some normalcy to that --

Mona Schriver: Right.

Gary Schriver: -- that they're not going crazy, that this is a very traumatic thing. And then that just reassures them that they can take the next step and take the next breath. And sometimes that's all they can do is just take the next breath. But then once you walk this path you can get to the end and have success.

Lee Rosen: Now, you've put out -- this edition of *Unfaithful* is the second edition. It's four years, I guess, after the first edition. And there are some revisions in it, I know. What kind of changes came between the two editions?

Mona Schriver: Well, the first thing is we changed a lot between the publication in 2005 and this one. We grew a lot in terms of learning more about infidelity recovery ourselves. We were able to sit under some of the experts and learn some things from people who had more of a professional training. So we're able to share what we've learned. So there's a lot more general information in the book that we think will be helpful.

Then the biggest changes are we added a section on emotional affairs because there's really nothing out there -- like Gary said, we get letters a lot and we try to resource people out to the best things that are out there that can help them. And I really had a difficult time finding anything to come alongside someone who had had an

emotional affair. There were things out there for pornography and such, but not the emotional affair that we typically see in the workplace or in the church or in the neighborhood.

Lee Rosen: Which can have just as big an impact as a physical affair, right?

Gary Schriver: Absolutely.

Mona Schriver: Absolutely. Yes, indeed. And so we added that.

We also added a healing timeline. Now, that was something that we avoided intentionally with the first version but we have since learned that it really is kind of helpful to have an idea of the process. So the timeline is not time in terms of months, days, weeks, that sort of thing; it's more a healing timeline in terms of what the process typically looks like.

Gary Schriver: Looks like. And we are so careful to say please don't get stuck on a timeline because some people can just skyrocket through this process and other people can get stuck in a certain spot and take a long time. So don't get stuck on the timeline.

Mona Schriver: But there's some common dips in the road --

Gary Schriver: Yes.

Mona Schriver: -- in healing and if you know that it's a common place for people to come to, it doesn't make it go away but it can help you not overreact to it.

Gary Schriver: Yeah.

Mona Schriver: And then I think the other thing we added was an appendix that gives a couple a way to begin that healing process. So we think they're great additions and that it'll be much more user-friendly for the couples.

Lee Rosen: Fantastic. Well, it is a terrific book. And I just can't thank you enough for your willingness to share your story in the book because I do think that your openness helps -- everything you say is received so much more easily and it's so much more effective because people get where you're coming from. So thank you for that.

Gary Schriver: Thank you.

Mona Schriver: Oh, thank you for recognizing it.

Gary Schriver: Really.

Mona Schriver: It is a privilege, actually.

Lee Rosen: Well, thank you for being with us today. I appreciate it.

Mona Schriver: Thank you, Lee.

Lee Rosen: If you would like to get more information about the book *Unfaithful* by Gary and Mona Schriver, you can check out the website at HopeAndHealing.us. I'll put a link to that in the show notes. Also, if you want to get a copy of the book -- and I definitely think that it will help you; there's just no way around it. My reading of it and talking with Gary and Mona make it pretty clear to me that this is a pretty unique book in terms of the help that it offers. You can get a copy at Amazon; that's how I end up buying most of my books. I'll put a link to it in the show notes as well.

Thank you so much for joining us today. I hope that you will come back again next week. In the meantime, I'd love to hear from you, love to have your comments, any suggestions. We love to hear them. You can reach our comment line at (919) 256-3083. Or you can e-mail us at comments@stayhappilymarried.com.

I'm Lee Rosen. Until next time, stay happily married.

Thank you for joining us today on Stay Happily Married. If you'd like more information, please visit us on the Web at stayhappilymarried.com. We would love to hear your feedback or comments. Please e-mail us at comments@stayhappilymarried.com or call us at (919) 256-3083. Until next time, best wishes.