

AERCs TRUST RECOVERY KIT



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WELCOME TO THE AERCs TRUST RECOVERY KIT



Rebuilding trust after a significant breach is a challenging and emotional journey. This kit is designed to provide you with the tools and strategies needed to navigate this difficult process. Whether you are the hurt partner or the erring partner, this resource offers structured guidance to help you cope, heal, and help rebuild your relationship.

This kit aims to help support you in making thoughtful decisions, help fostering open communication, and help building a stronger, more resilient relationship. Remember, rebuilding trust is a process that takes time, patience, and commitment from both partners. Use this resource as a guide to navigate this journey towards healing and reconnection.

GETTING STARTED

30 - 90 Days

1. Coping with the crisis of trust (Damage Control)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Avoid decisions about ending the relationship.• Limit any abusive or damaging interactions (Time outs can be helpful)• Understand your reaction to what happened.• Supply support to the hurt partner.• Avoiding discussing specific details of the incidents until couples therapy (if sexual).
2. Developing self-care	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Complete the trigger action plan (for hurt partner).• Obtain an STI test (if applicable).• Focus on sleep. Healthy eating, exercise, spirituality.• See physician.
3. Creating a recovery plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Access professional support (often includes individual, couples, and group counselling).• Make an interim plan for the relationship (deciding on contact, house tasks, parenting, finances, and sleeping arrangements).• Understand trust building and betrayal recovery (see resources).• Tell one trusted friend or family member about your situation (if they support your relationship).

TYPES OF TRUST BREACHES

Sexual infidelity: Sexual activity outside of the relationship that is not agreed upon (can include pornography use).

Emotional infidelity: Relationships or exchanges that involve intimacies typically reserved for romantic relationships. Often, the information being shared would not be liked or accepted by the partner (e.g., sharing intimate details of your relationship and personal life with outside parties).

Competing attachments: Outside influences that weaken or threaten the relationship bond. May include excessive working, leisure time, or prioritizing family of origin over your partner. The partner feels last on the list of importance.

Financial infidelity: Financial activity not known and agreed upon to by both partners (e.g., withholding info about excessive spending).

Unreliability: Broken promises, not being able to access partner by phone, not following-through on tasks, lateness, forgetfulness.

Lying: Purposeful withholding, distortion, or omission of information, minimizing, gas lighting (denying the partner's reality and suspicions).

Abuse: Name calling, insults, threats to safety, destroying property, yelling, pushing, hitting, controlling finances, mocking, forcing sexual contact, humiliation. Abandonment of a partner in a time of intense need (attachment injury).

Relationship insecurity: Regular threats to end the relationship, continual "auditioning" of partner, ambivalent about commitment.

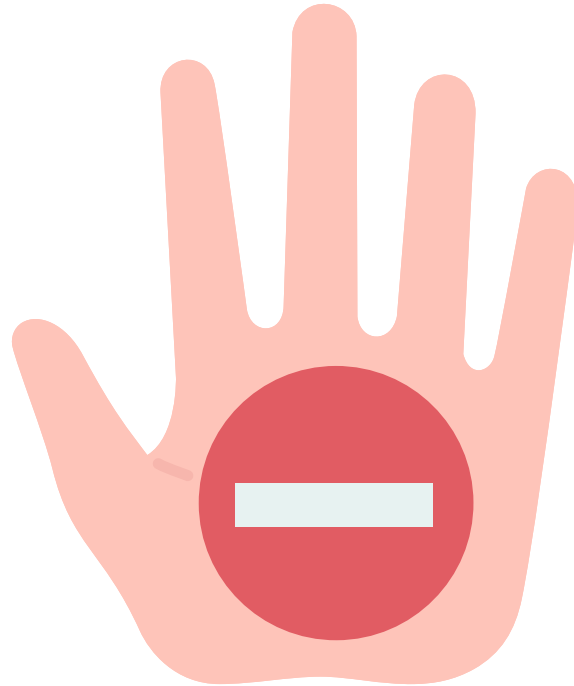
COPING WITH REACTIONS (HURT PARTNER)

A **Trauma** is a major negative event or set of events that destroys important assumptions or fundamental beliefs about the world or specific people- in this case, your partner and your relationship. Traumatic events disrupt all parts of your life- your thoughts, feelings, and behaviours."

Common Symptoms...

- Strong, overwhelming feelings that fluctuate throughout the day.
- Hyperarousal: Feeling overwhelmed emotionally (fight or flight).
- Hypervigilance: Heightened awareness and feeling "on edge" (impending sense of doom).
- Intrusive thoughts: Compulsively repeating thoughts or questions.
- Re-experiencing: Getting drawn back into the experience as though it's happening again (often brought by a trigger).
- Sensitivity to partners words and actions ("what did he mean?").
- Disorientation: Staring off or feeling lost.
- Questioning spiritual faith and basic human goodness.
- Loss of identity in relationship.
- Loss of feeling important or special.
- Adopting extreme negative views of partner.
- Confusion (torn about ending the relationship).
- Difficulty concentrating and functioning (sleep is often affected).
- Shame and embarrassment ("how could I be so stupid!")
- Hopelessness (doubt and uncertainty about your future).
- Exhaustion.
- Tearfulness.
- Lack of trust.
- Nightmares.
- Rage.
- Depression.
- Helplessness.

BEHAVIOURS TO AVOID



- Verbal insults.
- Physical abuse.
- Constant monitoring or checking (however, access to your partner's electronics is often part of rebuilding trust).
- Searching for specific details about the trust breach.
- Searching for information about affair partners (e.g. Facebook).
- Making hostile threats to leave partner.
- Trying to control your partner's behaviour .
- Inappropriate disclosures to family and friends.
- Self-harming behaviors (e.g., cutting, binge eating, consuming alcohol).

STRATEGIES

- Practicing mindfulness-becoming a curious observer to your experience with non-judgment.
- Deep breathing: Take 6 deep breaths and focus on relaxing muscle tension (especially in your jaw and shoulders).
- Calling a friend (if they are supportive of your relationship).
- Guided imagery.
- Exercise.
- Prayer.
- Time out: 20–30-minute time out with healthy, soothing distraction.
- Journaling.
- Understanding your thoughts and feelings about the breach of trust.
- Practicing gentle start-ups (e.g., "When I saw/ heard you, I felt/thought, In the future, I would like").
- Personal bill of rights.
- Strengthening self-compassion and self-worth.
- Being able to know and express your beliefs, feelings, and reality.
- Focusing on what you can control.
- Developing wisdom and spirituality.

Remember: Triggers and trauma symptoms often come in waves. If we can learn to surf the waves with compassion, we develop a great ability to handle these emotions over time. How you react is natural and nothing to be ashamed of.

SUPPORTING A PARTNER THROUGH TRIGGERS (FOR THE ERRING PARTNER)



1. **Express concern.** Stop what you are doing and give your partner your undivided attention.
2. **Acknowledge** that your partner is upset and ask them to describe their emotions and thoughts: “You look upset right now. How are you feeling? What is going through your mind?”
3. **Validate** your partner’s emotions by saying: “I can understand why you are upset right now. It makes a lot of sense that seeing (The trigger) would have brought up memories of the past and what I did to you.
4. **Express regret.** “I am so sorry that I have hurt you.”
5. **Ask** your partner for what they need. “What do you need right now? Often physical proximity and touch is very helpful.

SUPPORTING A PARTNER CONTINUED...

AVOID SAYING	TRY INSTEAD	OVERALL TIPS
I thought you were over this already! (Invalidation).	I will do whatever it takes to make it up to you.	Apologize often without making excuses (especially in the first two years).
I've said I'm sorry and I don't know what else you want me to say. (Defensiveness).	I was wrong and I deeply regret hurting you.	End all ties with affair partners set boundaries with competing attachments.
Don't think you think you're overreacting? (Minimization).	I don't blame you for how you're feeling.	Be open and honest in a non-defensive manner.
You've hurt me too! (Defensiveness).	I feel horrible for how badly I've hurt you.	It may be tempting to leave the situation, but moving toward them and offering physical comfort can be very healing. If your partner asks for space, honour their request, but check in with him/her after 10-15 minutes.
If you cannot get over this then maybe we should not be together (threats to relationship safety).	I love you and I never want to be hurt like that again.	Share information with partner that could be seen as threatening (e.g., unsolicited text from affair partner).
I am sorry if I hurt you/for whatever I did (insincere apology).	Let me try to understand the hurt I've caused you. Can you tell me what it's been like for you?	Try to let any verbal attacks go and focus on your partner's feelings. Often the betrayed is very hurt and anger is an expression of that hurt.

THE GOTTMAN'S TRUST REVIVAL METHOD

Phase 1: Atone

1. **Continual expressions of remorse.** The betrayer must remain patient and accept responsibility. Understand that this breach of trust has impacted every part of the partner's relationship house and possibly led to the development of trauma symptoms.

2. **Atonement cannot occur if the betrayer insists that the victim take partial blame.** Comments like “you did not pay much attention to me”. Are only going to make this worse. Yes, there is always a context, but this is not the time to discuss it. It may seem unfair for you to take all the blame. But it is important if you want to move forward requires the betrayer to hear the other's pain and understand what they are going through. Eventually, the two of you will come together to create a new relationship.

3. **The betrayed partner must work at keeping the door to forgiveness open.** The wounded partner must agree to cooperate if the betrayer is making some effort.

4. **Atonement is a painful process, but the couple should emerge with new understanding, acceptance, budding forgiveness and hope.**

According to Gottman Research, when the betrayer agreed to answer questions, the couple stayed together 86% of the time. If the betrayer refused to answer questions, the relationship's survival rate was only 59%.

Key Elements:

1. **Clarification and information sharing:** unless there is a thorough airing of the misdeeds, mistrust will remain a perpetual issue. Most people would rather know the truth even though it may be painful. In the presence of your therapist the betrayer must provide candid answers to questions about the other part and events surrounding the incidents.

(a) How did this happen? When did it start and finish?

(b) Why did it continue?

(c) Was there sexual contact? (Kissing, hugging, hand holding or sexual talk).

(d) How was it carried out, including details of where and when liaisons took place?

(e) How often did you communicate and in which ways.

(f) Has it stopped?

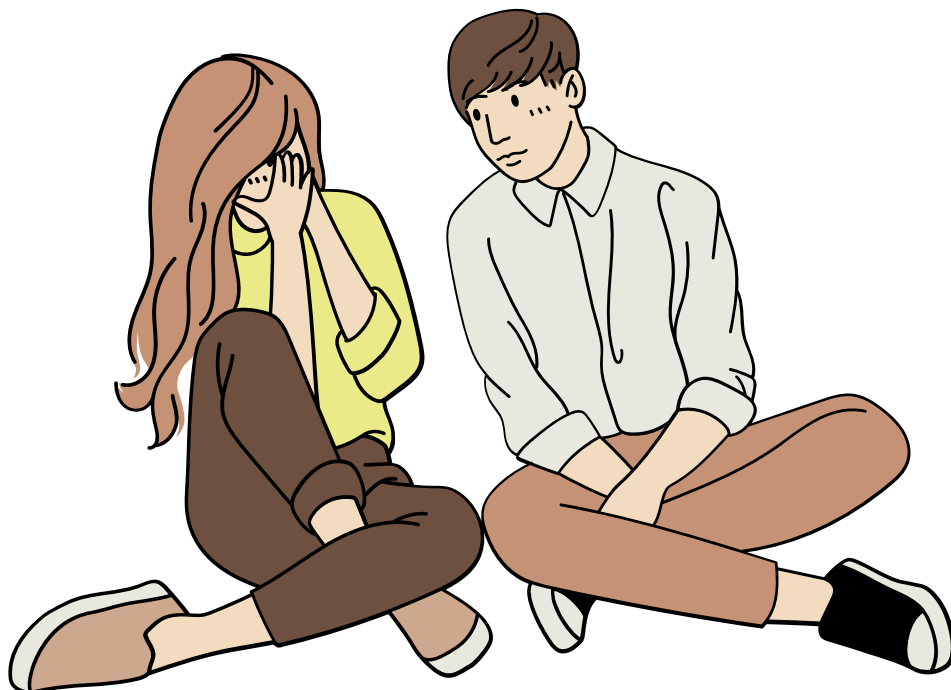
2. **Important exceptions to this tell-all approach.** If the betrayal was sexual, it is not good to describe the specific details of the sexual activity (e.g. "What was she wearing?"). Knowing what happened behind the bedroom door can lead the betrayed partner to obsessive ruminations that retrigger or exacerbate the trauma symptoms. It is a normal urge to want to know the lurid details, but please know that it may not be as helpful as you imagine.

2. **Behaviour Change, Transparency, and Verification.** A commitment to continued scrutiny is important to build trust.

(a) **Create proof that you are no longer engaging in betraying behaviour.**

Giving access to your electronics and finances can be helpful way to rebuild trust. This invasion of privacy may seem unfair but is necessary. Trust will not return without ongoing evidence of transparency.

(b) **Verification: Keep to your promises and create a way to verify this.** This means doing as promised and arriving home at predetermined times may be necessary. The betrayer must restrict activities and relationships that related to the trust breach. It is also needs to be explored about what was said to others about the betrayed party. If the betrayer put down the partner to family and friends, this needs to be rectified. Were these people rooting for the demise of the relationship or complicit? If so, the betrayer must sever those friendships.



4. **Understand what went wrong.** Both parties need to grasp what went wrong in their relationship.

(a) Why did the betrayer turn away, engage in negative comparisons, invest less in the relationship and become less depended on getting needs met through the relationship?

(b) Likewise, why did that partner engage in thoughts unfavourable to the other character, blame him or her for the unhappiness, stay open to or even encourage flirtation, and give oneself permission to cross that boundary?

(c) The betraying partner must avoid accusing the betrayed partner. The goal is to understand what went wrong, not to shift the blame.

(d) We are the masters of our actions. Accepting responsibility is part of the healing.

(e) All of this should lead to more vulnerability related to feeling needed and wanted as well as loneliness and feeling abandoned.



5. **Explore the betrayer's reactions to returning.** Why do they want back in? What is compelling him or her to rebuild the relationship? The key is often in the betrayer's longing to feel necessary and wanted.

6. **Expect a high cost for future breaches of trust.** The betrayer must accept that any future betrayal will mean the permanent end of the relationship. No second chances! The betrayer needs to know the catastrophic cost to any subsequent deceit.

7. **Begin to forgive.** This is the last step of atonement. The hurt party accepts the apology and begins to pardon him or her.

(a) **Forgiveness does not mean absolving the erring partner.** Forgiveness means the deceived partner is willing to cooperate and trust, even in the face of uncertainty and the atoning partner's occasional slip-ups. An "acceptable" slip-up is not the return to the betraying behaviour or new indiscretion but an invasion of the past that produces a regrettable incident. For example, buying flowers from the same store where he bought flowers for the other party or lover. Part of forgiveness is acknowledging that anyone can be untrustworthy at times.

Phase 2: Attune

1. **Tentative forgiveness.** After atonement, you should have tentative forgiveness to build a new relationship. The old one did not meet your needs, and your partner should not be blamed for this deficiency but rather work cooperatively to construct a new one.

2. **Building friendship.** This means working on the friendship part of your relationship, which has been shattered, you really do not feel like you know each other at this stage, and you both must rebuild this love map of each other's world. This means asking curious questions like you used to when courting, and updating current information about who you are today. This also means being more vulnerable about current feelings of sadness, stress and worries. This should include going into your darker areas of your background that still affects you today. This takes a lot of courage but sharing these 'enduring vulnerabilities' is key to getting closer.

3. **Managing conflict.** Learn to handle conflict better so it does not overwhelm you and create distance. Conflict is simply an opportunity to get closer and have conversations rather than fights about past and current hurts. Use the tools you have learned from your counsellor to help with this phase.

4. **Presenting a united front to friends and family.** Finally, remember to go public with the "new normal" of your relationship. Alert the people closest to you such as children, in-laws and close friends that you have recommitted and are working towards rebuilding trust. According to the Gottman's research, this idea of getting the word out helps establish this new relationship as "real" and garners support from those closest to you.

Phase 3: Attach

1. **Developing of sexual intimacy.** At this point, it is imperative to talk about sex, which is normally a topic many couples neglect to discuss. The following excerpt from the book *What Makes Love Last?* By John Gottman and Nan Silver (2012).

"In the Aftermath of betrayal, the victim often does not want to risk physical intimacy with the staying partner. There is too much fear, anger, and vulnerability. But if the couple is determined to stay together, the ability to attune must also reach the bedroom. Without the presence of sexual intimacy that is pleasurable to both, the relationship can't begin again. In a long-term love, sexual intimacy is founded on a healthy interdependency that satisfies the longing for connection. The keystone to the pleasurable and meaningful sex life is a steady diet of intimate conversations as presented in Chapter 7. Learning to communicate about sex is not just for couples healing from sexual disloyalty. It is crucial for couples recovering from all forms of betrayal."

Trust building is a process with many ups and downs. As stressful as this process is, it can be an opportunity to build a stronger relationship and connection.

For the erring partner, being open and accountable are opportunities to build trust with your partner. Trust is built in small increments where your partner can build faith that you will be there for them when they need you.

ACTION PLAN FOR TRIGGERS (HURT PARTNER)

Trigger = A reminder of trust breach often accompanied by intense emotion and traumatic reaction (e.g., intrusive thoughts) .

Specific Triggers	How does this apply to your situation?	Action plan
Seeing attractive people (with or without partner).		Hold your partner's hand if in public.
Sex scenes in movies + TV		Change the channel. Research programs before watching.
Inconsistency/unreliability of partner (e.g., being late)		Express concerns to partner gently.
Times of day. Days of the week (e.g., weekends, late nights)		Plan to do something relaxing.

General Triggers	How does this apply to your situation?	Action plan
Partner's travel (or being away)		Schedule times to communicate.
Lack of contact with partner (e.g., partner is not answering phone)		Agree to a plan for contact.
Lack of self-care.		Daily exercise 30 min. See physician if not sleeping well for over 3 weeks.
Sleep troubles.		Go to bed at the same time daily. Avoid electronics 1-2 hours before bed.
Excessive checking up/monitoring.		Engage in healthy distraction.

Emotional Triggers	How does this apply to your situation?	Action plan
Loneliness/isolation		Reach out to one person per day. Schedule one social outing per week.
Anxiety or rumination (e.g., "I wonder what he's doing right now?")		Healthy distraction. Practice meditation or yoga.
Rejection or disappointment		Journal. Talk to a trusted friend
Confusion (e.g., "can I trust him again?")		Debrief with a trusted friend (who supports your relationship) Understand sex addiction recovery.
Anger		Emotional regulation video. Deep breathing

Thought Triggers	How does this apply to your situation?	Action plan
Comparison (e.g., "those women are better looking than me.")		Remind yourself that your partner's behaviour is due to their own issues, not your worthiness.
Fortune telling (e.g., "my partner is never going to change.")		Focus on realistic expectations of partner and self. Look for positive movement while maintaining boundaries.
All or nothing thinking (e.g., "our whole relationship was a joke.")		Validate your reactions and engage in self-care.
Jumping to conclusions (e.g., "he's been looking at his phone, so he must be doing something shady.")		Check-in with your partner.
Entitlement (e.g., "he deserves to suffer like I have.")		Learn about the drama triangle and your potential role.

Rebuilding trust after a breach is a deeply challenging yet profoundly transformative journey. This AERCS Trust Recovery Kit helps provide a comprehensive roadmap for navigating this complex process. By following the structured guidance within this kit, both partners can engage in meaningful steps towards healing and reconnection.

Through understanding the nature of trust breaches and the corresponding emotional and psychological reactions, partners can begin to address the root causes of their pain and start the healing process. The strategies for self-care and emotional regulation are essential tools for managing the intense emotions and reactions that often accompany such crises.

Supporting each other through triggers and maintaining open, honest communication are critical elements in rebuilding trust. The Gottman Trust Revival Method offers a detailed framework for atonement, attunement, and attachment, facilitating the development of a stronger, more resilient relationship.

Ultimately, the journey of trust recovery is marked by patience, effort, and a willingness to grow. While the path may be fraught with challenges, it also offers the potential for a deeper connection and a renewed sense of partnership. Use this kit as a guide to navigate the ups and downs, and to foster a healthier, more trusting relationship moving forward.

If you need additional support, consider reaching out to AERCS for professional couples counselling. Our experienced therapists can help you and your partner work through your challenges and build a stronger foundation together. Visit AERCS at <https://www.aercs.ca/couples-counselling/> to learn more and schedule an appointment today.

SCHEDULE AN APPOINTMENT

For additional information, or to begin the process of therapy at AERCS, please contact us to book a complementary 20 minute phone call consultation.



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AERCS - GLORIA SEGOVIA

Gloria Segovia, MSW, RSW, RP

In Person and Online

Gloria Segovia is a Dual-language (English and Spanish) Registered Psychotherapist and Registered Clinical Social Worker with over 15 years of experience. She is experienced in providing clinical social work and psychotherapy to children, youth, families, and couples. Gloria has worked in private practice as well as in the hospital sector, and supervises masters level social work students in their practicum through York University.



Gloria is an empathic and compassionate master's level social worker with over a decade of experience in supporting people through mental health and addiction challenges. She specializes in addiction and relapse prevention as well as couples counseling. Gloria is registered with the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers and the College of Registered Psychotherapy of Ontario, both in excellent standing.

As a child therapist, Gloria's focus is to help children and families overcome challenges and promote emotional wellness. With extensive experience working with children of all ages, she has developed a strong passion for empowering children to become confident, resilient, and happy individuals.

Using evidence-based therapies and techniques, such as play therapy, cognitive-behavioral therapy, emotion focused therapy and trauma-informed care, Gloria works with children to address a wide range of emotional and behavioral concerns, including anxiety, depression, ADHD, ADD, OCD, trauma, and behavioral problems. She believes in a holistic approach that includes collaboration with parents and caregivers to help them better understand their child's needs and develop effective parenting strategies.

Gloria is committed to providing a safe and supportive environment for children to express themselves and explore their feelings. She believes in a strengths-based approach that emphasizes a child's unique strengths and abilities and strives to create a positive and uplifting atmosphere where children can build their self-esteem and self-confidence.

Through ongoing professional development, Gloria stays up to date with the latest research and best practices in the field of child therapy, and is dedicated to providing the highest quality of care to every child and family I work with.



Gloria Segovia with a client in the AERCS Orangeville office.

Belief in Strength-Based

Gloria believes that we all have the ability to grow and change. This leads her to pay attention to client strengths, in addition to their challenges. It is her belief that therapy cannot only help clients address concerns and symptoms, but also assist them in developing greater connection and meaning in their lives.

Safe Environment

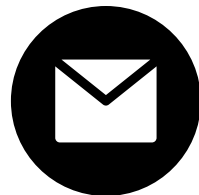
Gloria's experience in various roles has given her the opportunity to work with individuals of diverse backgrounds. As such, it is important to recognize and respect the full range of our differences. In doing so and in Gloria's therapeutic practice, she remains committed to fostering a safe environment which promotes equality, inclusion and diversity. As a therapist, it is Gloria's aim to foster an environment where you feel safe to unpack your vulnerabilities and emotional burdens.

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