

**How do you know if
you are about to cheat
on your spouse?**

Has Your Online
Friendship Crossed the
Line? Take This
Chatting Or Cheating
Quiz And Find Out

By Dr. Sheri Meyers

There's a new kind of infidelity that's destroying marriages and wreaking havoc among committed couples. It's called emotional sex.

We all know that infidelity is as old as civilization, but emotional sex is a new and more insidious kind of infidelity that was born out of the digital era of the 21st century.

It used to take a long time for affairs to develop. Not anymore. With the advent of social media and technology at our fingertips 24/7, the pathway to cheating is fast and practically unobstructed. It's easier than ever to meet others, stay constantly (and secretly) in contact, get intimate and cheat on our partners. That's why emotional sex is so much more potent: Instant access to our lover is in our pocket, our purse, or laptop. We don't even have to leave home to cheat. We can do it while the kids are playing in the backyard or our partner is downstairs watching TV or cooking dinner.

When we feel restless and dissatisfied with our relationships, instead of working on it, we become addicted to our electronic gadgets. They offer us the kind of instant gratification and validation that's not always easy to get from our partners. We turn to our laptops, tablets and cellphones for the kind of attention, stimulation and intimacy we crave. As a result, our relationships are suffering. Divorce rates are increasing, infidelity stats are rising and social media is increasingly to blame; Facebook, as an example, is reportedly being cited in over 30% of divorce cases as the cause of the breakup. More and more men and women are cheating, and much of the cheating starts -- or is being fueled -- online.

Has your online friendship crossed the line? Sure, it's easy to make excuses and deny what's happening by telling ourselves, "It's just innocent flirting," or "We're only Facebook friends," or "I'm just

texting with a co-worker, that's all!" How can you be sure that what you're doing is really innocent and harmless, or if you're slipping down the slippery slope toward emotional sex?

Take this 60-second reality check quiz from my book "Chatting or Cheating" to see whether it's just chatting or if you're really cheating. The key is whether the 3 S's are present: Shared intimacy, Secrecy and exclusion, or Sexual chemistry.

Are you...

Shared Intimacy

- Exchanging personal, intimate, and confidential information (and/or had offline contact) with an online "friend" that your partner doesn't know about?
- Giving more and more time, attention and emotional support to your "friend" and less to your partner at home?
- Beginning to emotionally or physically withdraw from your partner, preferring to spend time away, online, talking or texting with your "friend" vs. connecting with your partner?
- Constantly checking to see if your "friend" has made contact and/or are continually trying to come up with ways to connect and have contact?
- Feeling high and happy when connected with your "friend" and low and lonely when you've been disconnected for too long?

Secrecy & Exclusion

- Hiding your correspondence with your "friend" from your partner?

- Becoming secretive or evasive about your activities, changing your passwords, getting new anonymous email addresses, setting up fake profiles, joining a dating or cheating hook-up site?
- Avoiding getting into serious conversations with your partner?
- Pretending you're single when you're not?
- Spending a large amount of time (in person or online) talking, sharing, confiding with your friend and not telling your partner about it? Or worse, lying about who you are with?

Sexual Chemistry

- Finding yourself sexually and/or emotionally aroused when you think about or have contact with your "friend"?
- Sending or receiving flirtatious or sexy emails, texts, photos or videos?
- Doing anything sexual using your webcam (or your imagination)? Having sexy chats? Sharing your sexual fantasies? Masturbating and/or mutually masturbating?
- Imagining you are in bed with your "friend," while making love with your partner?
- Feeling cold when it comes to having sex with your partner? More interested in reading a book, Facebooking, watching TV, or talking to your "friend" then making love with your partner?

If you've answered "yes" to any of the above, blaring alarms should be ringing in your head, because you have definitely slid down the slippery slope of emotional sex and into

cheating. If this is indeed the case, you need to deal with the truth of what's really going on, fast.

Whether you believe it or not, you're putting your primary relationship at risk, and if you care about saving it, it's time to put on the brakes on the cyber friendship and start pouring the energy, time, and focus you've been giving to your "friend" back into your primary relationship.

If you've been seeking a thrill and fulfillment from outside sources, it usually means something is missing in your relationship with your partner. If that's the case, it's time to take a serious, hard look at what's really going on and fix it.

The cost of an affair -- be it cyber, emotional or physical -- can be devastating to a relationship. If you want to avoid a divorce, it's time to take the blinders off and turn off the gadgets. Start infusing your marriage with the affection, attention and appreciation you both need and deserve. It's never too late to turn things around, even if you've already crossed a line (or if your partner has). All it takes is a sincere willingness to open up, be honest, and learn to love, respect and treat each other as good friends again.

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