

# CURRENTS

HAMPTON UNION TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2007

## Affairs of the heart

Kate, wife of Jake for 10 years, feels emptiness on a daily basis. Along comes James who finds her exciting and interesting.

Chris, a father of three children, works at a stressful, demanding job. Along comes Sally, his administrative assistant, who takes care of his many work details. She makes him feel special and look good to his superiors.

Karen, a recently married woman, has a job that requires her to travel often, three or four days at a time. Along comes Henry who has a similar schedule. Since meeting him she feels less lonely.

Before meeting Henry, she despised the travel, now she enjoys the trips.

Ralph and Tricia have been friends with Jake and Susan for years. They have shared many activities and special events together. Just recently Ralph has started to feel a stronger connection with Susan, more than just friends, causing Tricia to become suspicious of their relationship.

### THE HOMEFRONT



CONSTANCE  
JOHANNESSEN

All of the people mentioned are married and are on a "slippery slope" toward an affair. About 50 percent of married individuals admit that they have engaged in an affair. In a survey of 4,300 people more than 90 percent reported that their affairs were based on emotional needs unmet in their existing relationship (source: Layton-Tholl). This information complements Dr. Sheila Glass's experience. Eighty-two percent of the 210 unfaithful partners she treated disclosed that they had an affair with someone who was, at first, "just a friend."

The intent of this article is not to determine whether affairs are good or bad, but rather to view the effects and healing process for those who are invested in rebuilding and recommitting to their partnership. To begin, for most people the experience of an extramarital affair is traumatic. The injured partner feels betrayed and the foundation of trust is shattered. The loss of the known relational "we" has been transformed into an unknown relationship, one with a splintered bond. "Who are we?" "I thought she/he loved me" "How did this happen?" "I'm in shock."

Psychologist Dr. Janis Abrams Spring has counseled numerous couples who have rebuilt their relationship following an affair. She defines three stages of healing. They are:

Stage I. Reacting to the affair or "Is what I am feeling normal?"

Stage II. Deciding whether to recommit or quit.

Stage III. Rebuilding your relationship.

In Stage I individuals feel quite disconnected or estranged from their partners as they absorb the

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