



***Tom Matlack wants to know: what constitutes infidelity? Looking at porn? Chatting with an old flame on Facebook? Guys weigh in.***

<http://goodmenproject.com/2010/11/20/are-you-faithful/>

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With the recent indiscretions of Brett Favre, Tiger Woods, and other famous philanderers, the question of what constitutes infidelity is on our minds. And, *surprise surprise*, men and women don't always agree. Does having a special friend of the opposite sex at work count as cheating? How about looking at porn? Striking up conversations with an old flame on Facebook? According to an ongoing infidelity poll of over 8,000 women conducted by *WomanSavers*, [69 percent](#) of women believe that viewing porn is emotional cheating. In a similar *WomanSavers* poll, [92 percent](#) of all women felt that online affairs constituted infidelity. (Granted, the readers at *WomanSavers*—a site where you can do a background check on a guy before going on a date—might not reflect women everywhere.)

But suffice it to say, there are many views on emotional fidelity. We would love to hear yours. As a guy, what do you think is important for a fulfilling relationship? What's OK and what's not? Do you have the urge to stray emotionally or physically? How do you deal with those urges?

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*This is an interesting gray area, since most men probably can't even define the term "emotional fidelity," and would be unlikely to engage in it unless they were being physically unfaithful at the same time. From the male*

*perspective, it seems like a package deal, so I'm not sure how useful it is to try and make a distinction between the two types of cheating.*

—**Tom Perrotta**, author of *The Abstinence Teacher and Little Children*

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*Our biology has its own imperatives and we can recognize and respect that without believing that those feelings represent our true self. It's similar to the way we behave when drunk; the old phrase is "in vino veritas," but we know today that the uninhibited self isn't the "true" self, but only another facet of our personality. The problem is when we think that that's who we really are, and either beat ourselves up over it or use it as an excuse to choose to behave badly. Desires are a product of our bodies, just like indigestion, and these momentary urges don't have to mean anything more than indigestion does—unless we make them more important through our thoughts or actions.*

—**Dylan Wittkower**, ethicist

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*One point of view that often gets dropped out this conversation is that of the growing number of Americans who are polyamorists. These people have solved the paradox of wanting both long-term committed relationships and multiple partners by being honest about it. Fidelity for polyamorists means being honest about their feelings for others, instead of trying not to have them. I have been in polyamorous relationships since 1967. I have been with the woman I am married to since 1961, and I have several other relationships that have lasted for decades.*

—**"Silenus"**

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*If women want men to be cool and in control of ourselves, to tamp down on and corral the intensity of our desires, that costs something: a measure of warmth and openness that we bring to any relationship; it also potentially stokes a toxic brew of resentment.*

—**Donald Unger**, lecturer, Massachusetts Institute of Technology and author of *Men Can: The Changing Image & Reality of Fatherhood in America*.

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*I hear about this every night on my radio show. Emotional fidelity is something men can do but his needs must be met—just like a woman. When a man is not getting what he needs, he may start looking elsewhere for someone to take care of his desires. If we have a good lady at home, then*

*we're going to resist any sort of temptation. And it's easy for a woman to keep a man interested by being a true friend who's got his back, providing support, and tearing it up in that bedroom. Simple.*

— **Jerry “The Loverman” Wade**, syndicated Talk Show Host

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*If a man's emotional needs are addressed, he feels respected and that elicits a bonding trust within him toward the woman who best addresses his particular combination of emotional needs. His emotional needs would include protecting his reputation, giving him his quiet time, and supporting the lifestyle he works to achieve. Depending on what is most important to him as an individual, even the most notorious player can be emotionally faithful if his emotional needs are met. One of the differences between men and women is the emotional impact that the act of sex has on the genders. For women, the act of sex can potentially address most of her emotional needs. For men, the act of sex IS an emotional need; thus, since it only addresses one emotional need, great sex alone will not make a man emotionally faithful.*

— **Frank Kermit**, relationship coach

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*As a man you have to be willing to put all cards on the table. I believe a relationship works when both partners inspire each other, as well as feel fully expressed. If someone in the relationship is stifled or unhappy with anything else in his or her life, it will chip away at the relationship. Also, if you're not getting what you want in a relationship, don't be afraid to say: “I love you, but I'm not happy in this relationship.” Honesty is key.*

— **Jason Silva**, founding producer/host for Current TV

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*To suggest that men cannot be faithful, when sixty percent of married women cheat on their husbands, is preposterous. In addition, women lie about their fertility and use of birth control (which is maternity fraud), as well as the actual men who fathered their children (paternity fraud). AshleyMadison.com, a noted dating website for married people, reports a significantly increased enrollment of women the day after Mother's Day. Fidelity has nothing to do with gender and everything to do with integrity, maturity, and stability.*

— **Marc H. Rudov**, author and Fox News personality



*Emotional infidelity is a lot harder to quantify than sexual infidelity. Where's the line? What if it's only one-sided? I bet a lot of guys think of it as a loophole in cheating—"Hey, we're not touching." But I bet that if men imagined their wives emotionally straying, they'd be as alarmed, if not more so, than if their wives slept with other men. You know damn well if your wife is lying in your shared bed or someone else's, but you'll never really know where her emotions point.*

*Communicate. Speak up when something is wrong. If a relationship is healthy, you won't need to look outside of it to feel loved. And include. If you're growing close to some woman—someone at work, or someone you met through a friend, or whatever—invite her (and her boyfriend/husband) to join you and your girlfriend/wife for dinner, whatever. Bring a relationship out into the open, and make it part of your public life, and it no longer feels like a secret space to stash your feelings.*

—**Jason Feifer**, editor, *Men's Health*



*A man must be emotionally present to his wife in order for emotional faithfulness (whatever that might actually be) to even be an option. If a man is indeed emotionally present, then he can be truthful—to himself and to her. It seems to me that any type of "emotional infidelity" must be a result of emotional disconnection (absence) with one's spouse. I suspect that if a man is truly emotionally present and authentic, then the whole issue of emotional faithfulness just sort of dissolves. If he is emotionally present, then he is truly in the relationship. The marriage is alive.*

—**Justice Marshall**, creator of The Hero Principles, [theheroprinciples.com](http://theheroprinciples.com)



*Many men have no concept of being emotionally faithful—they feel that physical faithfulness is enough of a "sacrifice." While a man would flip out if his wife was 'emotionally' involved with another man, he often do not recognize or care that he is emotionally involved with another woman. Many men also think that having a relationship with another woman that does not involve sex; of course it usually ends up involving sex of one sort or another, but is rather a way of 'sharing feelings' is somehow OK. Men can be anything they choose to be—it is making the right choices that makes a good man.*

—**Pablo Solomon**, artist



*The best way to explain emotional fidelity is to explain what constitutes emotional infidelity. Technically, this is when you choose not to or you're unable to share your emotions, thoughts and feelings with your significant other, yet you share them with someone else of the opposite sex. Although you're not having a physical affair, you are being emotionally intimate with someone other than your partner.*

*Emotional infidelity is not simple flirting. But, it can begin with flirting, as that is how many relationships develop. That casual banter with a co-worker may turn in to flirting and something more serious and emotionally involved as time goes on.*

*To be emotionally faithful is to not betray your partner. You know your partner better than anyone else; what her needs are and how she feels about everything. If you're sharing special thoughts, feelings, ambitions or dreams with someone other than her, then you are knowingly being emotionally unfaithful and trust has been broken.*

—**Paul Falzone**, Chief Executive Officer eLove.com

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*I always liked the saying, “The definition of character ... is doing the right thing when no one is watching.” I think this applies to relationships as well.*

—**Ted Wayman**, news anchor

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*Men fall in love with women other than their spouses all the time, and I would bet it happens in reverse. It doesn't have to be a big deal: a crush, a friendship that flows and then ebbs in intensity. This is harmless if key lines aren't crossed. That's the crux of it for me and my wife: defining what those key lines are. We've decided they are: sex, revealing personal secrets/exposing some sacred trusts, and allowing too much time to be taken away from our relationship. They are NOT flirtation or infatuation or attraction. I mean, come on: Cupid only shot his arrow through my heart—or my wife's heart—once in our lifetimes? That seems pretty naïve to me. Better to admit the fact that a wide variety of people are going to appeal over the decades of a committed relationship, and focus on what the lines are that are not to be crossed.*

—**Stuart Horwitz**, senior editor, BookArchitecture.com

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*It seems to me that the journey to emotional honesty is first a journey to understand one's feelings. If I understand what I am feeling, how my fears color my feelings, then I may have a shot at being emotionally honest—if I can find the words and the courage to express them.*

—**Joe D’Ariggo**, business executive

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*Infidelity isn’t a “capacity” problem; it’s a ‘choice’ problem: Do I choose to grow up, be responsible, and embrace the requirements for loving rather than remain detached and ungrounded as a “flying boy” in search of Never Never Land? Granted, there’s a complex relationship between fidelity to one versus desire of another. What is undeniably in our nature is a lust for novelty, some modicum of freedom and separateness while in passionate pursuit of its polarity—belonging to some “one” and committing to a person that expands our sense of ourselves.*

*Infidelity is not so much about the sex as it is about the deception, both toward our self and our partners. So let’s get honest. Men have the ability to be both intimate and faithful. It’s not that men are commitment phobic; it’s that they’re frightened by the requirements for loving someone because it asks us to evolve. Are we willing to become who we must to live up to what love and a real relationship demand of us? It’s time to choose.*

—**Dr. Jay Ferraro**, licensed clinician and relationship expert

## **About Tom Matlack**

Tom Matlack is just foolish enough to believe he is a decent man. He has a 16-year-old daughter and 14- and 5-year-old sons. His wife, Elena, is the love of his life