

## CHECKLIST FOR WOMEN

Because lies, manipulation, gas lighting, emotional abuse, and narcissistic traits are common for users of pornography, **begin to think about what it means to be emotionally safe.** Consider sharing your situation with safe people. Someone who tells you outright or implies that there is something (anything) you can do to change your husband or “help” him *is not safe.* “What did you do to set him off?” is a typical statement from an unsafe person.

- **Make a daily self-care plan-** . *Start small! Step outside and take a breath of fresh air. Get the nutrition and sleep you need. Focus on meeting your own emotional, physical, mental and spiritual needs — and allow yourself to receive love, validation, and answers from safe and supportive people.*
- **Schedule an appointment with your gynecologist, OB or midwife** - *to be tested for all STD’s, even if your husband tells you he’s only used pornography. Request a full-panel STD workup every year with your annual physical. We understand that this step can be emotionally overwhelming or horrifying. However, it will provide you with objective, direct, and potentially life-saving information.*
- **Read / listen to the following books & podcasts:**
  - ❖ *Your Sexually Addicted Spouse by Barbara Steffens & Marsha Means*
  - ❖ *Why Does He Do That? by Lundy Bancroft*
  - ❖ *When Love Goes Wrong: What To Do When You Can’t Do Anything Right by Ann Jones*
- **Determine your level of emotional safety.** -*Establish a support network by identifying the safe people upon whom you can rely. Schedule*

*a support call with Mel de Bruyn Inc. , a Betrayal Trauma Recovery Coach who can help you to determine your next steps, based on your individual situation. If possible, join Mel de Bruyn Inc. on facebook to find out about more resources on offer.*

- **Avoid attempting to identify the cause of your husband's problematic behaviors.** *-As you lean into your recovery from betrayal trauma, you'll likely find that understanding the source of his behaviors (shame, trauma, personality disorders, addiction, etc) don't make a significant difference in how those behaviors affect you—nor will it empower you to change, undo or minimize its traumatic impact. For too many women, seeking to “help” your husband figure out the source of his behaviors while those behaviors are still present only serves to keep you in harm's way.*
- **Move toward establishing an “emotionally safe home zone” as soon as possible.** *-Unlike seeking to understand the source of your husband's behaviors, this priority goal actually WILL make a big difference! In most cases, this means needing your husband to become 100% honest with you and everyone else within his community of support, accountability to stop his problematic behaviors completely, and to begin making restitution to those whom he has harmed — beginning with you and your children. If/when your husband can make and maintain those changes without resentment toward you, that's a sign that he is capable of sharing your “emotionally safe home zone.”*
- **Recognize that couples therapy is rarely the right place to start.** *Here at Mel de Bruyn Inc., we recognize that, in cases involving porn use and abuse, there are NOT “two sides of the story” — there is only truth. We know that **pornography use is NOT a “couple's issue”**. **Emotional abuse is NOT a “communication breakdown”**. Too many professionals prematurely attempt to provide couple therapy without first holding your husband accountable for his porn use and abuse, thereby minimizing the seriousness of his behavior. In the interim, consider communicating with*

*your husband's therapist or coach only to report specific violations of problematic behaviors and recovery commitments.*

- **Begin to think about boundaries that support your need for emotionally safe space,**
  - ❖ *even temporarily. Though your situation is unique to you, many betrayal trauma survivors need boundaries such as:*
  - ❖ *Abstain from sex*
  - ❖ *Detach from abusive and manipulative conversations*
  - ❖ *Sleep / live in separate parts of the house*
  - ❖ *Explore a temporary or indefinite separation*
  - ❖ *Choose to limit or eliminate all contact for a period of time*
  - ❖ *Allocate time, energy and money toward your own healing, not just toward his recovery*
  - ❖ *Request a therapeutic polygraph, ideally in conjunction with a complete therapeutic disclosure*
  - ❖ *\*Mel de Bruyn Inc. does not advocate for divorce. Mel de Bruyn Inc.'s aim is to help clients establish emotional safety for yourselves and your children, in whatever form that takes.*
- **Set appropriate boundaries while waiting for your husband to show these signs of recovery:**
  - ❖ *Honesty and humility*
  - ❖ *A willingness to meet your needs without anger, resentment, or retaliation*
  - ❖ *Accountability for his secret infidelity (including lies, porn use, and masturbation) and emotional abuse (meaning deception, manipulation, gaslighting)*
  - ❖ *Clear restitution for his lies, infidelity, and abuse*

- **Be gentle with yourself.** -As a betrayal trauma survivor, recognize that even your “baby steps” count! When the pain is intense and survival feels overwhelming, remember that an entire army of other women have survived this experience—and YOU WILL TOO. We know, because we’ve been there, and we believe in you!

- Finally

- **get safe.**

- **get stable.**

- **feel peace**

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