

Secrets

A secret is something that is kept or meant to be kept unknown or unseen by others. Margret Atwood the author of *The Blind Assassin* stated "the best way of keeping a secret is to pretend there isn't one." In our therapy sessions with couples we often hear a sense of distrust and recognize chronic poor communication



between the two. Bruce and Mary encountered problems during their marriage that created the inability to feel comfortable sharing feelings and being open.

The couple had been married for 17 years and have three children ages 9, 12, and 14. Bruce was an administrator for an area high school and Mary was a respected supervisor for an insurance company. Bruce was concerned about past problems that had threatened the marriage but because of his commitment to family, he stayed. However, he attributed his high blood pressure and other health issues to secrets within the marriage.

Bruce said that his wife had no remorse for having an affair earlier in their marriage and he suspected she was involved with someone currently. After seeing a text message from Mary's cell phone, his suspicion was verified. The couple decided to search for marriage counseling. During our initial session Mary insisted that she only talked to the men and had not violated their marriage vows. Our session was intense with accusations of lying and infidelity flying.

"I want to keep my family together" insisted Bruce, "but I want my wife to be honest and willing to change."

Adding fuel to the fire, during the reconciliation process, Mary left the home for one day. She returned during the evening, but Bruce did not know she went to a hotel and paid for the room with a credit card until the bill came, three weeks later. Mary said she needed some time because she was stressed and she went to a hotel to rest for a few hours alone. Bruce did not believe she was in the hotel alone.

Bruce wanted healing but Mary could not change the behavior of keeping secrets within the marriage. George Orwell the political writer stated "If you wanted to keep a secret you must hide it from yourself". Mary was certainly hiding from even herself. Even during her efforts to be honest and open she could not share her secrets. She was living a double life. She wanted to be married but she also wanted other relationships.

Eventually Mary's secret life was exposed. She had an ongoing relationship with her son's football coach, who also was a friend to Bruce. Once again, the evidence was found on Mary's cell phone where she had recorded nude pictures and text messages that were explicit and devastating to her husband and children. Bruce asked Mary to leave the home and he contacted the wives of the coach and another man who also had a relationship with Mary. The secrets destroyed Mary's family as well as the families of the other men who

had shared a secret with Mary.

Bruce has started proceedings for divorce. We must realize that secrets are like a vine growing around a post. The vine grows to the top and then it winds down again, back to its beginning.