

# Myron Doc Downing PhD

Author | Therapist | Coach | Seminar Leader | BA, MA, PhD

## **BEING PUNISHED FOR AN AFFAIR?**

So, you had an affair, NOW WHAT? Your mate will not let go of it and you are tired of being punished.

**The question is, how long can you take the steady dripping of the faucet?** The silent treatment? The emotional withdrawing? The outright accusations, questions, and suspicion every time you turn around? And, the angry outbursts that seem to come out of nowhere, for no reason.

**Half of the problem is yours. That is the half that you have power over.** In every relationship conflict, there are two people who are at fault. That's the good news, because you have the power to change yourself and do things differently. You can change the direction this relationship is going.

**You cannot change the other person.** But, when you change yourself, the other person is left to decide whether they want to change, or they want to get out.

**To make no decision, is a decision** to keep things the way they are! To make no decision is to decide to stay in the dysfunctional relationship. To do nothing, is doing something.

**The problem is not that the other person should change.** It is **how are you keeping yourself in this dysfunctional and emotionally punishing relationship?** What are you telling yourself, that keeps you coming back for more abuse?

One message that you may be giving yourself is that you are guilty. **"I am the one that screwed up; I deserve to be punished."** Guilt is a deadly emotion!

## **Whenever you feel guilty, You will set yourself up to be punished.**

You are setting your mate up to punish you. In situations like this, the question is, “When will you have been punished enough?” Is it going to take another month, two months, two years, the rest of your life before you have been punished enough?

**It is not about your mate forgiving you, it is about you forgiving yourself!** Would you allow yourself to be punished if you were not guilty?

When it comes to allowing yourself to be punished, it has been said, “If you keep doing what you’ve always done, you will keep getting what you’ve always gotten.” What was your motivation for having the affair? Were you feeling unloved and not appreciated?

**Are you willing to risk sharing your feelings with your mate?** “I am not feeling loved or cared about by you. And, it doesn’t seem that you feel like I care our love you. Would you be willing to share how you feel if I do not interrupt and argue with you?”

**Once you have figured out how you created the affair and what you will do differently next time, do you need to feel guilty?** That is the question you need to answer for yourself. No one else can give you that answer.

Nothing is a failure if you learn from it. What did you learn from your affair? Beautiful women are a temptation you can’t resist? Your mate needs to pay more attention to you so that you don’t “stray?” **If someone, or something can do it to you, then you will always be the victim**, subject to having serial affairs. That will probably not work for you in the long run.

**O**r, did you learn that you need to express your frustration and anger to your mate in loving, supportive and constructive ways? And, did you learn that the two of you need to learn how to do problem solving without either one of you losing?

Now, look at the other side of this equation. What is your abusers' need to keep punishing you? First, their need to punish you has NOTHING to do with the affair! And, the affair says nothing about you. **It is your mate's problem! It is his/her trust problem.**

What I often hear from the one doing the punishing is, **"I can't trust him/her anymore."** The real issue is the first three words, **I can't trust...**

**One of the main purposes of punishing someone is to protect yourself from disappointment,** and, to keep that person from getting close enough to you to hurt you. If they get too close to you, the punishing mate is afraid that they might get emotionally hurt again.

**By punishing you, they are trying to protect themselves from future disappointment and emotional pain.** The lie they tell themselves is, *"I can never stand to be hurt that way again."* If someone has been hurt so much emotionally that they hurt physically, and lived through it, it just **proves how strong they are, not how weak they are.**

If you allow them to continue to punish you, then you are reinforcing their illusion of being weak and prolonging your punishment.

**The punisher, by focusing on the person that they "will" not trust, makes him/herself the victim** and the dominating and controlling force in the relationship. "You have to prove to me that you will never do 'that' again." How do you go about proving such a thing?

The person not willing to trust will always find "evidence" to prove that "you cannot be trusted."

**The person doing the punishing, at some level, knows that they are not letting you get close to them.** As a result, they have even more insecurity and fear that you will "stray" again. This is the **guarantee that the relationship will never be as close and intimate as it once was.** And, that both of you will be unhappy and withdraw from each other even more.

There is always a choice! To make no decision is the decision to stay in the relationship and continue doing what you've always done. There is no right

or wrong to how your relationship should be. The question is, what are you willing to risk to get the relationship back?

**The correct answer** is. . . . Everything including divorce if it comes to that.

**Without risk, there is no gain.**

If you are being punished over a past affair, there are several ways of responding. One is to leave. The other is to start working on your relationship.

**Here are some things you can say to help get the relationship going again:**

- 1) "Honey, I understand and accept your anger. You have a right to be angry at me. When I had the affair, I took away your feeling of safety with me.
- 2) However, it seems to me that because of your fear of being hurt again, your anger is pushing me farther away from you."
- 2) "That is not acceptable!"
- 3) Are we willing to go to counseling to learn new ways of dealing with our anger? (What are **we** willing to do differently?)
- 4) Are both of us willing to accept the possibility of being emotionally hurt again?
- 5) "If you continue to punish me, I will accept your decision that you no longer want the relationship with me. And, I will start looking for an attorney."

In taking this last step, there are several questions that you should be asking yourself:

- Am I capable of living by myself?
- Do I deserve better?
- Do I believe that there are other relationships that could be as good or better out there?
- What will I do differently in my next relationship?
- What am I teaching my children about relationships?

**Emotional pain is not terminal.**

If you **allow** yourself to continue to be punished, you are giving the message that it is OK; you deserve it!

Yes, this is about both of you learning to express your anger in constructive ways. If you choose this option, be sure to find a therapist who is not afraid of their own anger or yours and your mate's anger. Remember, that the opposite of love is not hate or anger, it is indifference, not caring.

In my website, [DocDPhD.com](http://DocDPhD.com), under Handouts, you will find the handout entitled **Tell Me Your Anger**. Share this with your mate and talk to him/her to see if they would be willing to do this exercise with you. Another option is you can ask your therapist if they would walk you through the exercise making sure that you both follow the rules.

You can contact Dr. Downing at:  
Email: [DocDowning103@Gmail](mailto:DocDowning103@Gmail)  
Website: [DocPhD.com](http://DocPhD.com)