

# A view of adultery and its lasting effects philosophy essay



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This essay is about adultery and some of the things that happens to people who are the victims of it. By victims, I not only mean the spouse(s) who was being cheated on, but I am also referring to the children who are in the family unit as well. I am focusing on the fact that adultery is a selfish and very horrible act that can literally destroy a family. Along with the family being destroyed, the lives of each individual person involved are destroyed as well. The victims of adultery will face many challenges, emotionally and mentally, that could result in some very long term effects. My argument is that adultery does so much damage to a person's emotional and mental well being, that it should be treated as an abusive crime.

### Adultery Is Abuse

Adultery, to some, may not be that big of a deal, especially if they are the ones committing it. But what happens when a spouse or a partner's whole entire world falls down around them after they learn their partner has committed adultery? Adultery is a selfish and very cruel act that happens every day. It not only ruins marriages, but it can literally destroy the lives of everyone around the adulterer. Someone who is a victim of adultery can be presented to large amounts of downfalls in their life. Emotional and mental abuses are two of the major things they will go through. If the case is bad enough, and the person can't take mentally and emotionally dealing with what their spouse has done, adultery can even lead to death. Its mind boggling that such a selfish act can bring so much pain to so many lives, but it does to thousands of people every day. Even more disturbing, the adulterer is rarely punished or held accountable for all the pain their actions

inflicted on so many other lives. Adultery is nothing less than abuse, and should be treated as such in a court of law.

Maybe you have seen it happen, or perhaps you have even been a victim of adultery. It is nothing no one person should take lightly. It creeps into the marriage

and eats away at the very core of the once blessed union. It can effect even the

strongest of couples and literally tear families apart at the seams. David M. Buss and

Todd K. Shackelford (1997) showed that “ despite its destructive impact, infidelities are

estimated conservatively to occur in about half of all marriages.” (Buss D. M. &

Shackelford T. K., 1997 p. 216). It can definitely be shocking and scary to hear that

adultery can occur in almost half of all marriages. This can lead one to believe that

marriages, as well as issues pertaining to adultery, are not being taken very seriously in

America anymore. With this being said, it's sad to see exactly how many peoples' lives

are ruined over the blatant lack of respect the general population has for marriages and

staying true to their partner. Adultery in itself can affect every single person that is

exposed to it or around it, especially the children. The effects of adultery can even

ripple to the non-immediate family and friends. Out of everyone adultery effects, the

spouse or spouses' who are having adultery committed against them as well as the

children who are involved with the families will sadly take the brunt of the pain adultery

has to offer.

Ruth K. Westheimer and Pierre A Lehu (2007) proclaimed " adultery is probably

the single-most cited grounds for divorce." (Westheimer, R. K. & Lehu, P. A., 2007 p.

332s) Not only will the family have to deal with the tragic act of adultery once it is

brought to the light, but they will also have to deal with the horrible divorce they may

face if they choose to go through it. Divorce in itself, for whatever reason, can cause

enormous amounts of negative impact on the whole entire family, including the children.

Alison Clarke-Stewart and Cornelia Brentano (2006) suggested that “ compared with

children in intact families, children from divorced families are more likely to have

conduct problems and show signs of psychological maladjustment; they have lower

academic achievement, more social difficulties, and poorer self-esteem.”(Clarke-Stewart

& Brentano 2006 p. 107) This can also stay with the children far beyond the point of

reaching adulthood.

Clarke-Stewart & Brentano (2006) pointed out:

“ In one study of college students, researchers found that those who had experienced

their parents’ divorce reported distressing feelings, beliefs, and experiences.

These

were resilient young people and the divorce had occurred years earlier, but still they

harbored painful feelings.” (p. 108)

If children live with one parent full time, they also have a chance of having less

and less contact with the other parent as time goes by. This can also cause a great

deal of strain on a child, as well as feelings of abandonment and possibly hate. As

mentioned earlier, children will only have to deal with these issues if their parent’s

decide to get a divorce after the adultery is found out. Unfortunately, the effects of

divorce on children are only part of the problem when adultery is involved.

Adultery

can cause some very serious effects to children without divorce even being present.

Children of all ages, even adult children, can be affected by adultery.

Children, for the most part, look to their parents for guidance and as role models.

Children also tend to put most of their trust into their parents, trust adultery can easily

break. Watching their parents go through the strains of adultery will most likely affect

them and cause enormous amounts of strain on their own life. They will be in the front

row seat watching the tension, stress, arguments, grief, sadness, loss and despair. The

parent's could try and get the children to take sides, making them feel torn inside and

also making their lives seem completely out of control. Some parents who commit

adultery can even tell the secret of their actions to their children, making them promise

not to tell the other spouse, causing the children to be filled with even more pain and

despair as they don't know which direction to turn. The spouse isn't the only person

to feel betrayed, as the children will feel it too once they find out about the adultery.

Children who are a product of adultery will, without a doubt, be negatively affected

as well. In the worst circumstances, pregnancy due to adultery can even result in

neonaticide. Nicky A. Jackson (2007) describes neonaticide as " the killing of a newborn

within twenty-four hours of birth." (Jackson, N. A., 2007 p. 568) Jackson also states " the

most common reason for neonaticide among married women is extramarital paternity."

(Jackson, N. A., 2007 p. 568) If these children are carried to term, they still have a

chance of being born surrounded by controversy. They may immediately be given up



for adoption or have their mother deny them information about their real father. The

worst of these scenarios is having another man raise them, only to find out years later

the man they knew their whole life as their father was never their real father.

This can

lead to emotional problems for the child, depression, feeling of rejection and difficulty

having healthy relationships in their life, among many other things.

Emotional abuse is

definitely presented to the family, whether intentionally or not, from adultery.

Unfortunately, there are still many other things that adultery negatively impacts families

with.

Physical health is something else adultery affects. People who are in a

marriage trust their spouse enough to have unprotected sex with them. The natural

thought for married couples is the fact they don't have to worry about catching any kind

of sexually transmitted diseases from them. Even if the adulterer is careful in using

protection, it is still not 100% effective. Every day, an unsuspecting spouse takes a trip

to the doctor's office because they haven't been feeling very well, or have a sudden

rash appear on them. And every day, there is an unsuspecting spouse who receives

the news that they have a disease. Some even get told that the disease they have is

incurable. Jennifer S. Hirsch et al.(2009) even stated " for most women in the world,

their biggest risk of HIV infection comes from having sex with their husbands." (Hirsch,

J. S. et al., 2009 p. vii) Married men, who are the victims of adultery, are no doubt

unknowingly catching these diseases as well. To find out you have a disease that you

caught from the only person you have had sexual contact with, and to realize they had

to catch it from most likely having sexual contact with someone else can be described

as nothing less than devastating. Fortunately, a lot of people don't find out about

adultery from being diagnosed with a disease. Even with no disease present, the

mental and emotional anguish people go through as a result of finding out their spouse

has committed adultery is still the same.

Someone finding out their spouse has been cheating on them will go

through a plethora of negative emotions and feelings. Paul R Peluso (2007) says

“ finding out that your spouse had an affair can be a devastating experience for the

noninvolved partner. The revelation of an affair ushers in a host of emotions including

rage, sorrow, shock, and shame.” (Peulso, P. R., 2007 p. 63) Post Traumatic Stress

Disorder (PTSD) is unfortunately something else the victim of a cheating spouse can go

through. Mark A. Whisman and Tina P. Wagers(2005) found that “ major depressive

episodes and post- traumatic stress disorder are the most common diagnoses found in

noninvolved partners.”(Whisman, M. A. & Wagers, T. P., 2005 p. 61) It is horrific to think

that people are going through so much trauma because of adultery, that they are

actually catching a horrible psychological illness in return. PTSD’s symptoms include

flashbacks, depression, anger, nightmares, and anxiety. This condition is strong

enough to disrupt everyday life for someone, and can also last for years. The onset of

PTSD can also cause people to turn to drugs and/or alcohol. Even if PTSD is not

present, people who are the victims of adultery will most likely deal with severe

emotional and psychological stress.

Michael Clanchy and Chris Trotter (1999) stated:

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In many instances, betrayal through infidelity can be very close to what we term

domestic violence. Unfaithful parties are often insensitive to the pain they inflict, as

are perpetrators of physical and psychological violence. Often the faithful party is

as vulnerable and dependent as the victim of repeated bashing.

Furthermore, the

[behavior] patterns of ongoing infidelity often parallel the well-documented stages

in the cycle of domestic abuse. (Clanchy, M., & Trotter, C., 1999 para. 4)

Unfortunately, adultery can go even further than just the dilapidation of lives. The

most horrid outcome from adultery is death. Adultery can, without a doubt,

hurt people enough to take other people's lives. There is not one life that should be

taken or lost over adultery; sadly enough, innocent lives are lost due to adultery every

day. Death can occur by suicide, murder, or even murder/suicide cases.

There are

even instances where murder will involve the children of the family as well.

Two of the

more disturbing instances that involve the children are spousal revenge  
filicide and

paternal filicide. Spousal filicide, according to Jackson (2007) is “ parents  
who murder

their offspring in a deliberate attempt to make their spouses suffer. Infidelity,  
either

proved or suspected, is a common precipitant for spousal-revenge filicide.”  
(Jackson,

N. A., 2007 p569) The second is paternal filicide which Jackson (2007)  
explains as

“[husbands] killing the child’s mother as well as the child, often followed by  
the

[husbands] suicide.” (Jackson, N. A., 2007 p569) It is clear that a  
heartbreaking act,

such as adultery, will push people over the edge and do things they normally  
would

never do. As a matter of fact, Richard Worth and John L. French (2008)  
claimed “ among

the oldest motives for murder are passion and jealousy.” (Worth, R & French, J. L.,

2008 p34)

Even though a spouse may commit murder against their spouse, their spouse’s

lover, or perhaps both, they still have a chance of only getting charged with voluntary

manslaughter. This is by no means justifiable to take other peoples’ lives; however, it

only goes to show exactly how much adultery can damage someone’s emotions, as well

as their mental state. According to Jim Silver (2008) “ if a killing that would otherwise be

murder is committed in response to sufficient provocation, it is voluntary manslaughter

and is usually punished less severely than murder.” (Silver, J., 2008 p30)

Silver (2008) also adds:

“ Over time, most jurisdictions developed rules about what is sufficiently provocative to cause a reasonable person to lose control of his passions.

The standard ones included things like a serious physical attack or a husband

finding his wife committing adultery.”(Silver, J., 2008 p31)

As you can see, adultery is as sufficiently provocative as a serious physical attack, thus

allowing someone to act in such a way that they can take lives away from other people.

“ Crimes of passion” cases like these are heard in court every single day in the United

States. One of the most popular cases like this is with Eric McLean from Tennessee.

According to Yvette Martinez (2008), McLean shot and murdered his wife’s boyfriend,

but only received a conviction of reckless homicide, which is only punishable by up to 4

years in prison. McLean only served 47 days in prison and was allowed to serve the

rest of his sentence on parole. (Martinez, Y., 2009) The victims in this case were both



McLean, who was having adultery committed against him as well as the boyfriend of the

spouse who was shot at close range and murdered by McLean. The lives of both of

these men, as well as the two children McLean and his wife shared and the family of the

teenage boyfriend, were severely disrupted by McLean's wife's selfish choice of

committing adultery. The young boyfriend did not have to lose his life nor did his family

have to lose their son, while McLean should not have to live the rest of his life with a

death of another person on his shoulders. Sadly enough, the one person who brought

all of the pain and sorrow to both of these families (McLean's wife), did not get punished

at all.

In conclusion, given all the emotional and mental anguish as well as the severe

disruption of lives adultery causes, it should be treated as nothing less than abuse.

Laws pertaining to adultery do exist in some states, but are rarely enforced.

You

probably never even heard of anyone going to jail simply because they committed

adultery, but you do hear people of going to jail over abuse. It is my argument, that

people who make a conscience decision to step outside their marriage and commit this

selfish act, should be punished. There are laws pertaining to the lover of the spouse

committing adultery, specifically alienation of affection, that allows the victimized spouse

to sue the lover; however, sometimes too much damage is done, and no amount of

money can possibly fix it. Sadly enough, people's lives can be lost over this situation.

If bloodshed is cast, and people die over this type of situation, it should be the adulterer

who is charged with the murderer(s) as well. The lives of people, especially family,

should never be treated with such disrespect. Clanchy and Trotter (1999) claimed

“ infidelity can be as devastating as a violent attack.” (Clanchy, M., &Trotter, C., 1999

para. 8) There is nothing truer than that statement. Adultery is a crime against people

and their emotions as well as their mental well being, and should be treated as violence.

It is time this crime is taken seriously; the people who commit it are thoroughly

punished, and lives are no longer ripped to shreds by adultery.