

EMOTIONAL RESTITUTION LETTER EXAMPLE 1

NAMES REDACTED AND PERSONAL INFORMATION CHANGED

My Intention

I am writing this letter of restitution to step up and take full ownership and accountability for abusing you emotionally, betraying your trust, taking away your agency, exposing you to health risks, and wrecking our marriage of 50+ years and our relationship of 56 years. I want to show you that I realize the ways in which you were devastated emotionally and physically by my actions, and I will tell you the ways that I will help you to heal and for us to build a new relationship.

While I cannot change the past, I can act to ensure an authentic relationship for us going forward. To that end I pledge my full commitment to my continued recovery and more importantly, to you and to healing our relationship. With my heart and soul, I love you and will spend the rest of my days helping you heal. Earning your trust and together building a marriage you can depend on: emotionally authentic, physically comfortable, and spiritually strong.

I hope that through my words and actions you can see and feel that this letter comes from my heart and soul.

I own what I did:

Before I go on, I want to state in the strongest terms, so you have no doubt in your mind: my sex addiction had nothing to do with you or anything you did. I made the choices, and I am the only one that is responsible for those choices and causing this carnage.

How I understand Impacted You after D-Day

On January 10, 2024, I disclosed to you, without forewarning or shielding you, that I had been seeing prostitutes and was in legal jeopardy. I traumatized you to your core. I shattered not only your faith and trust in me, but I also blew up the marriage you thought we had, and took a sledgehammer to the memories and experiences you thought we had together. It was as if we had been climbing a mountain together for 50 years and you knew the trail wasn't always easy, but we had climbed this far. And then, when you weren't looking, I pushed you off a cliff. Then I followed with an avalanche of boulders that crushed you as you started to realize what happened.

Starting on that day you were left on your own to get out from under the landslide and try to heal. A few months later, as you started to get your footing, the therapeutic

disclosure was a second landslide, way bigger than the first, revealing the facts: the full extent and scope of my betrayal. Throughout the past year rocks and boulders have continued to fall, seemingly at random, as you tried to heal. Later, I saw and felt how sad and dysregulated you were as you wrote the impact letter and how it affected you, constantly pushing you back into the pit. Then, on February 21st, the kid's disclosure unleashed another rockfall, reopening old scars and cutting new ones.

Since January 10 I have worked on my recovery and you have been "feeling to heal". For the first few months it must have been excruciatingly hard for you because I was working on learning empathy and could not be as supportive as you needed or wanted. As I learned how to be empathetic, it made me realize how difficult a partner I must have been for all the years that you have known me. How I was selfish and so often thinking about myself first rather than us.

Thank you for staying with the healing process and giving me the opportunity to become more authentic and vulnerable.

In the past year I have observed, experienced, and felt your pain of the betrayal, your loneliness and feelings of abandonment, your confusion about how my addiction could appear so long into our marriage, anger at what I have put you through, grief over the loss of our marriage, anxiety about what the future holds, hate that I took away your agency, fear about how others will respond to hearing what I did to you, sadness about the loss of good memories, humiliation that I played you like a fool, rage that could treat you so badly after so many years, numbness because it is all so overwhelming, depression, disgust for the behaviors I engaged in, embarrassment for what others would think of you still being with me, emptiness over my not being there for you, and finally frustration with the timeliness and quality of my lawyer's managing of my case. These feelings are there because I traumatized you. All these feelings are normal, valid responses given what I did to you.

Even before hearing your impact letter, and the details of how what I did affected you, I saw and experienced first-hand the physical, emotional, and spiritual damage I caused.

In the first week, before I went to rehab, I saw you in shock, moving from sadness to anger to emptiness as you started to digest what I had done. In those early days I said unnecessarily explicit, egocentric, and callous things that could not be unsaid: These added to your trauma in the moment. I was aware that you were living in a dream, a nightmare, that left you feeling alone, sad, angry, and disrespected. Then I left for rehab leaving you to cope with all of that by yourself -I can imagine how hard that must have been for you to have to navigate those first few weeks on your own with no one to

share your pain with. Waking up alone, not having anyone to share your agony with, trying to get through each day while overwhelmed by what I had done to betray you.

After I returned and we were “following the process”, the waves came again and again, overwhelming you. In those first few months I saw and felt how you were physically drained most of the time. You were flooded with emotions and went from anger to rage, to sadness, to grief and despair. I saw and felt how you suffered in isolation because you were cut off from truly enjoying your children, grandchildren, and friends: feeling as if you were living a lie because you could not tell anyone what was really happening. You would not tell them that I had betrayed you and you were suffering from PTSD. I am sorry for all the times early on when I was not empathetic – It must have seemed uncaring when I would freeze as you were flooded, unable to be there fully to support you in the moment.

I also felt your frustration and anger at times with my inability to show emotions, how I would talk about myself when it was your feelings that were important, and especially when I would be unable to answer all your questions about why, when, how, etc., answering instead “I don’t know”.

What I heard in your impact letter:

I have read the impact letter many times and reflected (with head and heart) about what you shared. Here is what I heard you say about how my betrayal impacted you:

- I emotionally and physically abandoned you and was not there when you needed me to be. I was not there when you needed to hear and feel that I loved and cared for you. By withdrawing I created stress and anxiety in you that were a big part of your depression and health issues. My lack of emotional support during your depression made you feel as if I despised you, which is a horrible feeling when you needed my support. My behavior made you feel that I cared for other people more than you or our family.
- I was a coward because I did not come to you and ask for help when I was struggling, instead I made choices that betrayed you. Nor did I ever respond to your suggestions to get help to work on our marriage as it was fraying. That cowardice made you feel that the person you thought was your best friend and lover was not there
- I robbed you of your agency, of your power to choose because I kept you completely in the dark about my acting out. I undermined your self-esteem, and I poisoned your memories of the last 15 years. I took away good memories and replaced them with ugliness and pain. What should have been joyful memories of

vacations, anniversaries, marriages, and births were forever tainted. It was so painful that you had to put away pictures that included me. As you learned the details and dates of my acting out, what had seemed to be good times for us were actually times of deceit and betrayal, the realization of which weighs you down like a ball and chain.

- I heard you when you said discovery day was the worst day of your life. In 3 minutes, I crushed you, I blew up our marriage, and I threw you into the pit. By sharing certain details, I hurt you profoundly, making you feel rejected, abandoned, unlovable and worthless. What you heard at discovery and disclosure has made you question your sexuality, your sense of sexual self-worth, and your desires. You never asked for this. You were looking to retire to really enjoy life with our extended family and I dropped this bomb on you. For months you have continued to have intrusive thoughts that make you physically uncomfortable or make you feel like you might not be able to survive through the day. At times you have felt like you were fighting to stay sane and even wondering if you will ever have happiness in your future without being reminded of my betrayal.

- You have said our marriage is dead. I hear and understand that is the current state I put us in. By violating our wedding vows and withdrawing from you over 15 years, I not only betrayed you, but I took advantage of your kindness and character. Most hurtful to you is the time I acted out on our anniversary. It has been hard since D-Day: it's hard to comprehend the scope of my betrayal and for you not to lose hope about the future especially when all you yearn for is to be happy again.

- I took away from you the chance to continue into our old age experiencing a healthy, loving sexual relationship and the pleasure that brings to one's life. This has left you feeling empty, discarded, and unsure of your own sexuality.

- I destroyed the trust you had in me and for a while your trust in yourself. This left you feeling stressed and overwhelmed and often having to put up a protective wall between us. How can you ever trust me again? I have caused you to doubt every aspect of your life over the past 15 years. This leaves you feeling untethered and ungrounded because you are not sure if you are safe.

- My behavior during the past fifteen years and in some cases, throughout our marriage, was selfish and self-centered. I was controlling and distant, I was often rude and uncaring. I ignored the sacrifices you made helping the girls with their behavioral issues. You bore most of the weight and did most of the work to help them through those difficult times. My behaviors during the time I was acting out has made you wonder if I have any values or morals and even who I really am?

- The way I acted out and the sheer scope of what I did make you ask if I am an insane person. How could I put you, our kids and our grandkids at risk during Covid. How could I come home from acting out and sleep in our bed? You are disgusted and furious that I would do that.
- I betrayed you financially. I hid the fact I was taking money to pay for acting out by keeping separate checking accounts. While you were open about your retirement accounts and planning, I did not share my financial information with you. I paid for my acting out with money that was for us and our retirement which is the same as stealing from you.

When you shared your impact letter, it was hard for me to hear. At the same time, I was able to listen fully, hear what you were feeling, and begin to empathize with those emotions and your felt experience regarding my betrayal. You have every right to be outraged, shocked, hurt, humiliated, depressed, frightened, overwhelmed, disgusted, and disrespected. Anyone would feel the same way. What I did was horrible, hurtful, outrageous, and unforgivable. You are the innocent victim in all of this and of course you feel devastated.

Thank you for being strong and sharing in your letter all the ways that my actions and betrayal impacted you. As I continue my recovery journey, I will reread your impact letter for a deeper understanding and greater appreciation for the trauma I caused you.

I see and hear you

Your feelings of abandonment, distancing, sadness and depression were genuine and would be totally expected given how I acted. I was responsible for the darkness and pain that you felt before discovery day. I am deeply saddened and regret being distant, dismissive, mean, impatient, arrogant, and uncaring. I am just beginning to understand more about how you feel:

- I see you in Pain – It hurts to see what pain I have caused you. I can see how you have been shaken to your core by what I did, and I feel overwhelming sadness and guilt for doing that to you. I better understand the darkness and anguish of the pit when the waves hit. I am furious with myself that I acted in such destructive ways because you did nothing to have this happen to you. When I see you in tears my heart aches and I wish I could make the tears go away.
- I feel your Anger – When I experience your anger and rage at my years of acting out, I feel remorse because I am responsible for that anger by what I did to

you. At first, I just wanted to hide from your anger, but now I own what I did to you – it was outrageous, disrespectful, and hurtful. You never deserved to be treated that way,

- I experience your Distrust – I feel anguish when you say, “How can I ever trust you again?” or I see and feel that you need to distance yourself from me. I understand how after 56+ years where I was your husband, your friend, your partner and you trusted me completely that I just blew it all up. I am mortified and grieve that I destroyed your trust by acting out, lying, being deceitful, and gaslighting you. You never deserved having your trust broken and when I see how much that hurts and frightens you, my heart aches and I am sad that I betrayed your trust.

- I feel your Disgust – You have said how disgusting and sickening my acting out is. The fact that I acted out with prostitutes, engaged in appalling behaviors, and would then come home as if nothing happened and sleep in your bed. I realize how horrible that must be to contemplate, and you never deserved that. As I go through the recovery process, I am angry and humiliated by the choices I made, and I wish I could erase the past – it is repugnant and despicable. I am ashamed and embarrassed when you remind me of my acting out. I am accountable for what I did, and I will show you every day through my actions that I am no longer that person.

- I feel your fear about the future – As the legal aspects of my acting out begin to take shape, I feel the fear, anger, and anxiety that you have about the implications of a public disclosure. How you feel the humiliation of my getting caught for seeing prostitutes. You wonder what it will mean for and how it will affect our children and grandchildren and if the family will fall apart. You have shared your apprehension of what your friends will say or whether they might shun you. I am remorseful that I have brought this outcome to our family, and I am full of sorrow that more people must suffer for my actions. It is not fair to you or our kids.

Taking ownership for how I have hurt you:

I heard you when you said that my betrayal is the worst thing that has happened in your life. That I am the one responsible for putting you through this hell is indefensible. I was the one that was expected to keep you safe and protect you from harm. The one who you were supposed to feel you could rely on to keep our relationship and home safe and secure physically, emotionally and spiritually.

In the past year, as I embraced sobriety, looked into the darkness inside myself, gotten help, and surrendered, I feel the scope of the harm I have caused you and our family. I am responsible for the depth and breadth of my actions, and I know that I can never make up for what I have done or for the pain I have caused you, I can only tell you how deeply remorseful I am for what I have done. I am overcome with sadness when I contemplate what I put you through. I am angry at myself for all the years when I was a selfish, self-centered partner. I grieve for the loss of our marriage, which was a gift for us both until I betrayed you, I can never fill that hole. I am furious with myself when I think about all the energy, time, and money that I wasted on my addiction when I could have been doing good things for us and our family. What a waste! I sit here in front of you and say that I deeply and truly regret what I have done. I am sorry, so sorry for all that I have done and for the impact on you and the family.

What the past year has meant:

Since discovery day, you and I have been on separate but linked journeys of your healing and my recovery. They are separate because we each must do our work and linked because as we progress, we learn to heal, recover and connect intimately. When we co-regulate, we can grow and look to a better future – whatever that may look like. I have observed that when you see/feel/know that I have taken a step forward in recovery, it helps your healing process. When I see/hear/know that you have been able to fill in part of the pit, it helps me see that my recovery is progressing

In the past year I have seen and experienced your compassion, your courage, your humor, your inner strength, your increasing trust, your curiosity, your serenity, your hope for the future, and even your joy for life. I have appreciated the boundaries you've set to keep yourself safe and give me clarity. I cannot fully express in words my gratitude for your creating and allowing the space for us to work together in recovery and healing despite all the grief and pain that I caused you. Thank you.

Finally, I want to acknowledge how beautiful it has been, this past year, when we could talk about our feelings whether we were dysregulated or attuned and connected. The conversations we would have after a rough wave: these were moments when I was able to take another step forward and feel how my betrayal had hurt you emotionally, physically, and spiritually. In processing what you shared in anger, sadness, or grief I have been able to use it to climb the next step of the recovery ladder. I feel tears of joy as I think about those times when you'd come into my room and sit with me as I made a small step forward in recovery. I am awed by your inner strength and compassion, thank you.

My Pledge to You

Today, as part of my restitution I pledge that I will stay sober and to work diligently on my recovery. I pledge to continue to confront my addictions and overcome my sexual obsession and compulsion. I pledge to be authentic, vulnerable, and empathetic and to be accountable when I am not.

To meet these promises I commit to the following in my recovery and in the pursuit of building a stronger, more equal, more authentic relationship:

- I will continue recovery therapy and follow the guidance of my/our therapists for as long as is needed.
- I will continue to attend SAA meetings and to work with my sponsor to complete the 12 steps and keep you informed of my progress.
- I will honor your boundaries and stay out of my inner circle.
- I will continue to be truthful and honest and admit my mistakes or transgressions within 24 hours.
- I will continue to learn and grow in recovery both on my own and together by being present, empathetic and supportive.
- I will help you heal by staying sober, being authentic and vulnerable, and being accountable for recognizing and changing “old” or “little” “ME” behaviors.

As I am learning to be a whole, fully-present partner, I am discovering anew what loving you means – loving unselfishly, with all my heart and soul, without expectation, and fully giving myself to you and us. I know that I am a work in progress, and I hope and pray that I can bring true happiness and love back to our relationship. You deserve that. If you look into my eyes when I say I love you, I hope you see the truth of that in there. I know and appreciate that I have a long path to walk before I can ever earn your trust and love again. I will walk that path with you.

Closing

In closing, I thank you for being present and hearing this letter. I also thank you for giving us a better chance by allowing me to stay and work the recovery/healing process with you. It underscores your strength and compassion and was a courageous thing to do so soon after discovery day. I cannot express my gratitude and appreciation that I have for you and how you have stuck with the process despite overwhelming emotions about my betrayal. Our children and grandchildren have you as an amazing role model in you and I hope one day that we can look to our coupleship for inspiration.

I love you and will always.