

Response 2 - Addiction

His mistake was not a mistake. He did not make ONE conscious mistake. He made the same CHOICE over and over and over and over again. Repeating the same behavior is not a mistake. Nor is this what my husband did to me. He did not choose this life or these actions. He did not accidentally go too far or get bored with his life or get drunk and cheat. He is an addict. And I know this to be true, most of the time. But when I can't use my frontal cortex or the rational part of my brain that can understand and make sense of the addiction and of who my husband is, I want him to be punished. Over and over and over again. I want him to pay for his mistakes. I want him to understand and feel the pain that he put me in. I want him to hurt worse than he hurt me. I want him to feel the cuts just like I did every single time I found out or he disclosed about another. I want him to experience the torture of drip disclosure. If I had to be punished for his "mistake" over and over again, then he should have to be, too. But this is not the path I am choosing to take right now.

Because even just writing that, it doesn't make anything better. I don't feel better and it certainly doesn't erase the facts about the past. I actually feel that same weight in my stomach that I used to feel when learning about this new reality was so fresh. So what I know to be true now is that consistent punishment will not make my pain go away. I'm not sure about my thoughts around the word "fair", but I do know that it does not serve me on my healing journey.

With that said, when things escalate between my husband and I...typically when things feel unfair or if something feels like an old behavior or experience, I will often lash out with something like "you did this to us. You did this to me. It's the least you could do. The list goes on..." So, in my gut, when I'm not getting my way in a situation that really feels like I should be, I still go back to the mindset of, are you freaking kidding me? After everything you did to me." I want him to pay. This is something I want to work on because again, it doesn't help our relationship grow and I feel like I am taking steps backwards in my recovery. I am often reminded that this healing journey is not linear and I try to give myself

grace when I resort back to these types of responses and reactions. But knowing that these still come up tells me that I still resent him deep down. I do. And that breaks my heart that I am choosing to live my life with someone that hurt me so deeply.

When I think about this quote through the lens of my own self punishment I feel strongly that no, it is not fair. But I often do it anyways. I judge myself and feel the weight of self disappointment when I am reminded of all the red flags that I ignored along the way. They were there at the very beginning. They looked different then, but they were there. I was in my early 20s and really didn't know much about life at that point. I had very very little adversity in my life and was extremely naive about people and the world. Up until I was 27, nothing significantly bad happened to me. SO when things with my then fiance started to feel off, I did what I was trained to do and didn't tell anyone about it and pushed forward. Of course had I told my parents that I had full blown breakdowns in my bed every weekend they would have told me to get the hell out of the engagement. But I had already posted the news on instagram and facebook and there was no way in hell I was going back on that now. That would be too embarrassing. I am saying this out loud and I am thinking WTF!!!! This is your life!!! Get a grip. WHO CARES WHAT PEOPLE THINK!!!

But then things would get better and then something else would happen that felt off... but the venue for the wedding was already picked and the save the dates went out and planning a wedding with my mom and sister in law was so fun! Things would get better with my now husband. But of course they never did. Even after I found sexting messages and knew I was living a life that I did not ask for or deserve, I still got pregnant. And when it happened again, I got pregnant again. What the hell was I thinking? How could I have been so dumb and reckless and careless about my own life? About my unborn children's lives? How unfair to bring children into an unsafe family and world with men that actually do this to the person that they asked to spend their life with? My memory is pretty powerful. I do not forget about the mistakes I made with my own life. Choosing someone so cruel or in this case, so sick. But I didn't know. How could I? I'd never seen or experienced addiction,

infidelity, betrayal. I never saw it in my life. And even if I had, he was the master manipulator. And let's not forget that I had no clue what the word gaslighting meant. How could I have ever truly known? I did the best I could with the life skills and experiences that I was given at the time. But I know better now.

Punishing myself over and over and over again is something I spent many months doing. I know that I am not the reason he cheated, but I felt responsible for putting myself in this situation. But, this is not helpful in my healing journey. I know the story. I know the flags I ignored and the mistakes and the pushing through that I did. But replaying this narrative does not help me move forward to where I want to be. Acceptance I believe is my next step. This IS my life. This is my story... and I am not being reckless anymore. I am being intentional with it. I am actively trying to heal and connect with good people and learn more about people's real life struggles and who I am today vs who I was growing up. I am trying to move forward intentionally, not just push through because that's what I am supposed to do. It is not fair to replay the past and punish myself repeatedly. I know that to be true. I will continue to make active steps to not live in the shame of embarrassment and disappointment but rather find gratitude in the big and the little things in the life I am living today. This shit is hard but I am trying.