



# Golden Talk Series



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*Loyalty and Commitment  
in Relationships*

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## What is commitment?

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In a relationship, commitment means **intending to** be together for a long period of time. It's all about that deep **intent!** Personal commitment is when you **genuinely want** to be with someone, not that you're required to. For instance, staying in a marriage because divorce is too expensive doesn't demonstrate personal commitment; that's more of a "structural" commitment.

Commitment often involves **exclusivity**. Exclusivity means both partners agree to be romantically, emotionally, and sexually devoted to each other. It's about mutual agreement to refrain from **pursuing** romantic or sexual connections outside the marriage/relationship. However, every relationship dynamic can be different.

Commitment also refers to the **shared desire** to improve the relationship. When both partners are committed, they see the relationship as a **separate entity**. They're motivated to work on it and help it grow just as much as they want to develop individually. Understanding that relationships require effort, committed individuals are **willing to** invest that time and energy.

“  
**Loyalty  
is a decision,  
a resolution of  
the soul.**

Pascal Mercier

Being committed means **viewing yourselves as** a team and prioritizing the collective **best interests of** the relationship. It involves being ready to sacrifice personal desires if they don't serve the relationship well. It's important to remember that commitment can manifest differently for different people. For example, some may commit to monogamy (exclusive dating), while others may find that an **open relationship** better suits their needs. Ultimately, commitment is finding what works best for you and your partner.

## Commitment, loyalty, fidelity

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While commitment, loyalty, and fidelity are **interconnected** and often **go hand in hand**, they represent different aspects of a relationship. Commitment encompasses the overall dedication to the relationship, loyalty focuses on faithfulness and support, and fidelity specifically pertains to sexual exclusivity. These concepts build a foundation of trust, respect, and mutual understanding in a relationship.

- **Commitment:** Commitment refers to a willingness and dedication to maintaining a long-term relationship. It involves dedication, emotional investment, and effort to support and nurture the relationship. Commitment often means being supportive, reliable, and **actively working towards** the growth and success of the partnership. It implies a desire to overcome challenges and stay together through good and difficult times.
- **Loyalty:** Loyalty is the quality of being **faithful**, devoted, and steadfast to someone or something, often driven by a sense of duty, trust, and respect. In the context of a relationship, loyalty means being **devoted** and **supportive** of your partner, standing by their side, and being reliable and trustworthy. Loyalty involves prioritizing the well-being and interests of your partner, maintaining confidence, and showing **unwavering support**.
- **Fidelity:** Fidelity specifically relates to the aspect of sexual exclusivity in a romantic relationship. It refers to being sexually faithful and committing to one partner. Fidelity reflects a mutual agreement or expectation to be sexually exclusive and not engage in sexual relationships with other people. It involves trust and the conscious choice to honor the commitment made to one's partner **in terms of** sexual fidelity.



# Loyalty in relationships vs. loyalty in marriage



Loyalty can have similarities and differences in the context of marriage and a romantic relationship outside of marriage. Here are some points to consider:

- **Similarities:**

1. **Devotion:**

Loyalty, whether in marriage or a relationship, involves a deep sense of devotion and commitment to the other person.

2. **Trust:**

Both in marriage and a relationship, loyalty is built upon trust. It entails being trustworthy and having confidence in your partner's trustworthiness.

3. **Support:**

Loyalty entails standing by your partner and offering support, regardless of the ups and downs that may occur in both marriage and a relationship.

- **Differences:**

1. **Legal and Social Commitment:**

Marriage typically involves a formal legal and social commitment, while a relationship outside of marriage may not. The commitment in marriage may be

viewed as more binding, with legal implications and societal expectations reinforcing loyalty.

### **2. Long-term Orientation:**

Marriage is often considered a long-term commitment, with the intention of building a life together. Loyalty in marriage may involve a deeper sense of permanence and a stronger conviction to work through issues and conflicts.

### **3. External Recognition:**

Society generally recognizes and values loyalty within marriage more prominently through legal benefits, social acknowledgment, and cultural norms. Loyalty in a relationship outside of marriage may not have the same societal recognition or formal recognition.

## Questions to ask yourself

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**Determining whether your partner is loyal to you** can be a complex and sensitive. Here are some questions you can ask yourself to help you assess your partner's loyalty:

- 1. Does my partner communicate openly and honestly with me?*
- 2. Does my partner prioritize spending time with me and making me feel valued?*
- 3. Does my partner show interest in my life and my well-being?*
- 4. Does my partner keep their promises and follow through on commitments?*
- 5. Does my partner show respect for me and our relationship?*
- 6. Does my partner avoid behaviors that could be considered cheating, such as flirting with others or keeping secrets?*
- 7. Does my partner show consistency in their actions and words towards me?*



8. *Does my partner show empathy and understanding towards me?*
9. *Does my partner take responsibility for their mistakes and work to make things right?*
10. *Does my partner show a willingness to work through challenges and conflicts in our relationship?*



# Common reasons why married people cheat



There are numerous reasons why individuals may engage in **extramarital affairs**, and certain factors increase the likelihood of it happening.

- **Attachment style:** Attachment **avoidance**, attachment **insecurity**, and **intimacy disorders** may increase the likelihood of cheating, as well as poor self-esteem and insecurity.
- **Addiction:** **Substance abuse** issues, such as alcohol, drugs, or gambling, can increase the risk of infidelity due to **lowered inhibitions**.
- **Childhood trauma:** Individuals with a history of childhood trauma, such as abuse or neglect, may have **unresolved issues** that increase the likelihood of infidelity.
- **Exposure to infidelity in childhood:** Being exposed to a parent's affair during childhood can **double the chances of** engaging in infidelity later in life.
- **Mental illness:** Some mental illnesses, like **bipolar disorder**, can be a risk factor for cheating in marriage.
- **Previous cheating:** Individuals who have previously engaged in extramarital affairs are more likely to repeat this behavior in their next relationships.



- **Psychological issues:** Narcissistic traits or personality disorders can be associated with a greater likelihood of cheating, driven by ego and **entitlement**.
- **Unhappiness/Dissatisfaction:** Dissatisfaction with the marriage, emotionally or sexually, including a **sexless marriage**, can contribute to infidelity.
- **Feeling unappreciated:** Feeling **undervalued** or neglected may lead to **seeking validation** or worthiness through an affair.
- **Lack of commitment:** Individuals who are less committed to their relationship **are more prone to** cheating.
- **Boredom:** Some individuals **seek excitement** and the thrill of new experiences outside of their marriage, mistaking it for a way to **spice up** their relationship.
- **Body image/aging:** Insecurities about aging or physical appearance can lead individuals to seek validation or prove their attractiveness through an affair.
- **Revenge:** If a partner has previously **had an affair** or caused harm, the offended partner may **seek revenge** through an affair.
- **Internet:** The ease of having an affair, especially emotional affairs, online through social media or other platforms contributes to infidelity.
- **Opportunity:** Absence due to work travel or military service provides opportunities for affairs to occur, as well as feelings of loneliness and resentment.
- **Poor boundaries:** Weak personal boundaries and difficulty saying no can make individuals more **susceptible to** engaging in affairs.

#### Language note

Notice how the phrase "to be prone to something" can be followed by a noun or a verb.

#### Example 1:

*Lisa is prone to comparing her marriage to others.*

#### Example 2:

*John is prone to jealousy in his marriage.*

## Topic-specific collocations and phrases

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The following phrases may come in handy in your discussion about commitment and loyalty:

**lifelong commitment:** a promise to be devoted to someone for the entire *duration of a relationship*

**Example sentence:** *"They made a lifelong commitment to each other, vowing to support and cherish one another till the end."*

**unwavering loyalty:** loyalty that remains strong, not faltering in the face of challenges or temptations (unwavering = unchanging, steadfast)

**example sentence:** *"Even during tough times, her unwavering loyalty to her partner never wavered."*

**fidelity and exclusivity:** commitment to being sexually faithful and maintaining a monogamous relationship

**example sentence:** *"They agreed on the importance of fidelity and exclusivity, choosing to have a committed and monogamous relationship."*

**everlasting bond:** a strong and enduring connection

**example sentence:** *"Their everlasting bond grew stronger with each passing year, demonstrating their unwavering commitment to each other."*

**unbreakable bond:** a connection that cannot be severed or broken, symbolizing a strong bond of loyalty and commitment

**lasting love:** love that endures and sustains over time, characterized by loyalty, commitment, and deep affection

**extramarital affairs:** engaging in romantic or sexual relationships with someone outside of one's marriage or committed partnership

**example sentence:** *"The discovery of her husband's extramarital affair devastated her and shattered their trust."*

**unwavering support:** providing consistent and unwavering assistance, encouragement, and loyalty to someone, regardless of the circumstances

**example sentence:** *"Throughout his career, she offered unwavering support, always believing in his abilities and standing by his side."*

# Glossary

**best interest** refers to what is most beneficial or advantageous for someone's well-being or success.

**Example:** *I understand that my offer may not appeal to you, but it would be in your best interest to accept it.*

**Collocations:** look out for someone's best interest, act in someone's best interest, serve someone's best interest

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**open relationship:** It is a type of romantic or sexual relationship in which partners agree to have freedom in engaging with other people outside of the primary relationship

**Similar in meaning to:** a non-monogamous relationship

**Collocations:** enter into an open relationship, discuss boundaries in an open relationship, maintain an open relationship

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**entitlement:** a belief or feeling of being deserving of certain privileges, benefits, or rights without considering others' perspectives or earning them

**Example:** *Sarah's entitlement led her to expect praise and special treatment without putting in the necessary effort.*

**Word family:** entitled (adj.)

**Collocations:** a sense of entitlement, perceived entitlement, entitlement mentality.

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**seek validation:** actively seeking approval, recognition, or acceptance from others to validate one's self-worth or abilities

**Example:** *Instead of relying on her own judgment, Emily constantly seeks validation from her peers to feel more confident.*

## Questions to think about

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1. How would you define personal commitment in a relationship?
2. What is the significance of exclusivity in a committed relationship?
3. Some people argue that not every extramarital affair is equivalent to cheating. Do you agree with this statement?
4. Do you agree with the following statement? "Once a cheater, always a cheater."
5. How does empathy contribute to loyalty in a relationship?
6. How can conflicts and challenges impact loyalty in a relationship?
7. What are some common reasons why individuals engage in extramarital affairs?
8. How can childhood trauma influence the likelihood of infidelity in a marriage?
9. How would you describe the connection between commitment, loyalty, and fidelity in a relationship?
10. Why is trust an important component of loyalty?
11. What actions demonstrate loyalty in a relationship?
12. Can loyalty be demonstrated differently in marriage compared to a romantic relationship outside of marriage? Why or why not?

