

Interview with Mort Fertel



Hi, this is C Mellie Smith from InfidelityHealing.com and recently, I had the privilege to interview Mort Fertel, the author and founder of the revolutionary [Marriage Fitness](#) System. Mort is an expert authority on the psychology of relationships and has helped thousands of couples transform their relationships into something much better.

Mort has made numerous TV appearances and he is also a frequent guest on talk radio programs. In addition, his breakthrough program, Marriage Fitness, appeared in the New York Times, Huffington Post, Chicago Tribune, Los Angeles Times, USA Today, Family Circle, Psychology Today and others.

So now, without any further delay, let's start the interview with Mort Fertel.

Q1: Mort can you tell me a little bit about your background with helping couples with their marriages?

Mort Fertel: Sure. So, I got into this in an interesting way. Unlike most other marriage professionals, I don't really come at this from a professional perspective. I come at this from a personal perspective. My wife and I experienced a marital crisis a long time ago.

It was precipitated by-- Unfortunately, we had a son who died when he was one week old and then about a year and a half later we had twin daughters who also died and it was a really tragic, terrible, terrible, time in our life in addition to all the trauma and difficulty dealing with it. It also had a terrible impact on our marriage and it really started, maritally-speaking, spiraling out of control.

So, we reached out for help in all the classic ways. My wife learned about Mars, I learned about Venus, we went to counseling and they asked us to repeat back to each other what we were saying, did I understand you correctly and that kind of stuff and no matter where we turned for help, whether it was a professional help or book, whatever, everybody was asking us to focus on what was wrong and to try

and make it right.

We found that doing that just made things more wrong. It just immersed us deeper in the negativity of our situation and we walked out of the office and finished reading the book, or whatever, and we felt worse. Our situation was worse. This was not helping. We were very, very discouraged with the type of help and the methodology that was being used to help in our situation.

To make a long story short, we eventually just put aside the problems and the issues that everybody kept trying to get us to turn to, to deal with, and we just started to really be decent to each other and to do things that would build good will and would help us create more of a connection. It worked like magic.

It was really amazing how when we put the problems aside and focused on just connecting that it really helped us tremendously. It helped us save our marriage, reconcile our marriage, and that was the seed, that was the whole origin of Marriage Fitness Methodology. I then went on to write a book about what we experienced and created a methodology around what we experienced and it's called Marriage Fitness.

I published it and it got all that media attention and here I am many years later having worked with thousands and thousands and thousands of couples. Both privately, private sessions, and also the vast majority of them joined the Marriage Fitness Tele-Boot Camp, which is the main program that walks people through this methodology and helps them to reconcile their marriage.

Q2: You said you tried all the traditional forms like marriage counseling and so on but they did not help, so what advice would you give to couples -- because I know for a fact that marriage counseling doesn't work. I had a friend that every time they met with the counselor all they did was fight and yell at each other. What advice would you give to couples about marriage counseling? Does it work for any couples in any situation?

Mort Fertel: My advice is don't go. My advice is don't do it. It's pretty well documented at this point that 75% of married couples that begin marriage counseling are either worse off or divorced about two years later. It is a failed methodology.

There are many reasons why it fails – I don't know if you want to get into them here – but that's the whole reason why I created Marriage Fitness, which I call an alternative to marriage counseling and, at the risk of being self promotional, I would advise people to use the alternative, to use Marriage Fitness. This is a methodology and a program that really works. We have a 90% success rate dealing with couples that are in marital crisis.

Q3: What about couples facing infidelity? I know you said in your situation it was the death of your children, which would put the stress on any marriage. Also, infidelity is another thing that would put stress on the marriage. What advice would you have? Would Marriage Fitness help couples facing infidelity as well?

Mort Fertel: For sure. I would say it's one of our specialties. Over 50% of the people in the Marriage Fitness program are people who are suffering from infidelity. So, yes, for sure, it works. It's basically that there are different events and traumas that lead to the break down of a marriage but, at the core, the

way to rebuild the marriage is in 99% of the cases the same.

Once you really identify what it is that really helps a couple reconnect and rebuild their marriage it's easy to see that these principals and practices, which I outline in the program, can be used to rebuild any marriage.

Q4: OK. So, if one couple, say the betrayed spouse, could your program help them if the person is not on board? Say the cheating spouse is not on board? Say, they are still carrying on the affair and they are not on board right now, can the program still help the betrayed spouse?

Mort Fertel: Of course. When I say 50% of the people in the program are suffering from infidelity, the 50% are the betrayed spouse and the betrayer, the adulterer, they are never in the program because they're not interested in the marriage right now. They're having their fun with an affair and so they're not in the program.

We have what's called The Lone Ranger track in the Marriage Fitness program and the Lone Ranger track will teach people how to single-handedly take unilateral action that does not require the participation or cooperation of their spouse but, they can still impact their spouses feelings and the marriage.

That's a tricky thing to do. Most people make the mistake of sitting around and thinking, "Oh gosh. I can't do anything until my spouse's affair ends or my spouse agrees to work on the marriage with me." That's just simply not true. It's certainly easier to do it if you have your spouses cooperation. I know you'd prefer if you had your spouse's cooperation but, here you are.

Your spouse is having an affair, you don't have their participation or cooperation so what are you going to do? You can sit around and moan about how you don't have their cooperation and what a terrible situation you're in or you can actually unilaterally take the actions that can be taken without the participation or cooperation but they can still have an impact on their feelings in the marriage.

There are a whole series of actions and behaviors that fall into that category and that's what people get in the Lone Ranger track, that system of unilateral actions that they can begin to impact the marriage I know it's hard for people to believe and understand, they just don't quite get it.

I get this all the time. "What do you mean?" "How could that be?" But, if you just look at the stories of the people on my website of people who have been through the program but started in the Lone Ranger track dealing with infidelity, and they follow the directions in the program, it's amazing the results that people come up with.

Q5: Yes. Because the betrayed spouse, sometimes seems like they spend a lot of time trying to get their wayward spouse to go to counseling with them and the person resists, keep resisting so, they think they can't move forward until that happens.

Mort Fertel: Right and that's a huge mistake. They are not going to go to counseling with you and even if they do, they're not going to go with a full heart or proper intentions. So, you're really wasting that time and energy.

That time and energy should be spent doing what you can do to make a difference in the marriage and, again, there is a ton that you can do to make difference even before you have your spouses participation.

Q6: Can you give us a couple of examples?

Mort Fertel: Sure. Well, one of them would be to stop trying to get your spouse to go to counseling. You gave a great example. Stop trying to get your spouse to go to counseling. It's annoying to them. You're building bad will, not good will. It's creating conflict. It's just further reinforcing for them that they are doing the right thing by trying to exit the marriage. You're giving them further justification to go out and have fun in an affair because they have to have feel good somewhere. So, that would be one example.

Another example would be to find, to catch your spouse doing something right everyday. When a person's being betrayed, when a spouse is having an affair it's very easy to identify all the things that they are doing wrong. There are many of them.

They're lying, they're cheating and you're right, they are lying and cheating and it would be the easiest thing in the world for you to identify things they're doing wrong and then to hammer your spouse about them and you'll feel quite justified in doing so because you're right.

But, I don't want you to be right, I want you to succeed in saving your marriage and when you're right then your spouse is wrong and when they're wrong they don't want to be with you because nobody wants to be with some one who makes them feel wrong and who's hammering about all the mistakes they're making.

So, even though they're making lots of mistakes, I wonder if you can find anything, something on a daily basis that they're doing right. That would shock them if you can identify it and mention it. Communicate it to them. Express an appreciation and gratitude. I'm not saying for the affair and all the terrible things they're doing but to identify something specific that they're doing right. You see when you hammer them about the affair and what they're doing wrong that just plays into their story.

That helps them justify what they're doing. They then feel validated in leaving you, avoiding you, and getting pleasure somewhere else. But if you can start to give them, start offering them appreciation and gratitude, you'll begin to ruin they're story. Now the bad guy, and that's you from their perspective, is not so bad anymore. It becomes more difficult to justify cheating on you.

Q7: That's a very good point but I can imagine that it's not something that is easy for the betrayed spouse to do?

Mort Fertel: Now easy I can not offer. That is, actually, one of the mistakes people so often make when they're in these marital crisis situations, is that they are seduced by what is easy but, usually, what is easy is not effective. People ask me all the time, "Mort, your program, your methodology is phenomenal but, it's so hard. Can you help me?" and my answer is, "I can't help you with that. You're right. I can't promise and I can't offer easy. What I promise and offer is results."

Q8: Right. What do you think is the biggest pitfall a couple should avoid when they're trying to save their marriage whether it's after infidelity or they're just having a break down in the marriage overall?

Mort Fertel: We eluded to it earlier in the interview. The biggest pitfall is that people mistake the symptoms for their marriage for the actual problem. In other words, the symptoms, which is usually what they're fighting about, what they're arguing about, what they think they've identified as the problem, is what they want to attack, it's what they want to deal with, it's what they want to discuss and it's what they want to try and resolve but that's the biggest problem.

The biggest problem is that they've usually misidentified the problem. The things that are symptomatic about a marriage is usually not the thing that's really wrong. The real problem at the root of every broken marriage is a lack of connection between the husband and the wife. Everything else is symptomatic to that core problem.

The biggest mistake that people make is that they're too focused on the symptoms, what they think are the problems, which are the problems and issues that they are fighting about, that are creating conflict, that they're arguing about and those things are not really the problem. The real problem is the lack of connection between a husband and a wife and when you reconnect you solve the core problem and then all the other problems that you have identified, they're really just symptoms, they just melt away.

As one of my students said, "I get it Mort. The problems don't actually get resolved, they just dissolve." That's exactly the way it works.

Q9: That's a good point there. What would you say is the number one thing that a couple needs to know or that they need to do? Oh, I think you just answered that. If someone just came to you and said, "I just found out my spouse is cheating, what do I do now? Where do I go from here", what advice would you give them?

Mort Fertel: Well, I don't know if there is any one short simple thing that they have to do. Let me answer the question by explaining this. It might be helpful.

Affairs don't happen in a vacuum. Affairs happen in the context of a broken marriage. In other words, "Oh my gosh! My spouse is having an affair and that led to the break down of our marriage." No, that is never true. Your marriage was broken and that led to your spouse having an affair. Your spouse wouldn't be having an affair if you and your spouse were deeply connected.

If you had a great marriage, if you had a great relationship. When there is an affair that occurs it's because there's a gap. There's something significant that's missing in the marriage. So, again, it's a classic example of people thinking that 'the problem in my marriage is that my spouse is having an affair.'

No! That's not the problem. That's the symptom of the problem and as long as you're trying to fix the fact that your spouse is having an affair, you'll never get anywhere but if you can work on fixing what's really wrong, which is the reason why the affair occurred to begin with then the affair will resolve itself, it will die, it will end as they always say.

Q10: Some people would say, “Well, I had a good marriage”, but perhaps the person that strayed did not feel the same way. Would you agree?

Mort Fertel: Well... But, if that's the case then you didn't have a good marriage. In other words, if your spouse didn't feel like you had a good marriage then you didn't have a good marriage. You may have felt you had a good marriage but you didn't. Not only didn't you, but you were obviously clueless about your spouses true feelings about the marriage which is just a further indication that you didn't have a good marriage because, in a good marriage, we're tuned into how our spouse feels, we're tuned into what's going on with them.

So, sometimes people will come to me in marital crisis. They'll be like, “I, I, I don't know what happened. I thought everything was fine. We've been together 15 years. We had a great marriage.” No, you didn't have a great marriage. You thought you did. From your perspective you thought things were fine but you were oblivious to what was going on in the head and the heart of your spouse and that's probably one of the reasons why the marriage broke down.

Q11: That makes sense. What about couples who have been dealing with infidelity for a long time? Can Marriage Fitness program help those couples?

Mort Fertel: It can but you know it's pretty unusual for affairs to last for a long time. It's not as unusual to have multiple affairs over many years. In other words, if a marriage breaks down and is unfulfilling and unsuccessful particularly from one spouses perspective so, it's possible if the marriage is never healed, is never fixed that they will continue to have affairs, multiple affairs, but it would be pretty unusual for any one of those affairs to last a significant period of time.

It just doesn't really happen. Affairs-- there are relationships that are built on deceit and immorality and things that are planted in dirty soil don't grow well. The affair usually dies within a year.

Q12: What about a situation where the affair is no longer going on, the couple is still together, but it's a dead marriage. They just can't seem to work out the problem or the betrayed spouse can't seem to let go of the affair.

Mort Fertel: Well, if that's the case then the couple needs help and I would really encourage them to join the marriage fitness program because that's one of the things that people learn in the program is, first of all, how to get through the affair to begin with, how to create a situation where your spouses affair ends. where it dies. Then, once that's done, you have the work on rebuilding the marriage, rebuilding the trust from infidelity and there really is a system or a methodology, a way to go about doing that.

So, post-infidelity, if the marriage feels dead and there is no trust, it's all because you haven't gone about rebuilding the marriage and the trust in the proper way. It's not a mystery. It's not magic. There really is a way to go about it and you simply have to get the information you need in order to accomplish those objectives.

Q13: So, would you say rebuilding trust is the biggest obstacle to rebuilding the marriage or is there something else based on your opinion?

Mort Fertel: Referring to post-infidelity?

Q14: Yes Post infidelity.

Mort Fertel: It's one of the significant challenges that the spouse faces for sure. Trust is crucial in a marriage. In a case of infidelity the trust has been breached. It can be rebuilt. Some people make the mistake of thinking that once it's been breached it can't be rebuilt. That's a mistake. The truth is trust can be rebuilt. It's very important that it be rebuilt and it has to be tackled properly. There are other challenges as well that post-infidelity couples face that are just as important.

I'll just mention or highlight one that we've already discussed, which is, again, the affair did not occur in a vacuum. It occurred because there was a huge hole in the relationship. Something, at least one thing if not more, that was missing in the marriage that was missing from the perspective of at least one spouse and unless you really understand what that hole was and you work to fill it then you'll be vulnerable for it happening again.

So, in addition to rebuilding trust that's one of the other really important things that has to occur and that's one of the things we do in the marriage fitness program, is we identify why did the affair occur. In other words, what was missing in the marriage that left your spouse vulnerable to an outside relationship.

What were they getting outside the relationship that they weren't getting inside the marriage and how do we restructure the marriage so that they now receive what they want and need that's fulfilling to them inside the marriage and once that occurs now you've really insulated the marriage against further infidelities. Not only that but now you've created a marriage that's significantly improved.

Q15: What advice would you give to the betrayed spouse? What are things that they should do or things that they should not be doing when they find out that their spouse is cheating?

Mort Fertel: Well, we've been discussing a number of them over the last ten or fifteen minutes. We've discussed some of them already. You're asking for something else that the betrayed spouse can do? Well, I'll mention something that the betrayed should not do.

Q16: I meant what the betrayed should not do ,right.

Mort Fertel: The betrayed, and this is a very common mistake, they should be careful not to discuss the marital problems of the affair with any family or friends. They very often want to do that because they make their spouse, the adulterer, look bad and that makes them feel a little better, after all their spouse deserves it.

Once again, I don't want you to be right, I want you to be effective in reconciling your marriage and when you do that you're not going to endear yourself to your spouse, you're going to create bad will, and, again, you're going to further enhance their story, the story they're telling themselves that they use to justify their affair. So, you should be careful to keep what is private, private.

Q17: A lot of times in the forums, in the infidelity forums, they give the opposite advice. They say you should expose the affair, tell their friends and their family what they did.

Mort Fertel: I've been through this thousands of thousands of times with people. That is an enormous mistake. It always makes the situation worse, not better. It's a classic example of the betrayed doing what is easy and feels good instead of what is effective. Sure. It feels good.

There's an addictive element to that behavior and you'll feel good when you do it and you'll feel somewhat justified, but if your goal is to reconcile your marriage, don't do it. In terms of the advice coming from forums-- Look, to me that's a bit of a joke because.

I feel a bit uncomfortable saying this. These forums are a disaster. I know they exist. I know there's a lot of them out there and a lot of people take comfort in talking to people in similar situations but they're very, very destructive.

They're destructive for a number of reasons. You've just brought up one of them. It's that you have people who don't really know about what they're talking about giving advice to others who don't know any better. The people in these forums are people in similar situations. They're in a similar situation because they don't have a solution.

I mean, the people that are talking on these forums they're butchers, they're bakers, they're candlestick makers, and that's fine. I'm sure they're very good at what they do, whatever it is that they do. But, unless you've actually ushered thousands of people from these situations of infidelity through to healing reconciliation and rebuilding trust, how in the world would you ever know how to get there?

Believe me when I tell you that how to get from where you are to where you want to be is far from intuitive. So, this exposure thing, I know it's out there. People are people. The butchers, the bakers, and the candlestick makers are advising it but it does not help. It makes things worse and it decreases dramatically the likelihood that you will succeed in saving your marriage and reconciling your relationship.

So, when you want to take advice from somebody, there's two things that you really want to look carefully at. I call them the two C's: character and competence. Let's just take a brief look at both of them. Character is just a person of substantial character. Who are they? Can you trust them? Do they have noble values? Are they steeped in wisdom? Are they motivated by the right things?

For example, just because a brain surgeon graduated from Harvard medical school and can perform most surgeries with one hand tied behind their back doesn't necessarily mean you want him operating on you because, if he is an alcoholic and he possibly might come in the morning of your surgery with a hangover or if he's very driven by money and might be vulnerable to performing surgeries that are unnecessary, he might have competence but he doesn't have character and therefore you should be careful to avoid him.

At the same time, you might have a spiritual or religious leader that is a very holy person, that is a person of substantial character but they've never been to medical school so, if you need brain surgery, you probably don't want to get on the table with that person because they have character but they don't have competence.

Now, most people get confused and they take advice from somebody with one but not the other and the fact that they have one is what seduces them.

In the case of forums, the incredible thing to me about forums, is that there is no indication that the people in the forums have either C, that they have character or competence.

They have no idea who these people really are because they're hiding behind a user name. So, in terms of character, it's a mystery and in terms of competency, again, they're butchers, they're bakers, they're candlestick makers. I'm sure they're competent with something but there is no evidence that they have competency or any real experience with the cases of infidelity.

Those are really when you're taking advice from somebody it goes not only with your marriage, but your health, your finances, your tennis game, whatever it is, an advisers got to have the two C's. Forums is a horrible place to get advice.

Q18: That's a good point because, like you said, you don't know who these people are and sometimes their vision is tainted or colored by their own experience.

Mort Fertel: Exactly.

Q19: OK. What about the cheating spouse? What words of wisdom can you offer for the cheating spouse assuming that they want to end the affair and they want to reconcile with their spouse?

Mort Fertel: Well, there are two things right away that come to mind. That are really crucial. I'm not going to be able to give the full-fledged advice here on the air because we just don't have the time but, I'll just kind of point them in the right direction. So, for the adulterer that wants to end the affair there are two things that are really crucial.

One is you have to sever the affair and doing so is easy to say, it's not so easy to do it. Having an affair is like being on drugs and there are many, many adulterers who have tried many, many times to end the affair and they get sucked right back in. Once again, with many things like this, there really is a methodology for ending an affair so that it sticks and you don't get sucked back in.

So, and of course this is one of the things that is discussed in the marriage fitness program, if you want to end the affair and you want to do it and you want to make it permanent and you want to not get sucked back in make sure that you reach out and learn how to go about that.

I've seen so many well-intentioned people that they think they're in love and that they're supposed to be with this person because "I've tried to end it and I can't", that doesn't mean you're in love. It means you're incompetent and you don't have the proper advice to go about how to do it. When people have the proper advice on how to go about ending the affair then it ends successfully.

Then the second thing is rebuilding trust. You broke the trust, you've got to rebuild the trust and it's not an easy thing to do. Once again, it's not this abstract, "Oh, I'm going to be trustworthy", and then you go off and try to do the right thing. Rebuilding trust is a very specific set of behaviors that are really required in order for somebody to succeed to rebuild the trust.

Once again this is the whole section in the Marriage Fitness program. If you go about rebuilding the trust properly then you can succeed to do it. If you think that you're just going to be trustworthy without really knowing what does that mean, what does that look like, how do I do that, then you're

probably going to fail.

I have the adulterer six months, a year after the affair has been over come to me and say, “You know, I don't understand. My wife, my husband still doesn't trust me. It's been a year/ It's been six months, you know, and I've been trustworthy.” “Really, you've been trustworthy? Let me ask you a couple of questions”, and three minutes later I can diagnose that they haven't been trustworthy.

They think they've been trustworthy, they intend to be trustworthy, they want to be trustworthy but there's not really a sophisticated understanding of what does it mean to behave in a trustworthy way and what does it take to rebuild trust post-infidelity.

So, sometimes you have some really well-intentioned people that just don't have the information, the knowledge they need to succeed with what they want to succeed with. So, for the adulterer I would say that it's crucial that you succeed to sever the affair and rebuild the trust and I encourage you to use the Marriage Fitness program to do this successfully.

Q20: Do you have any final thoughts or steps or any final words for couples dealing with infidelity or other marriage problems?

Mort Fertel: Just that we're here for you. I've been where you're at. I made it through successfully and since then it's really been my mission and passion in life to help others through similar situations that I went through and most people say that I'm doing that successfully. So, I encourage you to reach out to me and get help through the services and products that I offer.

Mellie: OK. Thank you very much, Mort, for sharing this information on dealing with infidelity and saving your marriage.

This is an awesome interview and it is very long so be sure to download and print the PDF version below. This interview has something for everyone and I really learned a lot from speaking with Mort. I just wished I had this resource when I was dealing with infidelity in my marriage years ago. I encourage you to read this interview with an open mind and take action right away to heal your marriage.

To find out more about Marriage Fitness and how it can help you transform your marriage, just follow this link: [Marriage Fitness by Mort Fertel](#)