

## THE MOORE THERAPY MOVEMENT: Are you your sister's keeper?

Written by Darren D. Moore, Ph.D., LMFT  
Wednesday, 17 April 2013 14:50

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Dear Dr. Moore:

I have a best friend, someone I have been friends with for the past ten years. About five years ago, I found out that the love of her life was cheating on her. When I told her, she got really upset with *me*. She did not believe me. Well I think she secretly already knew, but she did not want to admit it. She stopped talking to me for about a year. After our time apart, we became friends again, but we no longer discuss the relationships we have with our significant others. Interestingly enough, she is still with the same guy. As recent as last week, I found out through another source, that he is still up to no good. What should I do? Do I tell her, when I think she probably already knows and risk ruining our friendship? Or do I simply turn a blind eye? Any thoughts would be helpful.

From Anonymous

Response:

Greetings. First, I would like to say thank you for being courageous enough to bring this topic to light through Insight News.

I think you present a very interesting dilemma. On one hand, you do not want to risk ruining your friendship. At the same time, you feel obligated to protect your friend and to inform her about what is going on. I think you really need to examine your idea of friendship. What does being a friend mean to you? Are you your sister's keeper?

From your previous actions, I'll assume that you believe that true friendship is based on honesty. I will also assume that if a similar situation was going on in your life, you would hope, pray, or simply expect that she would come to you. Am I correct here? Are you your sister's keeper? If so, a quick, hard, and fast answer to your question would be to "speak the truth."

However, before you make any moves. I must ask you a few questions, as I am sure I do not have the entire story. You mentioned that you found out from a source that this man is cheating. How reliable is this "source?" Are you sure about your allegations? What proof do you have? How long have your friend and her mate been together? How happy is she in the relationship? Does she also engage in sexual activities outside of her relationship? Do they have children together?

Is she financially or emotionally dependent on him? Is there other critical information of which made aware? Does he want to stop cheating? Does he realize his faults? Does he care? How committed is he to this relationship?

You appear to believe that his cheating is public knowledge. If everyone knows about his indiscretions around town, then she probably knows as well. However, I see nothing wrong with bringing it to her attention again. Yes it is true, if you say something, she may become angry with you and stop talking to you for a while. Can you handle that? If you do not tell her, what could happen? Suppose she finds out that you knew and did not tell her, then what would happen? You might be in more trouble. What if she contracts an incurable STD, which in theory

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could have been prevented if someone (you) told her the truth? Would you be able to live with yourself? If you speak the truth, you might receive backlash, but at least you will be able to walk away knowing that you did your job (assuming you believe it is your job/obligation to tell her). Are you your sister's keeper?

From your letter I got the sense that you are leaning towards telling her the truth, regardless of the consequences. When we speak the truth, there is nothing to be afraid of. Therefore, I believe that you should trust your intuition and your feelings. I am not telling you what to do, but telling you to trust yourself and know that you have good intentions. If you are nervous, perhaps you could consider having a conversation with her about your role as her friend or her "sister." You could simply ask her if she would want you to tell her things such as a boyfriend cheating or information about other serious matters. If you did this, you could gage if she would be receptive to you talking with her before saying a word about your current situation.

One thing you should know is that for some people cheating is not a big deal. For others, it can be a deal breaker. As a marriage and family therapist, I work with couples all the time regarding infidelity. While I may have my own views about what does and does not work within relationships based on religion, it is ultimately not up to me to make that call for each couple. In therapy, we help clients explore the best options that work for them. They develop the goals for treatment and dictate the direction of therapy.

If your friend is interested on exploring why she continues to stay in a relationship that is based on – or at least rooted in – infidelity, then I would work with her regarding this. If she is interested in leaving such a relationship, I would assist her with exploring this option. However, if the couple is interested in working to improve its relationship, then I would work with them based on the couple's desired goals and objectives and help the two move past the infidelity.

In a perfect world, infidelity may not occur, but in the real world, believe me, it happens. The real question is, what do we do about it? Do you stay together and try to work through this issue or do you break things off? Is it a case of "once a cheater, always a cheater?" In your friend's case maybe so, but then again as a therapist I have to believe that people can change. However, people can only change if they so desire to change. We always like to think that we can force people to change, but I do not believe in this type of perspective. People change when they want to change, when something in their lives motivates them to modify their behavior. So in essence, it really goes back to what your friend and her significant other want. They may desire change, or desire for things to remain the same. You will never know, unless you bring up the topic.

One word of advice, do not work harder than your friend. You have to give her some of the responsibility for her own quality of life. She is in charge of her life and her destiny, not you. Short and simple, you should weigh the pros and the cons to telling her, make your decision, and do not waiver. If you feel uncomfortable having this conversation with her alone, you could always schedule an appointment with a marriage and family therapist and disclose this information within the context of a therapeutic session. At the end of the day, I think you already know what you want to do. You just need to be sure about it before addressing the issue at hand. When thinking through your dilemma, I want you to ask yourself this question, "Are you

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Let me know what you end up deciding and how things turn out. Please stay in touch. I hope to hear from you soon, but until then, "Stick around, there's Moore to come."

*Darren D. Moore, Ph.D., LMFT, is a licensed marriage and family therapist and an assistant professor in marriage and family therapy at a University in Georgia. He works with individuals, couples, and families regarding mental health and relationship concerns. His research, teaching and clinical interests include general mental health, obesity, weight loss, eating disorders and addictions, within couple and family relationships, with an emphasis in working with men, African-American families, and marginalized populations. Moore is a north Minneapolis native and obtained his bachelor's degree in African American Studies from the University of Minnesota, his master's degree in marriage and family therapy from Valdosta State University, and his Ph.D. in marriage and family therapy from Virginia Tech. Dr. Darren D Moore can be reached by email at [ddmoore@vt.edu](mailto:ddmoore@vt.edu) or (612) 296-3758.*