

Week Nineteen

Infidelity

In large surveys, up to 25% of men and 15% of women have been unfaithful to their spouse at least once. People who have had affairs often have these characteristics:

1. They are less satisfied in their marriages.
2. They are less satisfied with their marital sex life.
3. They tend to be less religious.
4. They tend to hold attitudes toward infidelity that are more tolerant than other people.

Whether or not someone has these characteristics, it would be unwise for anyone to assume that he or she is immune. Too often, relationships that begin innocently enough develop into something more serious over time. It is important to be aware of the cascade of events described in the previous week's column. Dedicated people who recognize attractive alternatives as a threat to their own relationship internally devalue the attractiveness of others in order to protect their commitment to their mate. Instead of wondering how delightful it might be to be with someone else, they tend to look for what might not be so good about the alternative.

Next week: Strategies for protecting your marriage from attractive alternatives.