

## What to do when you're tempted to cheat on your spouse [Mathilde De Robien](#) | [Jul 26, 2018](#)



*LDprod | Shutterstock*      *Infidelity not only hurts our families, it hurts our souls. Here's how to nip this temptation in the bud.*

Fantasy, mutual attraction, or even platonic admiration ... none of it is harmless. If you're experiencing these desires, take some time to reflect on your feelings, your relationship, and the meaning of marriage.

### Look for the cause

First, ask yourself, what is happening to tempt you to look or cast thoughts elsewhere? What is missing from the relationship that would explain a romantic interest in someone else? Is your relationship healthy, or drying up? Is the relationship stuck in routine? Is there a lack of communication, tenderness, or attention? Have past hurts been forgiven?

Serious reflection, done alone, as a couple, and/or with the guidance of a therapist, can help you see more clearly and uncover dysfunctions that can be fatal to the relationship. One of the best ways to avoid emotional or physical infidelity is to strengthen your marriage, facing difficulties together and constantly renewing your love. Sometimes you just need to rekindle or stir up the flame of romance.

### Physical distance

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No need to play with fire. If you find yourself drawn to someone outside your marriage, it's best to avoid situations that could lead you further astray. Decline ambiguous one-on-one meetings with a colleague; avoid going out at exactly the same time as your attractive neighbour in order to cross paths with him. Make a quick getaway when the object of your desire appears. Act prudently so as to avoid temptation.



### Mental distance

Sometimes it can be pleasing to simply imagine the object of your desire, telling yourself there's no harm doing so. But this only nourishes and reinforces the desire. This attitude is harmful, useless, and vain, and puts the soul in jeopardy. The Desert Fathers advise to practice guarding the heart (in Greek *nepsis*: vigilance), meaning to pay attention to the movements of the heart. This spiritual method, which aims to free us from impure and impassioned thoughts, invites us to observe our interior world and discern between good and bad thoughts. St. John of Damascus tells us that there is no fault in having troubling thoughts come to mind, but that we are responsible for what we do with these thoughts, either rejecting them or embracing them.

"The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak," (Mt 26:41), said Jesus to the disciples who had fallen asleep the night of his arrest on the Mount of Olives. Men and women are beings of flesh, subject to impulses and emotions — fragile beings marked by original sin. At the same time, men and women have within them the resources to resist temptation. Why does God permit this duality that sometimes causes us to suffer? God loves humanity and desires our good. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, he gives us the strength to fight all temptation that would hinder our happiness. He also gives us freedom and with this freedom, we can choose to resist temptation or succumb to it.

What to do when we feel tempted? Jesus' words to his disciples are also helpful for us: "Watch and pray, so as not to be led into temptation" (Mt 26:41). The state of wakefulness, also understood as introspection and prudence, enables us to prevent and purify unwanted desires. With God's grace, we are capable of firmly rejecting the temptation, and the firmer our decision, the better.

### Pray to experience the grace of marriage

Jesus advises his disciples to keep watch and pray. Through prayer and the sacraments, God gives us the grace to rediscover the meaning of marriage. The Catechism of the Catholic Church states that in order "to heal the wounds of sin, man and woman need the help of the grace that God in his infinite mercy never refuses them. Without this help man and woman cannot achieve the union of their lives for which God created them 'in the beginning.'" (1608). This particular grace "is intended to perfect the couple's love and strengthen their indissoluble unity" (1641). It is thus indispensable to turn towards Christ, source of grace, in order to remain unified and faithful throughout marriage.