

Writing Your Impact Letter

A guide for betrayed partners preparing to share the emotional impact of betrayal. To be used alongside your therapist.

What is the impact letter?

The impact letter is a written letter from you, the betrayed partner, to the person whose addiction and secrecy caused you harm. It is read aloud in a structured clinical session with your therapist present. The purpose is to give you a voice in the disclosure process. After you have received the truth, this is your turn to tell your partner what that truth cost you.

This is not about punishing your partner. It is not about winning an argument. It is about being honest, in your own words, about the full weight of what you have been carrying. Your partner needs to hear it. And you deserve to say it.

Before you begin writing

- Work with your individual therapist throughout the writing process. They will help you shape the letter and prepare emotionally.
- Give yourself time. Most people write multiple drafts over several weeks. There is no rush.
- Write for yourself first. Focus on what you need to say, not on how your partner will react.
- This letter does not need to be polished. It needs to be honest.

Areas to consider including

Your impact letter is yours. There is no required format. But here are areas that many betrayed partners find important to address. You do not need to include all of them. Include what is true for you.

- How the betrayal affected your sense of self. Your confidence, your identity, the way you see yourself.
- How it affected your ability to trust. Your partner, other people, your own instincts and judgment.
- The physical impact. Sleep, appetite, health, your nervous system, panic attacks, hypervigilance.
- The emotional impact. Grief, rage, shame, confusion, numbness, loneliness.
- How it affected your relationships. Friendships, family, your ability to be present with your children.
- How it affected your sexuality and physical intimacy. Feeling unsafe, disconnected, or unable to be close.
- How it affected your faith or spiritual life, if applicable.

- What you lost. Time, safety, the version of your relationship you believed in, the future you had planned.
- What daily life has been like. The intrusive thoughts, the checking, the hypervigilance, the exhaustion of pretending to be fine.

What to aim for

- Honesty, not performance. Write what is real, not what sounds most devastating.
- Specificity. "I stopped sleeping" is good. "I lay awake every night for three months replaying conversations, trying to figure out what was real" is better.
- Your experience. Use "I" statements. This is about what happened to you, not a catalogue of what your partner did wrong.
- The full picture. Include the quiet damage, not just the dramatic moments. The slow erosion of trust is often harder to name than the moment of discovery.

What to avoid

- Character attacks. This is not about labelling your partner as a person. It is about naming the impact of their behaviour.
- Ultimatums or threats. The letter is not the place for conditions about the future of the relationship.
- Minimizing your own pain. Do not soften things to protect your partner. They need to hear the truth.
- Comparing yourself to others. Your pain is your pain. It does not need to be measured against anyone else's.

What happens when you read it

The letter is read aloud in a clinical session with your therapist (and ideally your partner's therapist) present. Your partner listens without interrupting, defending, or explaining. They do not respond in the moment. The therapist holds the room and manages the emotional intensity.

After the reading, your partner will process what they heard in their own therapy. Follow-up sessions will give both of you space to work through what was shared. You do not carry this alone.

This guide is a companion to the clinical process. Please do not write or deliver your impact letter without the support of a therapist trained in the disclosure model. The structure and facilitation are what make this process safe.

This guide is intended to support the therapeutic process, not replace it. The impact letter and restitution letter should be written and read with the guidance of a qualified therapist trained in the disclosure model.

Joseph Addy, MDiv, RP (Qualifying), CSAT

Addy Psychotherapy | Etobicoke, Toronto | Online across Ontario
addypschotherapy.com | (647) 991-7604