

Writing Your Restitution Letter

A guide for the addicted partner preparing to demonstrate genuine accountability after hearing the impact letter. To be used alongside your CSAT.

What is the restitution letter?

The restitution letter is your written response to your partner's impact letter. It is not a defence. It is not an explanation. It is a demonstration that you have truly heard the cost of your behaviour and that you are taking concrete, observable steps to change.

This letter is different from an apology. You have likely apologized many times before. The restitution letter goes further. It names the specific harms your partner described, acknowledges them without minimizing, and lays out exactly what you are doing to ensure they do not happen again.

Before you begin writing

- Write this letter with the guidance of your CSAT or individual therapist. They will help you stay honest and avoid common pitfalls.
- Sit with the impact letter first. Do not rush to respond. Let your partner's words settle. Process them in therapy before you start writing.
- Ask yourself: have I actually heard what my partner said? If you are still feeling defensive, you are not ready to write this.
- This letter requires genuine empathy, not performed remorse. Your partner will know the difference.

What to include

The restitution letter has two core parts. First, specific acknowledgment of the harm. Second, concrete commitments to change.

Part 1: Acknowledging the harm

- Reference specific things your partner shared in their impact letter. Show that you listened.
- Use their language, not yours. If they said "I stopped trusting my own instincts," reflect that back. Do not rephrase it into something more comfortable for you.
- Name what your behaviour did, not just what you did. "I lied" is a fact. "My lying made you question your own reality for two years" is acknowledgment.
- Do not qualify the acknowledgment. No "but." No context. No explanation of why you did what you did. That work belongs in your own therapy, not in this letter.

Part 2: Concrete commitments to change

This is where the letter becomes more than words. Your commitments should be specific, observable, and measurable. Your partner should be able to look at your life and see whether these things are actually happening.

- Ongoing individual therapy. How often, with whom, and for how long you are committed.
- Group therapy or recovery community involvement, if applicable.
- Transparency measures. What you are doing with devices, accounts, and access. Be specific.
- Accountability structures. Who holds you accountable and how.
- Boundaries you are putting in place around triggers and high-risk situations.
- Commitment to couples therapy and the ongoing recovery process.
- What you will do when you are struggling, instead of reverting to old patterns.

What does NOT belong in this letter

- Excuses or justifications. "I was stressed," "Our relationship had problems," "My childhood was difficult." All of that may be true. None of it belongs here.
- Deflection. "You also..." or any framing that shifts responsibility onto your partner.
- Vague promises. "I will do better" means nothing without specifics. Name what "better" looks like in concrete terms.
- Requests for forgiveness. This letter is not a transaction. You are not offering accountability in exchange for absolution.
- Your trauma history used to explain your behaviour. Your history is real and it matters in your own therapy. In this letter, the focus stays on your partner's experience.

What happens when you read it

The restitution letter is read aloud in a structured session with therapist facilitation. Your partner listens. They do not have to respond in the moment. The therapist holds the space.

Your partner will process the letter in their own therapy. Follow-up couples sessions will address questions, concerns, and next steps. This is not a single moment of closure. It is part of an ongoing process.

A word about honesty

Your partner can tell when the words are genuine and when they are performed. If you have not done the internal work to truly understand the impact of your behaviour, the letter will feel hollow. That is not a failure. It is information. It tells both of you, and your therapist, where more work is needed. Do not rush this to check a box.

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.

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