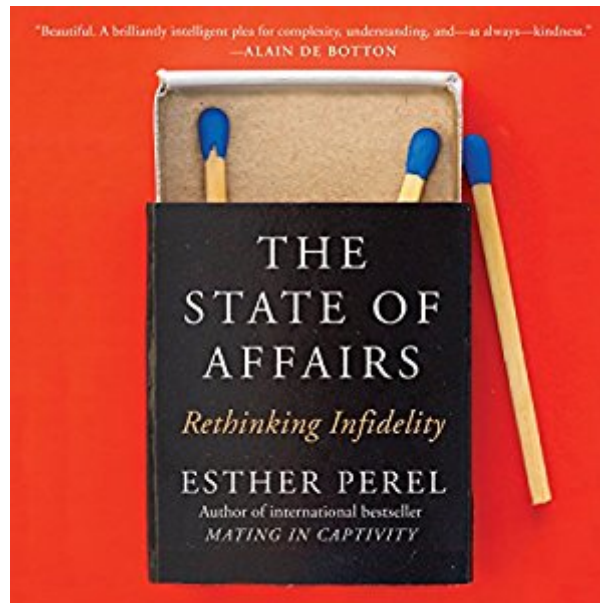




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The State Of Affairs: Rethinking Infidelity



Synopsis

Iconic couples' therapist and best-selling author of *Mating in Captivity* Esther Perel returns with a groundbreaking and provocative look at infidelity, arguing for a more nuanced and less judgmental conversation about our transgressions. An affair: It can rob a couple of their relationship, their happiness, their very identity. And yet this extremely common human experience is so poorly understood. Adultery has existed since marriage was invented, and so, too, the prohibition against it - in fact it has a tenacity that marriage can only envy. So what are we to make of this time-honored taboo, universally forbidden yet universally practiced? For the past 10 years, master therapist Esther Perel has traveled the globe and worked with hundreds of couples who have been shattered by infidelity. In *The State of Affairs* she asks, why do we cheat? And why do happy people cheat? Why does infidelity hurt so much? And when we say infidelity, what exactly do we mean? Is an affair always the end of a marriage? Affairs, she writes, have a lot to teach us about relationships. They provide unusual insight into our personal and cultural attitudes about love, lust, and commitment. Betrayal hurts, but it can be healed. An affair can even be the doorway to a new marriage - with the same person. With the right approach, Perel argues, couples can grow and learn from these tumultuous experiences, together or apart. Fiercely intelligent, *The State of Affairs* provides a daring framework for understanding the intricacies of love and desire. As Perel writes, "Love is messy; infidelity more so. But it is also a window, like no other, into the crevices of the human heart."

Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 10 hours

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Harper Audio

Scheduled Audible.com Release Date: October 10, 2017

Language: English

ASIN: B072W97SV2

Best Sellers Rank: #16 in [Books > Medical Books > Psychology > Sexuality](#) #30 in [Books > Health, Fitness & Dieting > Psychology & Counseling > Sexuality](#) #47 in [Books > Medical Books > Psychology > Counseling](#)

Customer Reviews

Infidelity. It's a highly charged topic that everyone has definite opinions about because most people

have been touched by it in some way. But what truly lies beyond the emotion, beyond the pain, beyond the preconceptions? This is the territory that clinician and researcher Esther Perel covers in this important new work. Through working through the pain of infidelity with hundreds of couples, interviews and feedback from hundreds more across a broad swath of cultures and situations, and analysis of current research she tries to construct a picture of infidelity for all of us to look at and learn from. In fifteen chapters that progressively work through defining different types of infidelity, the emotions of pain, jealousy, and guilt, processing, rebuilding, and constructing meaning, and the nature and challenges to monogamy in this culture, Perel brings her points home with clinical vignettes that illustrate both the ravaging damage and the potential hope that characterize walking through infidelity. Perel challenges the reader to rethink their views, whatever they are, and realize that infidelity is rarely as simple or as straightforward as we think. There is no one single path to healing, there is no one pat answer as to why people cheat or what they should do when they're caught. Trying, really trying, to deeply understand the deep issues involved for all the parties is the only path to real growth, real healing. I don't know anyone, whether "cheater" or cheated against or friend or family who would not greatly benefit from this important work. Highly recommended.

If you've seen Esther Perel's TED talk, "Rethinking Infidelity," you've got a good introduction to this book. Her TED talk is nearing 8 million views. Her book also merits a wide audience. Perhaps Perel's signal service is in updating the context by which we cast our ideals for relationships. She reminds us that our circumstances are very different from those of our ancestors who helped shape the templates of our ongoing experience. The book is based on a large number of interviews. We see the different perspectives of those who stray and those who are betrayed. Readers will doubtless take away their own interpretations, also varied. In a time when centralized institutions and "one-size-fits-all" ways of thinking are breaking down, individuals are experiencing greater freedom than perhaps ever before. Yet, with that freedom comes new challenges of responsibility and self-determination. 'The State of Affairs' is a useful snapshot of today's relationship landscape. With Perel's guidance, readers can see what is unusual and what is commonplace in their own lives. So, too, through the testimony of others, they can see that no matter what else, in terms of their experiences they're likely far from alone. This reader finds value in Perel's approach. She doesn't so much try to think things through for others, as to enable others to think things through more clearly and rigorously for themselves.

Back in the early 90's I read an excellent book on infidelity by author Frank Pittman entitled "Private

Lies: Infidelity and the Betrayal of Intimacy." Psychiatrist Frank Pittman's work made me understand the psychology and consequences of affairs and it is an authoritative work on the subject. In Esther Perel's new book, "The State of Affairs," she has us rethinking infidelity. Both authors agree, affairs are destructive. But Perel's book is not a book just about infidelity. She shares her collective and global perspective, as a therapist, with real stories from the trenches to unravel a complex problem that is widespread and happening every minute behind someone's back. I did not find new information in Perel's book, just more conversations with different victims. Most of these questions about why people cheat or their insidious motivations have been answered. Affairs thrive on secrecy and there is no benefit, only consequences. I happen to be a big fan of the films "Play Misty for Me," which later became "Fatal Attraction," and "Bob, Carol, Ted and Alice," and the point of those films are that affairs ruin people's lives and families. Sometimes guys and women can be just plain stupid. Like with Bill Clinton, no one cared about Monica Lewinsky, we cared because he lied to us as Americans when he said, "I did not have sexual relations with that woman." The question is: Do we need a new conversation, as the author suggests, or do we continue the conversation where Pittman's brilliant work leaves off? I say, continue the conversation and buy both books if this is a situation you are dealing with. The truth of the matter is, the state of affairs then, now and forever, is still sad.

In *The State of Affairs*, Esther Perel gives an in depth look at infidelity and the effects it has on a relationship. She uses dozens of cases from her research to illustrate the various reasons why a person may cheat on their partner. As expected, she asks the question "does an affair always mean the end of a relationship?" The book covers a lot of ground and Perel writes with clarity on a complex subject. The personal stories are insightful and in the end there is no right or wrong answer when it comes to working through infidelity. I've been there as have many of my friends and we all handled the situation differently. As Perel acknowledges, there is no one-size-fits-all approach to working through infidelity. Her book provides some insight into how dozens of couples have coped with this betrayal of trust.

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