

BETWEEN SESSIONS

Episode 3: The Coldplay Couple Comes to Therapy

Holding Affairs in the Room

SUMMARY & KEY TAKEAWAYS

Summary of Content

In this third episode of *Between Sessions*, Karen Murphy invites therapists to reflect on how we sit with couples in the aftermath of an affair.

Using the recent viral “Coldplay couple” moment as a starting point — not to analyse them, but to explore how we as therapists might hold a couple presenting with a public rupture — Karen speaks to the deeply human, emotionally charged nature of affair work.

She reflects on our role as therapists when clients arrive carrying pain, betrayal, confusion, and disconnection, and what it means to stay neutral, grounded, and open in the face of strong stories and reactions.

Rather than focusing on clinical technique, this episode offers a higher-level, reflective lens on how to begin the work when affairs come into the therapy room.

Key Takeaways for Therapists

1. **We're not here to be the moral police**

Therapists will naturally have feelings or opinions when they hear about an affair, but our job is not to assess right or wrong. Instead, we hold space to understand each partner's internal process and what has unfolded between them.

2. **Affair work starts with neutrality and curiosity**

We ask: Why are you here? What do you each hope to understand, change, or decide through this process? Our role is to support reflection and discovery, not to direct outcomes.

3. **Each partner may want something different**

One partner may want to stay, the other to leave. Or neither knows yet. Early work often centres on helping each person clarify what they need, want, or feel.

4. **Therapists need to check in with their own histories**

If a therapist has been impacted by infidelity in their own life, it's important to assess whether they feel grounded enough to sit with this kind of presentation. Bracketing our own experience is essential.

5. **Presentation matters**

Karen highlights how a partner who is remorseful and reflective shows a very different process to one who is defensive, entitled, or dismissive. This information informs how we hold the couple, without casting blame.

6. **We're not blaming, we're trying to understand**

Exploring how the affair came about isn't the same as justifying it. We're looking for context, patterns, unmet needs, relational history, and coping strategies, not a verdict.

7. **Affair repair begins with the affair partner**

In the immediate aftermath, the betrayed partner is often too flooded to engage in reflective work. Karen suggests beginning by exploring what allowed the affair partner to go against their own stated values or monogamous

commitment.

8. The role of deception matters

The extent and nature of lies — especially if gaslighting was involved — offers important information about the couple's process, but again, we approach this with clinical interest, not judgment.

9. Awareness creates choice

When we help couples understand how they got to this point — what was missing, what was overlooked, what each partner has been carrying — they can make more choiceful decisions about whether and how to move forward.

10. Support without pushing

Our role isn't to encourage repair or separation. It's to support couples in making grounded, informed, and emotionally honest decisions — based on a clearer understanding of themselves and each other.