

# BETWEEN SESSIONS

Episode 3: The Coldplay Couple Comes to Therapy

## TRANSCRIPT

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### Introduction

Hello.

In this next instalment of the *Between Sessions* series, I thought it would be, um, topical to talk about the Coldplay couple — to talk about imagining the Coldplay couple coming to therapy.

So let me step back and say a little bit more about this.

I've just come back from my summer break, and like all of you out there, I have no doubt I couldn't help but, um, be informed of what happened at the Coldplay concert 2 or 3 weeks ago, where there was a couple caught on the kiss cam. And when the camera highlighted them on the screen, both people hid themselves — and it blew up the internet.

You will have seen that there's been a lot of, um, interest in it. A lot of people impacted by it, a lot of people having opinions — very strong opinions — about the man, about the woman, about the man's wife, about the woman's wife. And I thought it would be really helpful for us to think about that from a couples therapy perspective, and a couples therapist's perspective.

Which is why I've called this: ***The Coldplay Couple Comes to Therapy.***

### We Know Nothing — And That Matters

Now, I'm not going to talk about that couple in particular — because I know nothing about them, and I wouldn't imagine knowing anything about them. I think that's something very important to start with. We know nothing about that man, that woman, or their partners. There's a lot out there in the public eye — but actually, no context or real information behind it.

So in my mind, I was imagining either one of those individuals and their partners, in the aftermath of this, making a decision to go to couples therapy.

## A Familiar Presentation

One of us, as couples therapists, receiving a phone call:

*"Something really difficult has happened in our relationship. I've discovered my husband, or my wife, is having an affair. I've discovered it in a really public forum. Can we make an appointment to come see you?"*

Now, coming away from that specific couple, because as I say, we know nothing about them, you will either already have had a couple in those circumstances come into your office, or, in the future, you likely will.

## Bracketing Our Reactions as Therapists

In the aftermath of discovering an affair, the positioning we need to take as couples therapists is very different from the positioning we're seeing in the common narrative that's out there.

But, we're human. And being human...

**It might be interesting for you to think for yourself:**

*What came up for you when you read that story, whether in the news or on social media?*

*What thoughts did you have?*

*What feelings?*

*What opinions?*

Because we're human beings, we're going to have thoughts, feelings, and opinions about things that happen. It's really helpful for us to be aware of our own reactions, notice them, bracket them, and put them to one side.

Then we sit in our role as couples therapists and ask: *Is there a way I can help support this couple?*

## When the Work Might Not Be Yours

Also, depending on where you're at in your career, if you've been impacted by an affair yourself, ensure that you feel grounded enough in yourself to work with a couple bringing

in this presentation. If it has happened to you, it may still be active or alive in you, and that's something to be aware of. It might be the right decision to refer those clients on.

## Starting Where the Couple Is

As couples therapists, we sit there with curiosity. We ask each partner:

***Why have you come? What are you hoping to get help with?***

Each person may want something very different from the process. One may want to stay in the relationship. The other may want to leave. Or, they might both want to figure it out together.

**So we sit neutrally and ask: *Why are you here?***

They might say:

*"I'm here because I've had an affair,"* or

*"My husband or wife has had an affair."*

And then we ask:

***"What are you hoping this process will help you with?"***

There can be a whole lot of different reasons:

- I want to figure out if I can trust this person again.
- I want to figure out how to leave.
- I want to understand why the affair happened.
- I want to figure out who's to blame.

That's why the starting point is so important: understanding what brings them into the room.

## Timing Matters

The way they present will also depend on when the affair was discovered.

Was it very recent? Or has some time passed?

Is the emotional intensity still very high, or has it begun to settle?

## Neutrality and Context

Something I feel **very strongly** about is the importance of **neutrality** as a couples therapist.

That's why I'm using the Coldplay couple as a symbolic example. Because some presentations, just on an emotional level, *feel* a lot stronger.

For example:

- Was it a one-night stand or a year-long affair?
- Did it involve a co-worker or a close friend, or even a sibling?
- What was the level of deception?
- Were there lies that made the partner feel they were imagining things?

## We're Not the Moral Police

The Developmental Model has helpful concepts around deception — especially when one partner is made to feel they're "crazy" for suspecting something that was, in fact, true.

Again: **we are not the moral police.** That's not our job.

But if someone presents feeling self-righteous, entitled, or justified in having an affair, with no empathy or remorse, that's useful information. It tells us something about their process, and possibly their personality.

On the other hand, if someone comes in extremely distressed and apologetic, that's also informative.

We're not here to determine who's right or wrong.

We're here to wonder about the **process**.

## Exploration Isn't Blame

We need to be curious about each person and their internal world.

- What was happening within the relationship?
- What's the couple's history?
- What are the patterns?

**This isn't about assigning blame, it's about understanding *how* this happened.**

If we can facilitate awareness, new insight the couple didn't have before, then they're more equipped to make meaningful, choiceful decisions.

Whether that's a conscious separation or a renewed commitment.

## When One Person Isn't Ready to Reflect

In the immediate aftermath of an affair, the betrayed partner is often too flooded to engage in reflective work. That's not where we start.

### We begin with the affair partner.

We ask:

*"If you committed to a monogamous relationship, what was going on for you that made this okay? How did you justify it to yourself?"*

That's a powerful place to start the work.

## Stay Curious. Stay Neutral.

These are the words I return to again and again in my teaching and supervision.

It's not easy. But it's necessary.

And if I go back in my imagination to the Coldplay couple... I hope that if either, or both, find themselves in couples therapy, they're held with compassion and curiosity. Held by someone willing to walk with them in the truth of their actions, and help them find a new way forward, if that's what they choose.

## Closing Thoughts

That's a high-level overview of how we begin the work when an affair is the presenting issue in couples therapy.

Thank you.