

How To Prevent Affairs

There is no such thing as an affair-proof marriage. But couples who want to protect their unions from infidelity can be mindful of the dangers. To keep a marriage healthy:

* **Stay honest with your partner.** "Honesty is the trump card for preventing affairs," says Peggy Vaughan, who has studied affairs for more than two decades. Her Web site is dearpeggy.com. "Make a commitment to sharing your attractions and temptations." That helps to avoid acting on them. Dishonesty and deception cause affairs to flourish, Vaughan says.

* **Monitor your marriage.** "Realize if there is something missing," says psychologist Kimberly Young of St. Bonaventure University in southwest New York state. "Be willing to try to fix it." Assess whether needs are being met.

* **Stay alert for temptations.** "Be very careful of getting involved in the first place," Young says. "Know the dangers. You can be drawn to an affair as to a drug. And once you are past a certain point of emotional connection, it is very hard to go into reverse."

* **Don't flirt.** "That is how affairs start," says Bonnie Eaker Weil, whose Web site, www.makeupdontbreakup.com, features tips for preventing infidelity. "Flirting is not part of an innocent friendship. If you think there might be a problem with someone you flirt with, there probably is a problem."

* **Recognize that work can be a danger zone.** "Don't lunch or take private coffee breaks with the same person all the time," psychologist Shirley Glass says.

* **Beware of the lure of the Internet.** "Emotional affairs develop quickly, in maybe a few days or weeks online, where it might take a year at the office," Young says. "There is safety behind the computer screen."

* **Keep old flames from reigniting.** "If you value your marriage, think twice about having lunch with one," Glass says. Invite your partner along.

* **Value the intimacy of your marriage.** "Reveal as much of yourself to one another as possible," Atlanta psychiatrist Frank Pittman says. "You will find it less necessary to form an intimate friendship with someone else."

* **Make sure your social network supports marriage.** "Surround yourself with happily married friends who don't believe in fooling around," Glass says.