

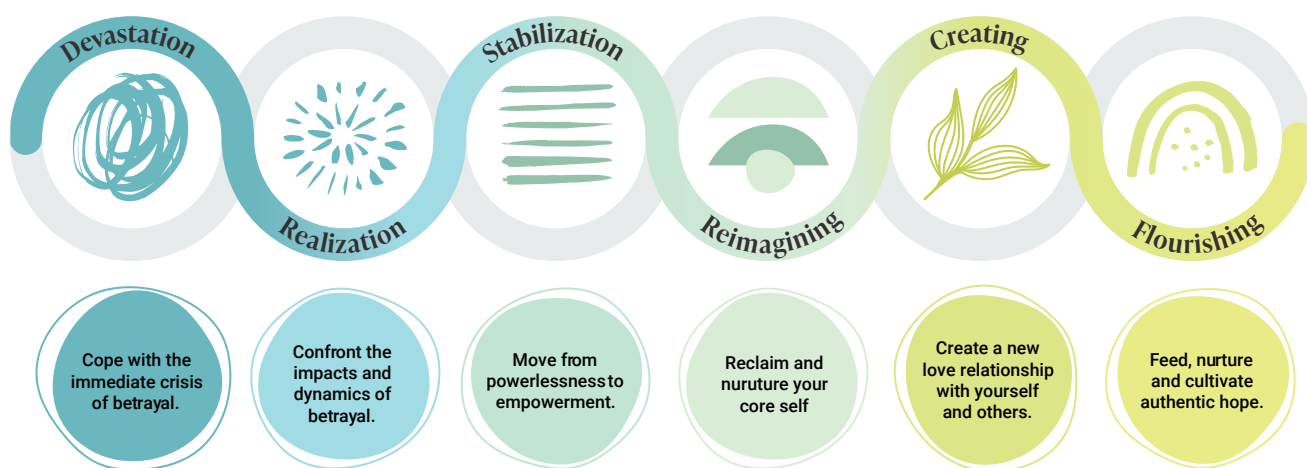
# The Attachment-Focused Partner Betrayal Model:

## A Step-by-Step Guide to Healing Partner Betrayal

Michelle Mays, LPC, CSAT-S



# The Attachment-Focused Partner Betrayal Model provides a clear attachment-based path to healing partner betrayal.



Michelle Mays provides an in-depth explanation of the Attachment-Focused Partner Betrayal Model in her new book, *The Betrayal Bind: How to Heal When the Person You Love the Most Hurts You the Worst*. This Step-by-Step Guide offers a convenient outline of the key tasks and outcomes for each phase described in the book.

The path to healing from partner betrayal moves through six phases: devastation, realization, stabilization, reimagining, creating, and flourishing. Each phase of The Attachment-Focused Partner Betrayal Model has its own goals, tasks and outcomes. Each of these phases outlines the specific skills, tools and relational abilities that, when developed, will move betrayed partners out of pain and confusion in a place of connection, empowerment and wholeness.



## Devastation Phase

Cope with the Immediate Crisis of Betrayal

| Tasks                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Outcomes                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Learn to recognize partner betrayal trauma.</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | <b>Experience relief as you learn terms and concepts</b> to help you understand and articulate your experience; and recognize that you are normal, the range of reactions and emotions you are experiencing is to be expected. |
| <b>Identify where and how to get expert help</b> and build your alternative safe base.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | <b>Begin to feel connected</b> to a stable source of support and help that you can depend upon.                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Develop skills and utilize tools</b> to calm, comfort, and soothe your activated nervous system.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <b>Move toward your window of tolerance, feel longer periods of calm</b> , and gain better access to clear thinking and decision-making.                                                                                       |
| <b>Access help from your support team</b> managing any immediate crisis issues (legal, financial, parenting, health etc.) To access the free Betrayal Trauma Crisis Assessment Tool to assist you and your support system in this process go to: <a href="http://www.michellemays.com/crisis-and-risk-assessment-tool/">www.michellemays.com/crisis-and-risk-assessment-tool/</a> | <b>Resolve immediate crisis issues</b> to the degree possible to free up mental and emotional resources to focus on healing.                                                                                                   |
| <b>Learn about the attachment injury at the heart of betrayal</b> and the role of attachment ambivalence and attachment shame in activating relational trauma symptoms.                                                                                                                                                                                                           | <b>Move into awareness about the deeper relational needs and motivations</b> driving your thinking, feeling, and behaviors as you respond to the loss of relational connection and safety.                                     |
| <b>Identify the core attachment needs</b> reflected in specific common behavioral patterns following betrayal such as battling for empathy, repudiating shame, and declawing the tiger.                                                                                                                                                                                           | <b>Begin to trade unhelpful reactionary coping strategies for new coping skills</b> that better meet your needs for relational and emotional safety.                                                                           |



## Realization Phase

### Confront the Impacts and Dynamics of Betrayal

| Tasks                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Outcomes                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Develop skills to slow the cycle of attachment ambivalence</b> and identify safe zones within the relationship where connection is possible and danger zones where boundaries are needed.                                                                                          | <b>Accept your attachment needs as normal and healthy and make positive choices</b> about how to get those needs met in your current situation while also protecting yourself from further harm.                                                                                        |
| <b>Learn about the emotional and psychological injury</b> at the heart of betrayal including the types and impacts of gaslighting and the attachment-based role of betrayal blindness.                                                                                                | <b>Experience clarity and decreasing confusion</b> as you identify gaslighting when it is happening and remove yourself from the path of danger. Experience growing tolerance for uncomfortable emotions and fear as you learn to stay connected to your reality even when it is scary. |
| <b>Identify and release</b> cultural carried shame, sexual carried shame and carried shame related to the infidelity.                                                                                                                                                                 | <b>Increase self-worth and expand your ability to hold the cheating partner accountable.</b> Experience freedom from attachment shame and make the decision that is best for you regarding staying in or leaving the relationship.                                                      |
| <b>If you need or want to leave your relationship but are unable to due to fear, develop a plan</b> for working through fear and developing internal resilience and resourcefulness. Understand that you must be able to leave the relationship before you can make a choice to stay. | <b>Welcome a growing sense of resilience and connection</b> to your core self as you work through your fear and become able to make a fully free choice to stay or to leave your relationship.                                                                                          |
| <b>Learn about the sexual injury at the heart of betrayal</b> and identify the ways in which sexual betrayal has impacted your sexuality and your sexual relationship.                                                                                                                | <b>As you grieve the losses around the sexual injury, you also experience a new understanding</b> of your worth and value as a sexual being. Your expectations for a healthy sexual self and a healthy life-giving sexual relationship expand and enlarge.                              |
| <b>Become empowered to learn</b> the whole truth about betrayal through requesting a full therapeutic disclosure.                                                                                                                                                                     | <b>Experience the relief of limiting further emotional harm to yourself</b> from staggered discovery by decreasing Sherlocking behaviors and setting boundaries around receiving a full therapeutic disclosure.                                                                         |



## Stabilization Phase

Move from Powerlessness to Empowerment

| Tasks                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Outcomes                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Learn to effectively set and maintain boundaries</b> and bottom lines.                                                                                                                                               | <b>Experience an increased sense of safety and empowerment</b> in all your relationships.                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Learn to hold your reality in conscious awareness</b> as you step out of the gaslighting dance and move away from betrayal blindness.                                                                                | <b>Experience clarity and decreasing confusion as you identify gaslighting</b> when it is happening and remove yourself from the path of danger. Experience growing tolerance for uncomfortable emotions and fear as you learn to stay connected to your reality even when it is scary. |
| <b>Learn to use your effective powerful voice</b> to communicate and ask for what you need.                                                                                                                             | <b>Decreased conflict along with increased relational risk</b> as you more clearly communicate what you need and wait to see how your partner responds.                                                                                                                                 |
| <b>Learn to rescue yourself from the trauma trigger cascade</b> by identifying powerless behaviors and exchanging them for empowered beliefs, thinking and actions.                                                     | <b>Increased knowledge of and trust in yourself and your ability to handle challenging situations</b> expands your capacity to face fears, take risks, and do what is best for you.                                                                                                     |
| <b>Identify where fear of loss is creating paralysis</b> and patterns of powerlessness that prevent you from utilizing the skills you are learning. Begin to work through fear by taking manageable risks with support. | <b>Get unstuck, experience forward movement and increased healing</b> as you build trust in yourself, internal resilience, and resourcefulness.                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Identify the difference between reactive emotions and core emotions</b> and learn to experientially differentiate when you are in each.                                                                              | <b>Begin to experience the relief and emotional grounding</b> that occurs when you access and process your primary emotional experience.                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Complete a full therapeutic disclosure</b> with the cheating partner (if you are staying in your relationship).                                                                                                      | <b>Full confidence that you know the scope of the betrayal</b> and have established a baseline of honesty and trust within the relationship to begin to build upon.                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Create a plan</b> for handling relapses or slips that may occur.                                                                                                                                                     | <b>Decreased fear of relapses/slips along with increased empowerment</b> to handle any sobriety challenges that occur with self-care, self-compassion, appropriate boundaries, and bottom lines.                                                                                        |
| <b>If you are leaving your relationship, create a support team</b> to provide you with community, guidance, and nurture as you enter the grieving process.                                                              | <b>Experience support</b> that allows you to truly separate from and divorce your partner both legally and emotionally, freeing you to move forward.                                                                                                                                    |



## Re-imagining Phase

### Reclaim and Nurture Your Core Self

| Tasks                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Outcomes                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Identify and understand</b> your attachment style and your partner's attachment style (if staying).                                                                                                                                                                  | <b>Increased compassion and empathy</b> as you better understand your (and your partner's) relational patterns and how they came to be.                                                            |
| <b>Identify the beliefs, feeling states, and behavioral patterns that shape your sense of self</b> (i.e., I believe I am not worthy of getting my needs met, as a result I feel deprived and exhausted, and I operate in an anti-dependent manner in my relationships). | <b>Welcome a new understanding</b> of the patterns that have shaped your relationship with yourself and others.                                                                                    |
| <b>Identify the beliefs, feeling states, and behavioral patterns that shape how you see others</b> (i.e., I believe others are not reliable and I cannot depend on them, as a result I feel alone, and I expect others to disappoint me or not treat me well).          | <b>Allow yourself to grieve</b> the negative beliefs and patterns that have limited your ability to have secure relationships with yourself and others.                                            |
| <b>Identify the origin story behind these beliefs, feeling states, and relational patterns</b> by exploring family of origin dynamics or childhood trauma impacts.                                                                                                      | <b>Experience growing compassion, knowledge, and self-love</b> as you better understand your story.                                                                                                |
| <b>Access and process your core emotional experience</b> related to the partner betrayal trauma as well as childhood betrayal trauma.                                                                                                                                   | <b>Experience healing and freedom</b> as old emotional wounds are processed and transformed creating space for your core self to emerge and develop.                                               |
| <b>Learn to re-parent yourself</b> to heal old wounds, develop secure bonding, and create new healthy relational patterns with yourself and others.                                                                                                                     | <b>Become empowered</b> to operate from new powerful beliefs, supportive emotional states, and healthy behavioral patterns that honor your core self and build positive relationships with others. |
| <b>Practice operating from new beliefs</b> , feeling states and behavioral patterns in relationship with yourself and others.                                                                                                                                           | <b>Experience the benefits of vulnerability and risk taking</b> as your core self gets stronger and your capacity for secure bonding with yourself and others expands.                             |
| <b>Participate in attachment-focused couples therapy</b> to heal relational injuries and reshape and repair the secure bond between you and your partner.                                                                                                               | <b>Experience deep healing, rebuilt trust, and renewed love for your partner</b> as the wounds created by betrayal heal and recede from the forefront of the relationship.                         |



## Creating Phase

Create a New Love Relationship with Yourself and Others

| Tasks                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Outcomes                                                                                                                                                                          |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Practice operating from new beliefs</b> , feeling states and behavioral patterns in relationship with yourself and others.                                                                                     | <b>Experience the benefits of vulnerability and risk-taking</b> as your core self gets stronger and your capacity for secure bonding with yourself and others expands.            |
| <b>Continue building safe connection</b> in your relationship and repairing wounds that still need tending.                                                                                                       | <b>Enjoy increasing connection</b> with your partner as the betrayal begins to recede from the forefront of the relationship.                                                     |
| <b>Repair sexual wounds</b> and create a healthy sex plan for yourself and/or your relationship.                                                                                                                  | <b>Welcome a new understanding and acceptance of your sexual self</b> and grow in your ability to co-create a fulfilling and life-giving sex life with yourself and/or a partner. |
| <b>Transform fear, anger, and bitterness</b> through a deeply personal experience of forgiveness.                                                                                                                 | <b>Experience the freedom</b> of releasing yourself from the emotional prison of resentment, anger or bitterness while continuing to hold the cheating partner accountable.       |
| <b>If newly single, learn about healthy relationships, healthy sexuality, and develop a dating plan</b> with bottom lines and boundaries (for yourself) if you have left your relationship and are ready to date. | <b>Adventure into the experience of sharing your authentic self</b> with new potential partners who are available for safe and secure connection.                                 |
| <b>Create a vision for the life and relationship</b> you long for and venture toward new dreams that arise from deeper connection with your core self.                                                            | <b>Experience the joy</b> that comes from listening to your longings and allowing yourself to move toward new relationships, hobbies, careers, and adventures.                    |



## Flourishing Phase

Feed, Nurture and Cultivate Authentic Hope

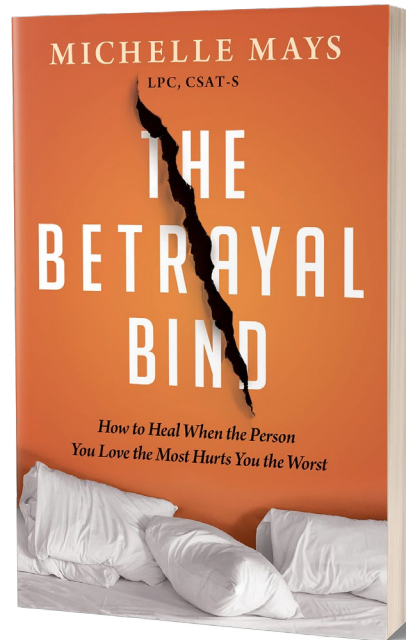
| Tasks                                                                                                                                                              | Outcomes                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Maintain connection and interdependence</b> with your community of support.                                                                                     | <b>Live a life that is enriched</b> by a strong sense of community and relationships.                                                                                                        |
| <b>Maintain long-term self-care priorities</b> , rituals, and practices.                                                                                           | <b>Experience the emotional and relational stability</b> that consistent self-care and emotional self-nurture create.                                                                        |
| <b>If staying in your relationship, determine long-term supports needed</b> (i.e., twelve-step meeting participation) to continue to cultivate and maintain gains. | <b>Enjoy the sense of accomplishment</b> that comes with graduating from therapy and moving into a new phase where growth is less intense but is an ongoing part of life.                    |
| <b>Increase intimacy with your partner</b> and more easily and confidently repair relational breaches, triggers, or conflicts.                                     | <b>Experience the relief that comes when the relationship is no longer under threat</b> and you and your partner are able to weather bumps in the road constructively.                       |
| <b>Continue to learn about yourself, healthy relationships, and sexuality</b> as you venture into dating and building a new love relationship.                     | <b>Enter dating or romantic relationships with new confidence</b> in your ability to share your authentic self with a partner and to make wise choices about who you choose to partner with. |

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# The Betrayal Bind

## How to Heal When the Person You Love the Most Hurts You the Worst

*In Michelle Mays' new book, find out how to resolve the crucial relational dilemma that betrayed partners face when their significant other is unsafe to connect to, yet connection is the key to healing.*



### **Discovering a partner's sexual betrayal spins your world out of control.**

In a split second, your sense of safety is shattered, your trust is gone and everything you thought you could count on is in question.

Betrayed partners, whether dealing with an isolated infidelity or sexual addiction, need the answer to this pivotal question: what happens when your partner, your lover, your primary person cheats on you and, in an instant, becomes a source of danger, pain, and threat?

Betrayed partners need immediate support to navigate the new terrain of their relationship. They need a clear articulation of betrayal trauma, a thorough education about their normal attachment-based reactions, and a proven path to healing.

By focusing on how a partner's attachment system functions in the wake of sexual betrayal, *The Betrayal Bind* offers a new, game-changing exploration into an age-old problem and connects the dots from research to the lived experience of betrayed partners.

**Michelle Mays** is a Licensed Professional Counselor and expert in treating sexual betrayal and trauma. She is the creator of Attachment-Focused Partner Betrayal Model providing attachment-based coaching, training, and certification to heal partner betrayal.

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# Praise for The Betrayal Bind

*"In The Betrayal Bind, Michelle Mays uses attachment theory to explain, educate, and empower hurting partners. Through her compassionate use of storytelling, Mays shares profound insights, normalizes partner's experiences, and provides encouragement and support. It is a must read for any person experiencing betrayal."*

**—Stefanie Carnes, PhD**, President of the International Institute for Trauma and Addiction Professionals and author of *Courageous Love*

*"Mays speaks the unvarnished truth about the impact of intimate betrayal with warmth and compassion as she guides the reader on a hero's journey from pain to grace. She accurately describes the emotionally harrowing, complex experience of betrayal trauma without pathologizing either party. With neuro-scientific accuracy, Mays explains why fear, shame, and powerlessness drive attachment ambivalence and how to shift out of it. The Betrayal Bind illuminates a clear and empowering path forward toward creating safety, sexual healing, and reclaiming an authentic sense of self. This book is a must-read for the betrayed, betrayers, and therapists."*

**—Alexandra Katehakis**, author, *Mirror of Intimacy: Daily Reflections on Emotional and Erotic Intelligence*

*"Michelle Mays weaves personal insight, beautiful writing, current attachment science, and clinical expertise to share this gift with us. With gentle respect for the busy brain, The Betrayal Bind reaches her reader where the heart is, guiding us to a deeper understanding of why sexual betrayal is so devastating. Michelle helps us hold ourselves, our friends, our family, and/or our clients with the utmost compassion in the aftermath of betrayal. I recommend this book for not only those swimming in the deep water of sexual betrayal, but also for adults living with the intimate betrayal that happens when our first caregivers are abusive."*

**—Kelly McDaniel**, LPC, trauma therapist and author of *Ready to Heal* and *Mother Hunger*

*"In this landmark text, Michelle Mays provides a path to healing from the pain of relationship betrayal. She candidly shares her personal experience of recovery and renewal from the trauma of partner betrayal. This transformation provided her with the understanding and empathy she expresses as a therapist, speaker, and author. The Betrayal Bind offers new hope for individuals and partners seeking to move beyond the hurt of their past to experience the life and relationship they desire."*

**—Dr. Mark Sanna**, Breakthrough Coaching

*"[The Betrayal Bind is] one of the most useful and comprehensive books on identifying and healing emotional betrayal. Michelle Mays's examination of these painful issues is laced with generous doses of practical advice and hope for the future. Relying on her personal and professional experience, she has created a must-read for betrayed partners, cheating loved ones, and the therapists who treat them."*

**—Robert Weiss PhD**, author of *Prodependence: Beyond the Myth of Codependency* and *Sex Addiction 101*

*"Michelle Mays provides a well-grounded process for healing and restoration following one of the most devastating life events possible: the intimate betrayal by a loved one. Such a trauma shatters everything, including a sense of self, sense of safety, sense of connection with self and others, and our higher power or God. Betrayed partners will find hope within this comprehensive book that provides well-grounded tools and a pathway toward healing and post-traumatic growth following betrayal."*

**—Dr. Barbara Steffens**, coauthor of *Your Sexually Addicted Spouse: How Partners Can Cope and Heal* and founding President of the Association of Partners of Sex Addicts Trauma Specialists (APSATS)

[More Information Available at MichelleMays.com](http://MichelleMays.com)