

Emotional cheating: What it is and how to spot it

Emotional infidelity, marked by deep connections outside a committed relationship, damages trust and emotional intimacy. Concealed interactions, growing emotional distance, and blurred boundaries highlight its impact. Open communication and therapy can help rebuild trust and repair relationships.

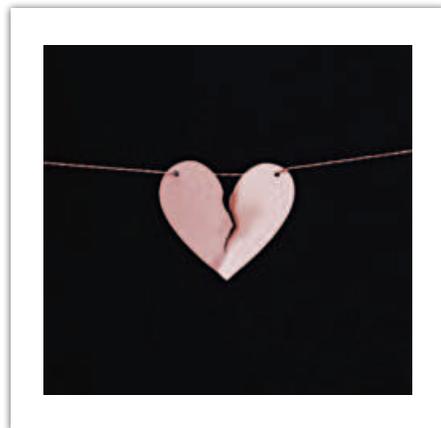
Often termed emotional infidelity, the phenomenon occurs when an individual who is already in a committed relationship forms a deep emotional bond with someone outside it. While not necessarily sexual in nature, emotional affairs can be quite damaging to existing relationships.

A healthy bond is not just about physical compatibility but also about strong emotional connection. This often involves sharing one's deepest thoughts, fears, and aspirations exclusively with their partners. However, emotional infidelity occurs when one partner begins to give the same level of importance to someone outside of the relationship, rivalling or even surpassing the emotional intimacy of the primary relationship.

What differentiates this sort of closeness from a strong platonic bond is the fact that there is usually some unexplored sexual tension between this new pair that has the potential to blow up fairly quickly.

Signs of an emotional affair

There are often some telltale signs of an emotional affair and it is best to recognise



these so that one is careful not to cross the line and hurt their partner.

Concealing interactions, messages, or the extent of the relationship with the third party is often the first step of an emotional affair in the making. If you have come to a point where you must delete messages with a third person so your partner does not feel hurt or uncomfortable, you are probably already in the thick of it.

Increased comfort in these covert conversations can lead to emotional distance from the existing partner. It can leave them confused and lead to doubts, fights, and even psychological withdrawal.

Frequently thinking about or anticipating interactions with the other

party can leave one disinterested and even bored in the primary relationship. Partners often engage in unnecessary comparisons between their partners and potential interests, often unfavourably so.

These relationships are often justified and rationalised by labelling them as "just friends", despite evident emotional closeness.

Impact on relationships

Emotional affairs can weaken trust and lead to considerable emotional distress for both partners. The one engaging in the affair may experience guilt, confusion, and a deepening attachment to the third party, while the other partner may feel betrayed, inadequate, and hurt. Over time, this

dynamic can chip away at the foundation of the relationship, making reconciliation a challenge.

Navigating emotional boundaries

In today's digital age, the lines between platonic friendships and affairs can blur easily, especially considering how simple online communication has become. Every relationship is different and couples in committed relationships must establish and maintain clear boundaries regarding emotional intimacy with others. Open communication about what constitutes acceptable interactions outside the relationship can help prevent misunderstandings and potential emotional infidelity from the word go.

If an emotional affair is suspected or, worse, has already occurred, addressing it honestly is key. It is crucial to let your partner know about the nature of the outside relationship and the damage it has done to the primary partnership.

It is important to agree to work together to rebuild trust through transparency, consistent communication, and mutual support from then on. Couples therapy may be a prudent choice if one is to learn how to navigate the complexities of the relationship post-emotional infidelity and strengthen damaged bonds.

By **Munira Fidai**
Photo: **Collected**



#PERSPECTIVE

The awkward reality of lingerie shopping in Dhaka

As women, we have all been there — the ordeal that is lingerie shopping; wrapped in layers of discomfort, embarrassment, and sometimes downright frustration. While our city boasts an array of options from budget-friendly shops in the busy New Market area to high-end boutiques in posh malls, this particular aspect remains as awkward and uncomfortable as always.

For women, the act of buying a bra, a basic necessity for any female, comes with the unwelcome baggage of discussing their size and preferences with male salesmen.

What a paradox! While lingerie is marketed as the epitome of femininity, the majority of lingerie shops are staffed with men. And for those shops that employ women, the prices are often prohibitively high, alienating the average shopper before she even crosses the threshold.

The imbalance

Some things need to be cleared first. It is not the salesman's intention that feels off. No, these male assistants are almost always professional and respectful in doing their job. However, their help, no matter how well-intended, often feels intrusive.

"I avoid going to stores altogether unless it's absolutely necessary," shares Nafisa, a 26-year-old teacher. "It's so awkward to explain my preference, band size and cup size to a man who has no idea what it's like to wear a bra," she explains with a look of utter discomfort. "And it's not just about size; sometimes I want to discuss fabric, design, padded or non-padded, but I hold back because it's just too uncomfortable."



This sentiment resonates across all age groups and professions. For many women, the embarrassment stems not just from having to articulate something deeply personal but also sometimes from the casual dismissiveness of male salesmen.

"I needed a new sports bra and the male salesperson kept suggesting the wrong sizes. When I told him it would not fit me, he just replied, 'It will loosen.' How would he even know?" recounts Rima, a 33-year-old fitness instructor.

A price for privacy

The rare lingerie stores staffed by women are often synonymous with high-end shopping. Step into one of these shops, and you will likely find yourself surrounded by neatly arranged racks, soft lighting, and the presence of female sales assistants. But all that will come with a hefty price tag.

"I remember walking into a lingerie boutique once that had female staff. Surprise, surprise! However, my happiness of finding the 'dream shop' vanished when

the price tags gave me a heart attack," says Tania, a university student. "Even the most basic bras were way beyond my budget and I never bothered to check out the sets."

That is not the end of the story. Even when you do find female staff ready to assist you, guess who is sitting at the counter to bill your purchase? That's right. The male in-charge.

It's worth a moment of silence, isn't it?



Breaking the Silence

What makes this issue particularly aggravating is how little it is discussed. Lingerie shopping is still shrouded in taboo, and women are often left to navigate these challenges alone.

"Whenever I bring this up with friends or family, the conversation quickly shifts," says Ayesha, a 34-year-old banker. "People either laugh it off or suggest online shopping as a solution. But online shopping isn't always practical. Sizes can be inconsistent, and returns are either a hassle

or not an option at all."

The root of the problem lies in the lack of understanding within the lingerie retail market. While some strides have been made, such as the introduction of more sizes and online platforms, the in-store experience remains largely unchanged.

One possible solution is to encourage more stores to hire female sales staff, even in budget-friendly shops. Before you rush to say that girls don't want to work in these markets, think again. If a safe working environment is provided, girls will work. If girls are shopping, girls will sell.

"I'm not asking for luxury treatment," says Sumi, a 25-year-old graphic designer. "I just want to shop in peace without feeling like I need to justify my choices to someone who doesn't understand them. Is that too much to ask?"

At the end of the day, lingerie shopping should not be an embarrassment. It's time for businesses to recognise that comfort goes beyond the product itself; it's also largely about the environment in which it is sold.

Don't we always say that women deserve better? Why not give them that — better options, better service, and better prices? Until then, the struggle of lingerie shopping will remain a symbol of how even the most basic needs can become a challenge in a society that often overlooks women's needs.

By **Nusrath Jahan**
Photo: **Collected**