**Jim and Pam**

A couple presents for therapy while separated. They are considering trying to work out their marital problems after a six-month separation. Pam (Caucasian, age 38) had been having an extramarital affair, which she chose to break off in order to try to work out her problems with Jim (Caucasian, age 40). Pam had been intimately involved with Brian (age 32) for one year. Pam and Jim have two children who are 4 and 7 years old. Pam and Jim have been married for 15 years, and dated for three years previous to marriage. Pam works as a dental hygienist and Jim is in sales for a large family owned car dealership.

Pam is somewhat defensive when speaking about her relationship with Brian, saying that she was justified in looking for love outside of the marriage because her husband was rarely home and worked all the time. This left her to do the majority of the housework and childcare, even though she also worked in a full time job. Both state that they do not remember a time when they felt close to one another, but assume that they did when they met many years ago. When asked what attracted them to the other, Pam stated that she had a distant father and when she met Jim he was very attentive and protective of her. While she was in college, he often would get jealous of the college men that she was in classes with and wanted to spend a great deal of time with her. Jim remembers that Pam was very attractive and always felt proud to have her on his arm.

When Jim’s business opportunities increased due to his strong performance, he spent less time at home. Around that same time the couple began having children. The couple remembers that some of their sexual problems intensified at that time. They have always had different levels of interest in sexual intimacy, with Jim being much more interested than Pam. However, Pam’s level of desire for sexual intimacy with Jim has decreased over the past several years. In the last year of marriage they’ve only had sexual intercourse a handful of times (they don’t remember exactly). This is currently a source of tension for them.

When Pam revealed her affair, Jim said that he was devastated. He went through many emotions, including rage, sadness, and confusion. Pam was surprised at the level of distress that Jim displayed. She said that previous to this she had thought that he had stopped loving her many years ago. She had considered starting divorce proceedings, but began to wonder if she and Jim had something worth saving, especially since they have two children at home. Jim stated that he always had positive feelings towards Pam, but because of her lack of sexual interest he felt she did not care about him or the relationship. When he said this Pam became angry and tried to point out all the things she did for the family that demonstrated how much she did care.