Leah and Matthew Vignette

MFTO 661

A couple presents for therapy for communication problems. They are trying to work out their marital problems but are considering separation. Leah (Caucasian, age 40) had been having an extramarital affair which she chose to end to try to work out her problems with Matthew (Caucasian, age 42). Leah had been intimately involved with John (age 43) for six months. Leah and Matthew have two children, boys ages 8 and 6. Leah and Matthew have been married for 12 years and dated for 3 years previous to marriage. Leah works part-time as a registered nurse, and Matthew works in commercial real estate.

Leah is apologetic about the affair but says she believed her husband would not care because he was rarely home and worked all the time. When Matthew was home, they did not spend much time together, or they were at baseball practices or tournaments. This left her feeling isolated and lonely. Both state they last felt close to each other before their children were born. When asked what attracted each to the other, Leah stated they had a good time together and spent time talking and being active outdoors. Matthew remembers that Leah was very attractive and active.

When Matthew began working in real estate he spent less time at home. Around the same time, the couple began having children. The couple’s sexual problems intensified about 2 years ago. They have always had different levels of interest in sexual intimacy, with Matthew being much more interested than Leah. However, Leah’s level of desire for sexual intimacy with Matthew has decreased over the past four years. In the last two years of marriage, they only had sexual intercourse twice (Matthew says he is sure about this number). This had been a source of tension but over the past year they have stopped talking about it.

When Matthew discovered the affair, he was devastated. He went through many emotions, including rage, sadness, and confusion. Leah was surprised at the level of distress that Matthew displayed. She said that, previous to this, she thought he had stopped loving her many years ago. They had discussed the possibility of divorce, but Matthew wanted to work on the relationship, believing that Leah needed therapy. Leah is not sure if she wants to stay in the marriage even though she ended her relationship with John and has no interest in rekindling it. She is most concerned about what divorce would do to their two children. Matthew stated he has had a hard time feeling responsible for anything and views her affair as her poor choice.