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Despite Past, Hillary Clinton Stands By Her Man

By Mark Wolf, Rocky Mountain News

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She cried, shouted and wanted to wring his neck when her husband finally confessed about his inappropriate relationship with Monica Lewinsky, Hillary Clinton said this week in interviews and in her instant best-seller *Living History*.

She didn't toss her husband's laundry onto the White House front lawn early on because she believed his initial denial of any untoward behavior.

She stood by her man years after famously professing to 60 Minutes not to be "some little woman standing by my man like Tammy Wynette" back when the Gennifer Flowers mess erupted during the 1992 presidential campaign.

And, say several therapists, why shouldn't she? Lots of marriages, high-profile and low, survive infidelities.

"No doubt she had concerns, she asked him and then she took a leap of faith, saying, 'I'm going to believe him.' Unfortunately he took advantage of that and compounded the problems he was bringing to the marriage," said Susan Heitler, a clinical psychologist in Denver specializing in working with couples.

"I've found that couples who choose to get help after a major betrayal often end up in enormous personal growth and a marriage that turns out to be all the more gratifying. They get help under the assumption that mistakes are for learning and marriages are for preserving."

Clinton said she and her husband entered marriage counseling after he fessed up about Lewinsky. They should have already been there, says Peter Poses, a marriage and family therapist who practices in Denver and Fort Collins.

"The irresponsibility from my point of view is their unconsciousness in not getting into it earlier," said Poses. "If you're in charge of the atomic bomb you have to do your best to make sure you're in control."

"I don't believe for a minute that she was unaware of his misbehavior and his liaisons. It always takes three people to have an affair."

There's more to the Clinton marriage than sexual fidelity, said Holly Hein, a therapist in Santa Monica, Calif. and author of *Sexual Detours - The Startling Truth Behind Love, Lust and Infidelity* (St. Martin's Griffin, \$13.95).

"This was a couple that had great admiration for each other professionally. He

wasn't threatened by her immense intelligence and capacity which many men would be threatened by. The fact he had a sexual addiction and compulsion is probably the least important part of their relationship," said Hein.

"He needed her as a structure and an anchor. The two of them had developmental needs for each other that far outweighed the sexual aspect of their relationship."

Nina Atwood, a therapist in Dallas and author of the new book **Soul Talk: Powerful Positive Communication for a Loving Partnership** (Sourcebooks, \$14.95), said she would have told Hillary Clinton "to really separate the idea of being responsible from being to blame as a partner. He chose his own behavior, no question about it, and he is responsible and accountable.

"Usually where one partner is having affairs or being unfaithful, there's some way the other partner colludes in not seeing that. There is a certain amount of denial, almost always clues that are there.

"You really want to look at, 'What's my role in this kind of thing happening in my relationship?' Being able to dig into that question will propel anybody forward. We all tend to have our blind spots. We're attached to keeping the status quo. She had an enormous investment in not seeing he was having affairs."

Judging the Clintons' marriage only in terms of sexual infidelity is a mistake, Heitler said.

"Hillary's marriage is much like every marriage. The unfaithfulness is just one dimension of a larger picture. I'm sure he can be a very fun, exciting and thoughtful partner at many times. There are many dimensions to live on. The simple thinker says, 'I see one thing wrong.' The complex thinker says, 'I see one thing wrong but see many more aspects that are positive and I want to fix what's wrong.' "

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