

## Who's the real perpetrator?



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There are two sides to every story, yet people end up listening to one side and believe it to be the truth.

Consider a hypothetical relationship in which one person commits a never-ending string of offenses, none of which are serious enough to warrant a drastic reaction from others, but their cumulative effect is great. The victim of these constant misdemeanors finally “has had enough” and commits a one-time, substantial offense that is obviously wrong. Most people who hear of the flagrant offense will lay blame on that person and not consider the balance of offenses. But, in this scenario, who is the real perpetrator?

Reflect on these two examples:

For years, a spouse is negligent in meeting the emotional needs of his or her partner. Instead of fostering a caring, loving relationship, the persistent neglect leads to a cold, unbearable detachment. The marriage exists but it doesn't.

After years of suffering, the neglected partner has an affair, seeking to have legitimate, important needs met but in an inappropriate way. Society sees only one culprit: the adulterer. But who is the real perpetrator?

For years, a person tolerates an annoying family member, responding with grace to his or her constant litany of irritating behavior and verbal abuse. Finally, the recipient explodes in anger, using curse words to express years of pent-up frustration. Those who observe the confrontation are aghast at the terms used

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*Think with me*

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and think less of the person who said them, not being privy to the years of subtle yet constant abuse. But who is the real perpetrator?

Don't fall prey to this unfair scenario. If you're in a situation that is slowly eroding your well-being, make changes; don't let the offenses slowly cumulate and then make a drastic reaction that turns you into the bad-guy.

Also, don't judge from afar, a situation in which you're not privy to all the issues. Often, we only see the dramatic climax, not the cumulative effect of minor issues over time.