



CAUSE AND EFFECT

The Psychology of "The Affair"

A summer in Montauk. A walk on the beach. A kiss in the dark. Our actions have consequences. When Noah Solloway (Dominic West) and Alison Lockhart (Ruth Wilson) embark on an affair, their relationship ricochets in unexpected directions, affecting their families and friends in ways neither of them could have imagined. Their desires expose undercurrents of guilt and longing, setting them and those around them on a complex path towards self-exploration and acceptance.

Noah and Alison's affair was born of longing and its aftermath forces them and their spouses to discover and accept who they truly are. Neither of the lovers was content when they first met. Noah's sense of self-worth was constantly undermined by his lack of professional success; Alison was struggling to recover from the death of her only child. Their affair was a form of escape. Yet their relationship causes more problems than it solves, leaving them, as well as Noah's wife, Helen (Maura Tierney), and Alison's husband, Cole (Joshua Jackson), to deal with the wreckage.

Like the rest of us, Noah's, Alison's, Helen's, and Cole's lives are governed by cause and effect and showcase questions of psychology and behavior that intrigue *New Yorker* writers. With their (unwittingly) different memories of their affair, Noah and Alison would be fascinated and a little disconcerted by "You Have No Idea What Happened," which explores why emotionally-charged memories are prone to inaccuracy. And Cole and Helen might gain a new understanding of their respective spouses' behavior from "How We Learn Fairness."

Enjoy this collection of stories that probe what we do and why, and what it means to be human.

The stories below are highlights from The New Yorker's coverage of human behavior and relationships, handpicked by The New Yorker's promotional team. The editorial staff of The New Yorker had no role in this post's preparation.

WATCH THE SEASON THREE PREMIERE OF THE AFFAIR ON NOVEMBER 20 AT 10 PM ET, ONLY ON SHOWTIME.

FROM THE NEW YORKER



"CASUAL SEX: EVERYONE IS DOING IT"

(2016): Maria Konnikova asks, what makes us engage in casual sex, do we enjoy it, and does it do us any harm?



"YOU HAVE NO IDEA WHAT HAPPENED"

(2015): We are the sum of our memories. What happens when most of what we remember is wrong?



"CAN ENVY BE GOOD FOR YOU?"

(2016): Envy entails seeing yourself in someone else's place—and that isn't always bad.



"HOW WE LEARN FAIRNESS"

(2016): Our aversion to unfairness is innate, but our reluctance to benefit from inequality might not be.

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