

BEYONCÉ, JAY-Z,

From 2016's culture-rocking *Lemonade* to the recent release of *4:44*, the world's most private public couple has given the world the closest peek into their relationship than ever before. Nicole Vassell investigates all that we can learn from Beyoncé and Jay-Z's self-exposure

and what we learn from telling the truth about relationships

By nature, we as humans can't help but take an interest in the goings-on of other people's lives. When you have a glimpse into how your peers navigate the world, and the tools they use to get through difficult times, it provides a source for comparison, and inspiration on how to deal with your own struggles. Though there are limits to how much we should use others as examples, in times of confusion many use the actions of others as a way to direct their own actions, subconsciously or otherwise.

And celebrities are often the subject of much of our curiosities; along

with sharing their talents with the world, there's something of an expectation that they'll do the same with their personal lives – to the extent that many of today's public figures are known primarily for their personalities and spilling all their personal business.

Yet there are rare exceptions; Beyoncé and Jay-Z stand as one example in particular. For most of the duration of their relationship, and professional careers in general, the couple have managed to keep a closely-guarded separation between their on-stage, public personas and their home life. Where many artists feel pressured to open up about their intimate lives, they are the masters of keeping quiet,

only giving fans rare snippets of major life landmarks with carefully constructed, artistic moments – the elaborate reveal of Beyoncé's pregnancy, and the subsequent twin birth announcement serve as major examples from this year alone.

Rather than engaging in in-depth, tell-all interviews about their lives, or sharing their every flittering thought to social media, the Carters have made sure that the public at large only knew as much as they want us to. However, through two albums released in 2016 and 2017, they put paid to any perception that they were a perfect couple by revealing that they'd privately been through a major obstacle that



threatened to ruin their relationship entirely: Jay-Z's infidelity to Beyoncé.

Revealed through song and video in Beyoncé's 2016 release, *Lemonade*, and then repented for late July 2017 in Jay's *4:44*, these acts showed the music industry's golden couple being more candid about their private lives than ever before. Though they were never too far from tabloid speculation that there was trouble in paradise (an occupational hazard when in the public eye), their consistent refusal to acknowledge the rumours kept the headlines safely at rumour level.

And at the level of petty gossip it could have stayed – save for an unfortunate leaked CCTV video that showed Jay getting physically attacked by sister-in-law Solange in 2014, the public never learned of anything about their family life without their deliberate say-so. The troubles in their marriage could've been for their knowledge only; however, with the release of *Lemonade*, it kickstarted a new era for the couple's relationship with their fans, and served as a catalyst for millions of fans to examine their own relationships. With the help of relationship expert Tamara Trusseau, we've pinpointed some of the major learning points gleaned from the Carters' truth-telling, and how best to deal with similar situations in our own lives.



Lemonade's lessons

Up until April 2016, Beyoncé, 36, and 47-year-old Jay – real name Shawn Carter – have stayed notoriously tight-lipped about many aspects of their personal lives, choosing instead to allude to them in song. From their first collaboration, '03 Bonnie and Clyde', they maintained nothing but a united front, and became a much-revered symbol of black love.

But this all shifted with the release of Bey's visual album, *Lemonade*. Upon its release, praise was instant

and monumental – its honouring of black womanhood, the pioneering experimentation with genre and the unabashed engagement with racial and political issues propelled the Houston-born star into a new era of recognition and cultural importance. However, the aspect of the 12-track milestone that grabbed the most headlines was the fact that it all but confirmed that Jay-Z had been unfaithful.

Through songs such as 'Hold Up', 'Don't Hurt Yourself' and 'Sorry', she speaks of a mysterious 'other woman' whose interactions with Jay-Z nearly brought their entire marriage crashing down. The outright frankness of her admission sent shockwaves through her dedicated fan base and beyond.

One of the major reasons for the shock was due to the consistently happy outwards display that had previously surrounded their love. However, another element of surprise and disappointment was felt by fans



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because of who it involved, and what it meant. With beauty, charisma and a whole heap of talent on her side, Bey is often hailed as one of the world's most desirable women. For someone who is widely considered an asset, seeing her on the receiving end of infidelity shows that it doesn't just happen to everyday people – even being Beyoncé won't necessarily save you from getting your heart broken.

Relationship expert Tamara Trusseau – also known as 'The Love Goddess' – tells of why lies and betrayal can have such a disabling effect of any relationship, regardless of who you are: 'Lies, deceit and betrayal fundamentally affect and dismantle any foundation upon which a relationship may be built. Although the level of disruption can vary considerably depending on the nature of the act as well as individual boundaries and levels of perception or acceptability, the underlying consequence carries the same resonance, which is the arrival of doubt and mistrust within the relationship.'

So what is the first step in recovering romance, when there's been a major betrayal? Tamara continues: 'In order to effectively such scenarios, usually the best place to commence is to recognize and acknowledge the problem. While every situation is unique, frequently it is through positive confrontation, open communication and a genuine understanding and digestion of the facts, that the process of acceptance and healing can begin.'

Killing Jay-Z

When it comes to acknowledgement being a key part in the healing process, this is a concept that, as far as we can tell, is directly applicable to Jay-Z's situation. In the opening track of *4:44*, the rapper and father-of-three owns up to his need to change his actions and mentality – named 'Kill Jay Z', it kicks off the remorseful, humbled tone of the album, and has him metaphorically killing his old persona in order to start again.

Referring to another high-profile couple in the black A-lister canon, he compares his marital situation to that of Halle Berry and Eric Benét in the early 2000s: 'You almost went Eric Benét / Let the baddest girl in the world get away'.

Luckily for Jay-Z, his relationship was able to be salvaged unlike Berry and Benét's; even by the latter half of *Lemonade* Beyoncé makes clear that she eventually forgave him ('Sandcastles') and they have since recovered the strength in their relationship ('All Night'), with their continued marriage and the birth of twins Rumi and Sir Carter serving as solid evidence. Along with first daughter, Blue Ivy, the family-of-five are rumoured to be moving into a \$90million mansion in the affluent Los Angeles neighbourhood of Bel Air; so as far as the public are concerned, they've put their troubles firmly in their past.

However, getting to that place can be difficult – there are limits still as to how much we know Jay-Z and Beyoncé had to work at getting back on track, or to the extent to which their marriage came close to destructing altogether. Tamara gives some insight into the steps that need to be taken in order to regain a happy equilibrium – and at the heart of it all, it's all about regaining trust:

'Reestablishing trust, given a backdrop of betrayal and disappointment, is not an easy feat. Truthful communication together



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'Even being Beyoncé won't necessarily save you from getting your heart broken'

comprehension may prove useful before putting into effect any final decision.'

Though you may not have the ability to escape a difficult situation with your partner by jetting across the globe without a care (something Beyoncé is said to have done in the near aftermath of Jay-Z's actions), it's a sensible idea to remove yourself as far as logistically as possible, in order to make a decision that isn't completely clouded by emotion.

The aftertaste

Aside from adding to their statuses as top-level musicians, Beyoncé and Jay-Z getting real about their relationship has highlighted how prevalent major problems in a relationship can be – despite being rich in both finances and adoration from the global public, they aren't immune from dark times. In knowing that it can happen to anyone, there is some solace – and the reassurance that there is no shame in being honest when things aren't going right.

Of course, this doesn't mean telling everyone you know about the ins and outs of your relationship: because unlike the Carters, there's no incentive of millions of dollars to be made from album sales and the tours and merchandise that inevitably follow. But open and honest communication with each other, and with the rest of the world – for example, not putting on a front of perfection for the benefit of social media – can be the healthiest way to make smart decisions about your relationship.

And overall, seeing who many believed to be an unstoppable couple revealing serious hidden struggles reinforces how pointless it is to be envious of other people's relationships; as even now, we can never truly know what's going on behind the scenes. **P**

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Tamara Trusseau, relationship expert

with consistency and perseverance may act as constructive building blocks enabling reconciliation. This, in time, should promote a renewed sense of trust.'

End of the road?

However, there are some cases where no amount of talking, creative expressions or apologies can help to repair what has been broken – and there comes a point where the relationship comes to an end.

'Ultimately where respect is lost, it is highly unlikely that a true and enduring relationship can be reestablished, regardless of continuing emotional attachment,' Tamara explains, before warning that in making the decision whether to leave, or to give it another try, time and distance to think is essential: 'In such cases, a period of separation, enabling appropriate reflection and