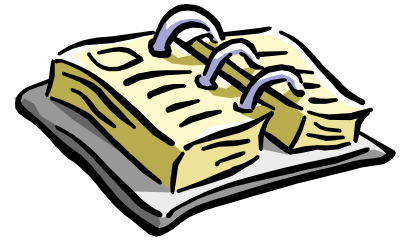


Intimacy

With the increase of pressures on us from all aspects of life in the 21st Century we are faced with less and less time available “just to be close”. Often we keep day-timers and palm pilots and easily “add in just one more thing” if there are any blank spaces in our week. The result is often that we are so busy we do not have time for each other. What “special” things do you take time to do for each other now? Is there already a rut of “running out of new ideas” starting to form?



Relationships and intimacy take work. Perhaps the easiest part is getting married,



and the real work involves staying married. As cold as it may

sound maybe the first thing to be put in your weekly

schedule is time for each other, before that time is

taken up by a meeting, volunteer work, golf,

jogging, going out with the guys/girls.

The following pages give you a chance for some very honest, open communication with your partner.



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Intimacy Questions

The kind of relationship we have is...

One way in, which we are alike, is...

One way in, which we are different, is...

If our relationship were a movie it would be called...

The needs you satisfy in me are...

I feel most tender towards you when...

One of the times that bothered me most in our relationship was...

What I like best in our relationship is...

In the future, I would like our relationship to become more...

In five years, I see us...

Some of my needs that are not being completely satisfied are...

Something you have helped me learn about myself is...

One of the feelings with which I have most trouble is...

Something I dislike about you that we seldom talk about is...

I have most fun with you when...



Creating Intimacy

Intimacy is how well you and your partner feel understood, accepted, appreciated, cared for and loved. (It's that inner feeling of warmth and closeness.)

It's how well you and your partner share... Hopes... Doubts... Failures... Successes... Sex... Needs... Dreams... Thoughts... Fears... Joys...

Elements of Intimacy

Sexuality: Physical closeness that includes sexual intercourse is often referred to as intimacy, but we know that sex and intimacy are not the same.

Sexual intimacy is, of course, very important and it becomes a reflection of the couple's total intimacy. The sexual side of marriage is usually affected when conflicts are unresolved.

Commitment: The foundation upon which an intimate relationship is built.

- ◆ *our intention to "be there" for our partner, through thick and thin*
- ◆ *our pledge to encourage the growth of our partner and our marriage*
- ◆ *our willingness to work towards a deeper relationship*

When partners have the security of commitment, there is safety to risk the openness necessary for feeling close.

Commitment grows as couples demonstrate integrity, honesty, fidelity and trust with each other.

Trust: Intimacy requires trust.

Trust means being able to count on each other and know that our best interests will be taken into account.

Trust is being able to tell our partner our deepest feelings, fears and hopes and know that these will be handled with care.



Since broken expectations in a marriage undercut trust, clarifying expectations and living up to promises are essential.

Separateness: *Is an element of intimacy.*

A healthy degree of separateness strengthens intimacy as our individual gifts, interests, and activities enrich our life together.

Too much separation leads to isolation, but too little can lead to smothering or submersion. Couples must find their own balance.

Low Self Esteem: *When we are unsure of our own identity or view ourselves as having little worth, we feel unlovable and fear rejection. Under these circumstances, self-disclosure increases the risk of rejection, so closeness is avoided.*

Breakdown of Trust: *Not following through on what we say we will do betrays trust and disrupts intimacy*

Steps Toward Creating Intimacy

- ◆ *Start by recognizing the intimacy you already have in your relationship.*

Talk about satisfactions and pleasures enjoyed during times of closeness. This is the intimacy foundation on which to build.

- ◆ *Reaffirm your commitment to the growth of your relationship and your growth as individuals.*

List the hopes and dreams you have for your marriage, your partner and yourself.

- ◆ *Become partners in building self-esteem.*

Express appreciation to each other and encourage each other's efforts and growth.

- ◆ *Build trust.*

Re-examine your expectations of each other. Revise them as needed and renew your agreements...then carry through.



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- ◆ *Learn skills for sharing feelings.*

Share your own feelings with "I" statements and learn reflective listening.

- ◆ *Work to clear up anger and resentments that occur in your relationship.*

Begin looking behind the anger to the deeper feelings that triggers it.

- ◆ *Help each other take risks.*

Begin by sharing your own hurts, shortcomings, mistakes or other sensitive topics.

- ◆ *Nurture the joy and satisfaction you share in your marriage.*

Express these to each other. Cultivate playfulness, humour and celebration.

- ◆ *Search for ways to express love to your partner.*

Find out what actions help each of you feel loved by sharing several "I feel loved when you..."

- ◆ *Set aside time for each other.*

Give your marriage priority by scheduling time together. Make this time a priority in your lives.

- ◆ *Identify a specific action each of you could take to create more intimacy.*

Sharing Hurts and Fears

For intimacy to develop, partners need to share with each other a wide range of feelings, including their hurts and fears.

Intimacy grows as partners share areas of vulnerability and offer understanding.



Even anger can be shared in ways that build closeness. Couples can learn to search out the feelings underlying anger -- the hurts, fears, frustrations, inadequacies, and feelings of low self-esteem.

Expressing these underlying feelings allows anger to be converted to understanding and results in increased intimacy.

Playfulness

Playfulness and a sense of humour add joy to life and help build intimacy.

Playfulness can relieve tensions and help couples feel close as they cope with daily responsibilities.

Playfulness may include spontaneity, silliness, and surprise.

Time

Intimacy doesn't happen immediately. It develops over time.

Being aware of our feelings and sharing them with our partner is almost impossible unless we consciously commit the time to do it.

Spending time with each other is the best way to demonstrate that we value our partner and our marriage.

Time together allows us to build good memories, and a "bank" of shared experiences to sustain the relationship.

Barriers to Intimacy

- ◆ *Lack of self-awareness*
- ◆ *Pressure and stress*
- ◆ *Unresolved anger*
- ◆ *Inflexibility*
- ◆ *Poor communication skills*

