

5 Commandments to Help Obliterate Your Struggles With Intimacy

Years ago, I sought a term to define a phenomenon that I was seeing over and over again in my office. Because I could not find one, I coined the term Intimacy Anorexia®.

Intimacy Anorexia® is the active withholding of emotional, spiritual and/or sexual intimacy from a spouse or significant other. If you are the intimacy anorexic or the spouse/significant other of an intimacy anorexic, there is hope for healing and restoration of your relationship so both of you can be connected in a deeply profound way. If you would like more information on Intimacy Anorexia®, you can visit the website [here](#).

Again, if you struggle with Intimacy Anorexia®, recovery is possible and I want to share with you a handful of the early exercises for recovery. I want to introduce you to what has come to be known as the “5 C’s,” which is short for the five commandments. These are five exercises that you do daily for the first 90 days of recovery.

Within *Intimacy Anorexia®: The Workbook*, there is a form to track your success during the first 90 days of recovery. I find that tracking your recovery is a really good idea so that you have something to measure your progress. These five commandments have helped many on the road to recovery and, if applied, I am confident they can be of help to you as well:

1. **Pray.** When you get up or even before you get out of bed and your feet hit the floor, ask God to help you in your recovery today. This prayer might be as simple as, “God, help me give love to my spouse and keep my heart open as I heal, and any help you can offer would be great.” Just

keep it connecting and honest, not a memorized prayer that you repeat without feeling. This prayer is just you opening up your heart to God and asking for some help on the road to recovery today.

2. **Read.** If you are reading this article, then you are already doing commandment No. 2, which is to read recovery literature about Intimacy Anorexia®. After I coined the term, resources have been becoming more plentiful as understanding broadens. In addition to books specifically addressing intimacy anorexia, which are limited outside my website, almost any book on marriage or intimacy could be helpful. Read daily to stay focused on your goal to actively initiate emotional, spiritual and physical intimacy with your spouse.
3. **Meetings.** Since Intimacy Anorexia® is one of the youngest members to the 12 Step family, its groups are few and far between. You can call Heart to Heart Counseling Center at 719-278-3708 for a national directory for Intimacy Anorexia® Groups. Members give one another feedback and there is a topic for each group. This becomes your team to help you get and stay free from the addiction to withholding from your spouse.

If there are no groups in your immediate area, then I highly recommend the therapist-led telephone support groups. These are led by therapists trained through AASAT (American Association for Sex Addiction Therapy). This is the only organization that is training therapists to treat intimacy anorexia.

4. **Phone calls.** Members of a group call one another daily for the first 90 days to check in on: 1) progress of initiating the 3 Dailies, and 2) any withholding characteristics (the 10) or other specific strategies you identified that you're working on. Both members share with and support one other.

Initiating a call can be difficult at first for intimacy anorexics, but again, within a two-week period, you are over this struggle. Recovery from any addiction is a team sport. You cannot make it by yourself (remember, you tried that already). These calls can be a real lifesaver, especially if you're spiraling into patterns of withholding. You can get grounded, take responsibility and move toward your spouse, not away from him/her.

5. **Pray again.** Any day sober beats a day of withholding. Take a moment and thank God for a sober day. He deserves thanks for helping you have the miracle of recovery in initiating intimacy toward your spouse.

Intimacy Anorexia® is a very serious issue faced by thousands of couples in the church. I definitely believe reaching out to God for help is paramount in finding your healing. And He will give freedom to those willing to ask Him for it. {eo}

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