

Is Your Marriage Lacking Intimacy?

Throughout my years of counseling, I have discovered that many marriages lack structures to encourage intimacy. We grow up believing that one day we will get married and live happily ever after. We enter marriage ill-equipped for intimacy and are disappointed when our husband or wife doesn't possess the secret code to intimacy either.

At first, marriage is fun as you begin to learn about your spouse, go to work or school, get your first apartment, pick out furniture, go to church and are physically intimate together without guilt. The sheer complexities of your new life together, along with the many new decisions you must make, can keep you talking and sharing regularly.

Slowly and subtly, it happens. No one really knows when or where it happens, but something changes within the relationship. You don't seem to talk as much.

Decisions are not met with the same excitement as when you were first married; instead, they are delegated, then discussed. Purchases become fewer, and physical intimacy and life take on a routine. You don't feel as close but seem just to be living together. What happened? Where did the passion for one another go?

Americans believe that people are either passionate or they are not. But this kind of thinking is incorrect. Passion is a dividend of consistent investments made into a relationship.

Let's reflect back a minute to when you were dating. You were selling your spouse on the idea that being married to you was a great idea. Remember the passion you had for your future spouse? Of course you remember the passion, but what you may have forgotten is the foundation of that passion, the priority

of the relationship.

Do you remember how you made time to be together? You planned your days and weeks around each other's work schedule, including your days off. Those of you who were attending school in another city away from your future spouse, as I was, had the phone bills to prove your passion and priority. In my case, those phone bills took a giant bite out of the little income I made, just so I could tell her about my day.

If you were a Christian at the time, do you remember how spiritual you were? You prayed together as often as you could and perhaps even read the Bible together. You desired to know God's will, and you wanted God to help you stay pure and still express your love to one another.

Do you remember the gratitude you had for the smallest things your spouse did for you? This was especially true for me when Lisa cooked for me. I was so grateful! I filled her life with a constant stream of praise. Do you remember when you thought she was so smart and attractive and had so much potential? You believed in her and regularly encouraged her.

Understand that passion is a result of setting priorities. Too many people attempt to get back the passion instead of getting back their priorities. Once you get the priorities back, the passion follows and grows naturally.

What priorities? I will discuss priorities shortly, but before I do, I want to share an analogy I often use in counseling sessions. Many couples come in for help with sprains or fractures in their relationships. I liken the repair of a marital relationship to fixing a broken bone. When your bone is broken, you can continue to function in a limited way, but you look and act unusual. Then you go to the doctor or emergency room.

The first thing the doctor does is order an X-ray of the bone. Sure enough, he looks at the structure. Regardless of how it

happened, the X-ray shows a damaged structure (your bone is broken). The doctor and nurse apply a structural treatment to your structural problem in the form of a cast.

The cast is a structural treatment that allows the bone to heal. The cast itself is just plastic or plaster, and it has no healing properties. But when it is applied to a broken bone to hold the bone in place, surprise! Healing can and does happen.

The same thing happens when you place the priorities back into your marriage. No matter how sprained or broken a marriage is, healing can and does take place. I have seen genuine miracles of restoration in marriages when priorities were put back into the relationship. One of the structures I apply is what I call "the three dailies," taken from the book, *30 Day Marriage Makeover*:

1. Prayer

As a couple, you must have prayer as an absolute necessity in your marriage. Praying together daily is an active way to have the Lord be a part of building your marriage.

2. Feelings Exercise

Emotional intimacy is a second very important aspect a couple needs to develop and maintain throughout their relationship. The feelings exercise is relatively simple. Click [here](#) for the feelings list or email heart2heart@. Share two feelings a day with your spouse.

3. Praise

Nurturing one another through praise is an essential ingredient for a vibrant, ongoing, intimate relationship. Share two praises with your spouse daily.

I want to add a personal note of testimony. As I have stated before, I would never ask you to do something Lisa and I have not done or are not doing presently in our relationship. Lisa and I have done two of the three dailies every day for years,

with only a few exceptions. When I developed the third exercise, we actively applied it to our marriage routine also.

These three exercises help Lisa and I maintain our relationship priorities. They are part of our bedtime routine. Neither of us expects to go to sleep without our relational ritual of the three dailies.

They are a major highlight of my day. I get to hear about my wife's day, hear her heart, and she gets to hear about my day and heart as well. This relational structure has richly developed our skill for intimacy to such a level that it can weather the day-to-day challenges of children, writing and media demands, together with all of our other commitments.

When your marriage priorities are restored, your passion will be restored. Everyone who knows me is well aware of my passion for Lisa.

I love her and really like her as well. This passion is the fruit of discipline born out of a heart of love. {eo}

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