

Ratchet Up Your Marital Intimacy in 2017 With These 3 Crucial Daily Habits

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 poorly equipped for intimacy and are disappointed when our spouses don't possess the secret code to intimacy either.

Americans believe 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. 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. Do you remember the gratitude you had for the smallest things your spouse did for you?

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, passion follows and grows naturally.

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."

Prayer

Prayer is an absolute necessity in your marriage. The Lord must be part of building your house. Prayer is an active way

to include the Lord as part of the building plan of your marriage and is one of the priorities that must be set in place by a couple desiring more intimacy. Remember, intimacy is three dimensional, involving spirit, soul, and body. As we grow together spiritually, our intimacy in the other two areas will grow as well.

Prayer is just talking out loud to God with your spouse, similar to talking with a friend.

I love walking in the garden of my life with Lisa and coming with her into the presence of our loving Father. I really believe this has been instrumental in developing the strength and intimacy of our marriage.

Sharing Emotions

Emotional intimacy is the second most important aspect that couples need to develop and maintain throughout their relationship. Early in their dating relationship and then in marriage, they readily share with one another their feelings about life situations, people, God and their dreams.

The problem isn't that we don't have feelings. The problem lies in the limitations we have in the skills to express them.

When I was first married, I was emotionally illiterate. I had many feelings, but I lacked the skills to identify or communicate them to my beautiful bride, Lisa. That's what identifying and communicating feelings is—a skill. Skills can be learned by anyone.

Learning to do this is critical for intimacy. If you can't share the feelings in your heart because you lack training and practice, how can you expect heart-to-heart intimacy to occur? If you are able to skillfully tell your spouse what you feel and what is in your heart, then your spouse must also be able to clearly communicate his or her heart back to you.

Nurturing and Praising One Another

I don't know where we get the notion that as we become adults we no longer need nurturing. We need to be mature, but we never are without a need for nurturing. You are the primary voice in your spouse's life. A silent voice is cruel.

Spouses who hear neither bad nor good from the husband or wife to whom they've committed their lives feels hollow inside. Both the giving and receiving of praise require skill. Again, anyone can learn a skill.

Lisa tells me something positive about myself almost every day, and my soul leaps. I feel affirmed, and I can take on another day of life events. I know in the deepest regions of my heart that at the end of even the worst day of my life, those big green eyes of hers are going to look right into my heart, and she's going to say something nice.

Do you remember the biblical principle of sowing and reaping? If you sow praise, in time, the harvest will come back to you.

Individually, think of two things that you love, appreciate or value about the other person. The praises can relate to something your spouse did during the day or can simply be a general statement of appreciation for your spouse.

The husband must look into his wife's eyes and state his praise. The wife continues to look at her husband until she has accepted the statement or let it sink into her heart. After the wife has let the praise into her heart, she says, "Thank you." At this time, the wife would give her husband his praise. When he lets it into his heart, he then says, "Thank you."

I pray that you allow this structure to teach you many skills. And I pray that these skills will become a permanent, positive part of your marriage. May God truly bless all you are investing into your marriage, and may your good harvest be a

blessing in which all of your generations can share. {eoa}

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