

Subtle Ways You May Be Emotionally Starving Yourself—and Your Spouse

Take a moment and honestly ask yourself if you are so busy that you have little time for your spouse? This doesn't necessarily mean that you are traveling all the time, although that could definitely be a way to avoid intimacy. There are often more subtle ways in which you are able to keep yourself so busy that you have little time for your spouse. Intimacy anorexia could be the root cause of this behavior.

Intimacy anorexia can impact other primary relationships like the children and extended family. It's been my experience, however, that the marital relationship is the primary relationship that intimacy anorexia manifests itself.

An intimacy anorexic keeps so busy that they have little time for their spouse. First, we'll discuss those reasons that have nothing to do with technology, then those that are technology-based. One way to stay busy is always doing housework; for example, cleaning constantly and rearranging regularly. Children also bring several ways to avoid the spouse. This may include doing homework with a child (without the spouse), playing with the children and excluding the spouse, or working on solo projects around the house. I know some couples who buy and live in fixer-uppers; they are constantly doing projects and have no time for each other.

There are readers who avoid by burying themselves in the newspaper, latest novel, or self-help book, and writers who endlessly write instead of relating. There are also those who need to sleep so much that they avoid connecting with their spouse.

Technology is a dream come true for many intimacy anorexics,

since it can feel as if they are actually doing something or relating to the images on some type of screen. The computer, and especially the internet, is the greatest avoidance strategy of our day. The anorexic may be involved in social networking, shopping, checking weather, chat rooms, pornography, games, gambling or research. This may eat up many hours while their spouse is in the other room, waiting to relate.

There's older technology, a terrific device that even allows spouses to be in the same room, next to one another, and still not relate. That's right, I'm talking about the television. That device should be called the intimacy-zapper. Both people are in altered states, separated from each other, and when they do come back to reality, at least one spouse is too tired to talk. By the time they pry themselves off of the furniture, it's time to go to bed.

Computer games and video games are another way for anorexics to distract themselves from their spouse. These games have become very realistic. Saving a false world from destruction, for example, is often more valuable than connecting to the one you said you would love, honor and cherish. These inside-the-house avoidance strategies must be addressed and eliminated to begin recovery from intimacy anorexia.

Some intimacy anorexics have busy avoidant strategies outside of the home to actively withhold intimacy from their spouse. These activities can be positive and easily justified. The person who volunteers to avoid intimacy has a cause they are helping and can justify their absences. The religious person is saving the world, but intentionally withholding from their spouse. The over-worker avoids intimacy while justifying their behavior through work to create more money or achieve goals. There is the golfer, sports participant or fan, who is loyal to themselves and a team, but isn't intimate with (or loyal to) his or her spouse.

Any of these behaviors could be fine in a marriage if they are staying connected to their spouse. In the absence of connecting, “busy” becomes a way by which the intimacy anorexic actually withholds intimacy, or even the potential for intimacy, through this type of avoidance.

You and your spouse deserve true love, intimacy, sexuality, and a relationship that is authentic, fun, and full of the hope and dreams you’ve always wanted. I have seen many brave men and women wage war on this stealth addiction and begin to give and receive intimacy from the love of their lives—their spouse.

If you believe you or your spouse is struggling with Intimacy anorexia, visit for more characteristics or purchase the book *Intimacy Anorexia*. {eoa}

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