

What to Do When Your Marriage's Intimacy Has Fizzled Out

Genuine intimacy is the cry of our nation. Many individuals search through multiple marriages trying to find the vital connection their souls long for. Still louder shouts the silence of the man or woman who has been married for decades and feels alone in that partnership. Many feel they have done everything right at home and with their spouses, yet there is little or no intimacy.

Far too many partners feel like roommates—as if they are just getting by emotionally. If fulfillment is promised, then why is it that few couples enjoy that impassioned connection? I don't think this is God's plan for your marriage. He wants you to live the abundant life and to have a marriage full of joy and love.

I have lived in the laboratory of other people's marriages for many years. In addition, I myself have journeyed from the inability to be intimate to a place of deep intimacy and great fulfillment with my wife, Lisa.

Early in my married life I had the feeling that I was surrounded by walls. I desperately wanted to step out from behind those walls but could not find a way to connect to my wife. God in His graciousness drew me into the field of marriage and family counseling, where I gained much understanding. Still, no one explained, "These are the steps to intimacy: 1, 2, 3." The mystery of intimacy and the skills required to build and maintain it continued to elude me—as it does for so many others in my field.

It is in the laboratory of real marriage, real crisis, real love and genuine desire for intimacy that we will solve the

mystery. Part of the solution can be discovered in a series of principles that can be applied daily. I've counseled couples whose relationships were so distant that they had not enjoyed physical intimacy for more than a decade. When these same couples applied the principles in the *30 Day Marriage Makeover* book, within six weeks, not only had they rekindled their sexual relationship, but they also started to like one other again for the first time in years.

Intimacy is really not a mystery at all—it is a process. Intimacy is the fruit of being in this process. Allow me to explain it another way: Wealth is a process. You work. You save. Maybe you invest. But to those who follow the basic principles of wealth and apply them, regardless of how they feel about them, wealth happens to them. The same applies to your health. Under normal circumstances, the process of eating right and exercising keeps you healthy. Those who do what they want, eat what they want or spend what they want often do not achieve optimal health or wealth.

The same is true with intimacy. Those who do what they want emotionally with their spouse do not achieve optimal intimacy. Since intimacy is a process, I strongly believe that after 30 days of applying the *30-Day Marriage Makeover* skills, your marriage will be made over into a dynamic and satisfying relationship with so many benefits that you will never want to abandon these principles of living and the deeply satisfying intimacy with your spouse that they can bring.

I have practiced these exercises in my relationship with my wife. Lisa and I have been married for many years, and as we have applied these principles to our marriage, we have continued to grow closer and stronger together. I believe the greatest gift to our children is a strong, vibrant and lovingly intimate marriage. I wouldn't ask you to do something that I don't practice myself. Throughout the years, these principles have given life to my wife, to many of my clients and to me. As you practice the power of intimacy, I pray that

you and your partner will experience the abundant life that Jesus has promised each of you in your most intimate relationship—your marriage.

You can breathe life back into your marriage, but you must work at it. Determine to spend this time mastering the basic skills necessary to enjoy satisfying and enduring intimacy with your spouse.

With Christian growth, those who pray, soak themselves in Scripture, have regular fellowship and obey the Holy Spirit of God will enjoy intimacy with the Father. Disciplines are the structures of life breathed into us. This truth applies to intimacy in marriage too.

As you and your spouse take the time to commit to behaviors that support intimacy, your marriage can be completely transformed and made new—no matter what state it is in right now.

Remember, you are developing a marathon runner's mentality, not a sprinter's. So please take the time and seriously discipline yourselves for the long haul. Happy training as you begin the happiest journey of your life—intimacy with your spouse.

My challenge to you is to make every effort to make your marriage over into what God has designed for you and your spouse. {eoa}

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