

Why Immaturity May Be Draining Your Marriage of Intimacy

The opposite of an emotional-based system is a principle-based relationship. In this type of marriage, intimacy can flourish over time, and sex becomes easier to negotiate. Principles guide the decisionmaking process. A personality doesn't dominate nor do the desires of one person in the relationship.

A couple that lives within a principle-based relationship has the highest chance of getting and maintaining a lifelong intimate relationship that benefits both spouses and makes you both feel loved. That means you're probably going to have a satisfied wife for a very long time.

This couple works together to solve problems and doesn't just serve their emotions. If they don't feel like doing something they committed to, their commitment pushes them through the immediate self-discomfort and on into doing what they had already agreed to do.

Couples in an emotional-based system can move into a more principle-based system. Marriages or relationships based on principles create strong structures and move couples to connect intimately and stay that way for the rest of their lives.

It is work to get lifelong results. Intimacy is not acquired by the lazy, fainthearted or undisciplined. Intimacy is a fruit that is born by staying consistent in the behaviors. I discuss this more in detail in the *Sex, Men and God* book.

When you have broken bone, a cast doesn't do the healing, but it does allow the bone to heal. I encourage all couples within an emotional-based system to apply the "cast" (of principles)

around your brokenness so that you both can go through the healing process. If you struggle within an emotional-based marriage, the exercises and structures will at first take a determined effort. I strongly encourage you to move beyond the “if it feels good, do it” attitude.

Emotional systems also evolve from one or both spouses who are behaving as a child or adolescent in an area of life as opposed to an adult. Someone can be an adult in one area of life but an adolescent or a child in another. This creates various imbalances within the relationship that set up an emotional-based system, and can make marital success difficult.

Jerry and Paula were such a case. Here one person’s immaturity in an area of their relationship that added a strain in their marriage and limited their intimacy. Jerry was a salesman in a local business. He was a great salesman and had personal integrity.

Socially, anyone who knew Jerry would say he was a social adult. Jerry was also an adult at doing fun things as he planned time with friends and business contacts to fish, hunt and go to games together.

Jerry, in the area of finances, behaved as a child. He didn’t know what came in or really went out of the checkbook and he would only engage in the financial process when he needed more than his allowance provided, or to sign his tax returns. Paula handled all the finances. Even though Jerry was an adult concerning social activities and fun, he lacked skills and development when it came to money.

The areas that Jerry handled emotionally instead of in an adult manner caused Paula stress. She didn’t like handling all of the finances and was overwhelmed with trying to meet Jerry’s relational needs all by herself. These were some of the issues that brought pressure on their marriage but it

wasn't Jerry's fault alone.

Paula, as sweet as she was, had some emotional areas of her life as well. She was an adult when it came to the social, financial and spiritual areas of her life but when it came to sexuality, she was a child. She took no sexual responsibility in the relationship. Neither Jerry nor Paula could remember one time that Paula initiated sex. Although Paula was as sweet as she could be, a perfect wife and mother, she also couldn't express her feelings. She had difficulty practicing the feelings exercise and really fought someone from knowing her emotionally. This also added strain to the marriage and their sexual intimacy. Jerry and Paula created emotional systems. On the outside they looked OK, but inside the house there was a quiet but steady resentment building.

Many couples are like Jerry and Paula. They kept hoping that the person they marry would carry the areas that weren't comfortable for them as they were growing up. Often the problem is that you really never talk it over with your spouse, it just evolves and then the emotional systems evolve and create roadblocks to intimacy, making sexual success difficult.

If both spouses are not functioning as adults within their relationship, they will have intimacy robbed from them. This is an important variable for how successful you can become in your marriage.

You *cannot* change your spouse anyway. So unless you use this information for individual development, in a therapeutic manner or in an agreed upon conversation with your spouse it can become less than productive. Please don't use this information to attack, shame or otherwise injure the soul of your spouse but instead for self-development.

This information is to be used so that you can identify where your own areas of personal growth are needed. The more of an

adult you are in all areas of your life, the safer your wife will feel, and the more respect and honor she will have for you. Remember if you are acting like a child or an adolescent, she will feel like your mother and not your lover. She knows when you are not taking responsibility for an area in your life. As one person said, "If you don't want your wife to act like your mother, stop acting like a child." I hope this list of development offers you insight on growth areas to identify for yourself.

These issues are emotionally based and often are the hot buttons within a marriage. To resolve these issues will be individual work, not couple work. The couple work comes in to place when you move beyond these issues and you can discuss them and see the impact that the development in an area is making on the relationship.

The less stress and chaos in a relationship due to these issues, the more likely she will feel close to you and you to her. If you feel close to each other regularly you will naturally have a deeper and more intimate marriage. If you're constantly chaotic and mad at each other, then your marriage will constantly struggle. The better the quality of your relationship, the more likely you are to have the best marriage ever.

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