

Growing Together Through Connections

INTIMACY REDEFINED



According to Dr. David Schnarch's Passionate Marriage approach, intimacy needs to be redefined. Everyone is desperately yearning for something that they can't get because they don't understand what it is — in and out of the sexual realm. Is intimacy unconditional love for or from your partner? Is it about being understood, emotionally supported, and getting a response from your partner that validates and affirms you? Is it about feeling like you and your partner have become one? Does intimacy come about because you communicate or negotiate well, have lots of sex, or have learned relationship techniques? The answers to all of these questions are a resounding NO.

To become intimate you have to know who you are as a person apart from your partner, otherwise you can't show what is innermost about you, the dictionary definition of what it means to be intimate. And if love is generosity, you've got to have a YOU to share. Intimacy begins and flourishes by nurturing the relationship with yourself.

Intimacy doesn't develop idyllically; it develops through challenges and conflicts that cultivate your ability to say who you are to your partner with no guarantees or assurances that your partner will still love and want you. This means that it's possible for you to have

intimate moments when your partner doesn't, because you are two different people. You hold a picture of reality that your partner doesn't share, not because he/she doesn't want to. He/she can't!

Are you protecting yourself, emotionally distancing yourself, withholding your love, waiting for your partner to make the first move, because you are afraid of rejection? Your partner will definitely leave you, one way or another — either by his/her own volition, because every individual has the right to make his/her own decisions, or by death. How do you open up to love and intimacy when you know that loss is always waiting in the wings? How do you open yourself to life, when you know death awaits you? This is a marital paradox that you have to make peace with inside your soul.

Stop trying to recapture your "honeymoon," whether it lasted a few days or years. It wasn't a time of intimacy, only a time of reciprocal validation. Take the courageous step toward a redefined intimacy, especially if your definition hasn't been working for you.

Think of the big picture. Intimacy, as Dr. Schnarch describes it, is a new phenomenon in the animal world. Only humans and a few other species can even express it.

Human beings have the most complex intimacy since it involves lots of self-reflection and sophisticated language.

Before developing a neocortex, you weren't capable of having intimacy. So, be patient and give yourself a break. Intimacy's development in a long-term relationship is on the cutting-edge. It doesn't happen often to that many people. You are part of an amazing evolutionary experiment. Why not be one of the lucky few experiencing intimacy, expressing on a regular basis who you are and what you want to become to your partner so that he/she gets to know the real YOU? A multiplied series of these intimate acts could start a revolution!

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