

# WHAT'S IMPORTANT: PHYSICAL OR EMOTIONAL INTIMACY?

In the last lesson you learned about unwritten contracts or assumptions in relationships. You'll now explore some gender differences between physical and emotional intimacy.

# LET ME BEGIN WITH A STORY.

*Stacy attended a week long high powered and successful business meeting. She'd obtained three new contracts and was excited. As she was flying cross-country, she thought, "I can't wait to get home. I want to tell Jeffrey everything that happened, hear how his week went, and then make sweet love to him."*

*Jeffrey also had a good week. He obtained a contract with a high-end developer. Stacy would be home in just a few hours. He thought, "I can't wait to make sweet love to Stacy, hear about her adventures, and tell her about mine."*

You may think they had a wonderful reunion. They wanted the same things, to share about their past week and to make love.

Instead of the celebration both wanted, their reunion had painful feelings of isolation. Let's look at what went wrong.

## WHICH COMES FIRST: PHYSICAL OR EMOTIONAL INTIMACY

Stacy and Jeffrey's story is about unwritten contracts and the difference between emotional and physical needs. Their story is a common one found in many couples and often in heterosexual couples.

After the relationship has moved from the intense physical attraction of the infatuation stage, different needs present themselves. Generally, men want to show intimacy on a physical level first. Women want to reconnect intimately on an emotional level.

Ultimately, they both wanted physical and emotional intimacy. Which came first was important to each of them.

## **LET'S LOOK AT BOTH EMOTIONAL AND PHYSICAL INTIMACY, HOW THEY ARE DIFFERENT, AND HOW THEY SUPPORT EACH OTHER:**

### **1. The characteristics of emotional intimacy**

- Intimacy = “into-me-you-see.” **Emotional Intimacy is about self-revelation.** The deeper your emotional intimacy, the more you share of your hopes, dreams, feelings and concerns.
- Emotional intimacy assists you in coming to know yourself better. When you reveal the deepest parts of yourself to

another, you are also revealing them to yourself. They can take on a vibrancy which assists you in deepening or even changing your own beliefs and feelings.

- **Emotional intimacy involves trusting your partner.** You trust them to listen with acceptance and non-judgement. You share thoughts and feelings you don't necessarily want others to hear. They are to be shared only with those you trust the most.
- **Mutual emotional intimacy, mutual self-revelation, and mutual honesty form an emotional bond difficult to break.** You are not only partners, but you are also friends. You come to know each other in ways others never could.

## 2. The characteristics of physical intimacy

- **Mutual agreement on public displays of affection.** Some people are very private. When you honor the desires of the most private person you are demonstrating how important their needs are.

- **Respecting each other's needs for sex.**  
People have differing needs for sex. Talk about your needs with your partner. Where can you compromise if your needs are different?
- Explore other ways to express physical intimacy when intercourse is not possible. Learn how to give body and foot massages. Spend time resting in each other's arms.
- Know your partner's favorite places to be touched. If you don't know, ask! If they don't know, show them! Your partner wants to know what turns you on because watching you turns them on.
- **Varied types of love making.** There are times you just want that wild sex you see in the movies. Then there are the times you gently want to caress and kiss each other, finishing with gentle intercourse. Both of your moods change. Go with the flow.

# THE INTERACTION BETWEEN PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL INTIMACY

Touching is so important in life that babies can die from not having enough touch. Relationships can die from not having enough touch.

**Relationships can also die from partners not sharing with each other who they truly are.** Your relationship may begin with the passion of physical intimacy. If it doesn't incorporate minimal emotional intimacy, chances are the relationship will wither.

When your relationship begins with emotional intimacy and moves into romance, physical intimacy naturally becomes a part of the relationship. You've come to know each other emotionally and now want to express that friendship physically.

When you have both physical and emotional intimacy in a relationship, the two result in an upward spiral of bonding and closeness. **The physical intimacy feeds the emotional intimacy and the emotional feeds the physical.**

# RELATIONSHIPS WITHOUT PHYSICAL OR EMOTIONAL INTIMACY

There are marriages of convenience. This is when the marriage serves a particular purpose, such as the joining of families to enhance financial or political power.

For these marriages to work in a way that is satisfying to both, a clear contract is important. This doesn't need to be a legal contract. Both parties need to be clear on the expectations of the relationship and the roles of both parties.

You may not want a marriage of convenience, but many people do. **The key is to know what you want and choose a partner who wants the same.** The way you do this is through clear communication, the topic of the next lesson.

## SUMMARY AND REFLECTION

Relationship intimacy is the sharing of hopes and dreams as well as your physical body.

In the next lesson we'll discuss ways to enhance communication.

Before you go to the next lesson, reflect on the following questions to anchor what you would like in an intimate romantic relationship.

## **HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED TO DO TODAY**

### **REFLECTION**

1. List 10 things you want your partner to know about you. This would include your hopes and dreams for yourself as well as your hopes and dreams for your relationship.
2. List 10 things you want in your physical relationship. This includes where you like to be touched, how you like to experience sex, and ways you want them to show you affection.