

Considerations for Developing Intimacy by a fellow traveler, Dr. Earl Wilson

Growth in emotional intimacy is a prerequisite for growth in physical intimacy.

1. It starts with talking. The conversation you have been avoiding is usually the one you should have. (Heard on "Blue Bloods")
2. Sample questions to address.
 - a. What hurts will we have to overcome? (emotional pain)
 - b. What fears do we each have?
 - c. What do we each want?
 - d. What changes can we make that will make the process easier?
3. Keeping on the same page.
 - a. Talk about the conversations you are having.
 - b. Be honest about what is helpful and what is not helpful.
 - c. Tell each other when you feel close.
 - d. Tell each other what creates distant feelings.
 - e. Talk about what you are learning about each other.
 - f. Tell each other what helps respect to grow. i.e. I felt respect for you just then, when you admitted you hadn't been totally honest with me.
 - g. Always remember that it is more important to tell people what they are doing right than what you think they are doing wrong. i.e. I felt close to you just now when you touched my arm and smiled at me.
 - h. Talk about what helps you in the process of rebuilding trust, respect, and love. These are three essential elements of a healthy marriage.
4. Watch for evidence of growing closeness.
 - a. Eye contact and looking into each other's eyes. When you have the eyes, you have the person.
 - b. Non-sexual touching. Many women report that they feel even closer to their spouse when touched non-sexually than they do when they are having intercourse. Talk about what is true for each of you.
 - c. Making decisions together. i.e. You share ideas about how to deal with hard things like flashbacks or intruding thoughts.
 - d. A renewed desire to spend time together. Note: Share with each other what you are observing.
5. Obstacles you will need to overcome.
 - a. Sharing doubts and fears is a step forward, however, you may wish the other person felt differently. Remember, you can't change the other person but you can do things differently if your spouse thinks it might help.
 - b. Feelings of inadequacy. Either of you may feel overwhelmed but sharing your feelings and talking about them may help you grow closer together.
 - c. Distractions. Many things may take away the moment when you are trying to be close either emotionally or physically.
6. Don't forget to celebrate even small steps of progress. Remember, what you are developing can be the closeness you have always desired.