

## Relationships - creating intimacy

Intimacy in a relationship means being able to share a whole range of thoughts, feelings and experiences that we have as human beings. It involves being open and talking through your thoughts and emotions, letting your guard down, and showing someone else how you feel and what your hopes and dreams are. Discovering intimacy with someone you love can be one of the most rewarding aspects of a relationship.

### Intimacy in relationships

Intimacy is achieved when we become close to someone else and are reassured that we are loved and accepted for who we are. Children usually develop intimacy with parents and peers. As adults, we seek intimacy in close relationships with other adults, friends, family and with a partner.

### Intimacy and sex

For many couples, 'making love' involves a sense of intimacy and emotional closeness. An intimate sexual relationship involves trust and being vulnerable with each other. Closeness during sex is also linked to other forms of intimacy.

It is important to share a whole range of emotions with a partner, otherwise some people begin to feel lonely and isolated regardless of how good their sexual experiences may be. Explore ways to share love and affection without sex. Often, the more a couple is intimate with each other in ways other than sex, the more fulfilling their sex life becomes.

### Difficulties in achieving intimacy

There are many reasons why some people find it difficult to achieve intimacy in their relationship. This is commonly the result of problems such as:

- Lack of communication
- Financial problems
- Work or family pressures
- Negative childhood experiences
- Past and current traumas.

We all have some barriers to intimacy. It is normal for couples to work together to overcome these barriers.

### Intimacy is built up over time

Building and maintaining intimacy in a relationship takes time, and it takes some people longer than others. Often, the harder you work at developing intimacy in your relationship, the more rewarding it is.

Some suggestions for developing intimacy in your relationship include:

- Celebrate the good things in your relationship. Tell your partner (in words and actions) how much you love and appreciate them.
- Talk openly about your feelings and what you need from the relationship.
- Create opportunities for intimacy. Take time out to be together as a couple.
- Accept that your relationship will have highs and lows. Continue to explore new ways of finding a deeper level of intimacy.

- Intimacy is damaged when one partner uses power inappropriately over the other. Abuse or violence in a relationship destroys trust and signals that the relationship is in trouble.

## Seeking help for relationship issues

Sometimes you may need help or guidance to sort through some of the issues, feelings and thoughts you have about your relationship. Consider talking to a relationship counsellor, or going to a course or workshop that will help you and your partner overcome some of your relationship problems.

## Where to get help

- Psychotherapy and Counselling Federation of Australia (PACFA) National Register (Family and Relationship Therapy) Tel. (03) 9486 3077
- Relationships Australia (Victoria) Tel. 1300 364 277
- Family Relationship Advice Line Tel. 1800 050 321
- Australian Association of Relationship Counsellors Tel. 1800 806 054

## Things to remember

- Sharing your deepest thoughts and emotions with someone you love can be one of the most rewarding aspects of a relationship.
- Be aware of the need to explore ways to share intimacy without sex.
- Intimacy in a relationship doesn't just happen. It is built up over time.
- Abuse or violence in a relationship destroys trust and intimacy and signals that the relationship is in trouble.

**This page has been produced in consultation with, and approved by:**

Relationships Australia Victoria

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