

MARRIAGE IN MOTION

Transcript: Module 1, Lesson 3

LAURA

Hello and welcome back. Today, we're talking about intimacy. I know what you're thinking..."It's about time!" Or maybe, you're thinking, "Wait, what...are we allowed to talk about that here?" Either way, we're going to be talking about intimacy in a new way. A holistic way.

Before we start, here's a question:

How do you define intimacy? What does that word mean to you? What does it mean to your marriage?

ZACH

I remember back in college, I'd been dating this girl for a while. We were on-again-off-again for a couple years without any real definition. She was upset at me for something I'm sure I did and I was trying to explain it to my friend to help get some insight.

He asked me, "Well...have you been intimate?" And I told him the truth, "Yes, we had." And he said, "Well, of course she's mad at you. You can't have sex with someone and then just leave them hanging about the relationship."

As a twenty year old virgin, I was dumbfounded. When I said we'd been intimate, I wasn't even thinking about sex. I was referring to the times we stayed up all night swapping stories and even the time we prayed together and the time that I comforted her in the midst of a family trauma.

I think it actually offended me to think that somehow, Intimacy and Intercourse had been used synonymously. The trouble is, I think we still do that. Couples often say "intimacy" when they mean "sex". Whether it's unconscious, or semantic, or just polite, I think it's a mistake.

Intimacy is much bigger than sex.

This lesson is about broadening your definition of intimacy to create a more holistic idea of what your marriage can be. In this video you'll learn...

1. How women and men understand intimacy differently.
2. A definition of holistic intimacy.
3. The characteristics of intimate conversation.
4. What intimate conversation and sex have in common.
5. Why you may not be ready for intimacy.
6. To become clear about your "next step".

LAURA

Our goal is to shake up your definition of intimacy, and especially to take it out of the bedroom. Don't worry, we'll get back into the bedroom later, but for now our focus is this:

True intimacy occurs when two mature people choose to share and pursue a higher purpose together.

True intimacy is allowing your partner to see you, know you, hear you, feel you...recognize all the facets of you. The good, the bad, the beautiful and ugly.

True intimacy begs you to be vulnerable and let yourself to be truly seen. It requires a level of comfort and safety in the relationship to disclose the pieces of yourself that you don't share with just anybody on the street.

Intimacy can peak when you choose to share details about your inner world, your hopes, dreams, failures, and fears. It can peak when you share major life experiences like childbirth or battling cancer. Intimacy occurs when working toward a common life goal like volunteering together at the women's shelter.

While we are social creatures and intimacy is one of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs for survival, it can be very difficult to maintain a strong sense of intimacy in relationships. Why is that?

Honestly, I think it's because we get lazy. We get used to each other. We think we have them figured out and then get bored and complacent. We stop trying. The goal of this lesson is to teach you how to create momentum by creating small, meaningful intimate moments on a daily basis.

Let me repeat it: Small, meaningful, intimate moments on a daily basis. THAT'S "motion".

Let's start by acknowledging that women and men understand intimacy differently.

ZACH

This isn't rocket surgery. There are countless jokes and memes about this all over the facebooks. My favorite is probably the one with this photo. It's both overly ridiculous and overly simplistic. And also still funny. But that's not what we're talking about.

The more important difference is sociological. Consider what marriage used to be as recently as 50 years ago. For the most part, marriage in the 50s and 60s was largely transactional, defined by "traditional" gender roles.

Recently, however, women in particular have started to become more empowered and articulate about what they really want from relationships. (I know this is definitely true of my wife and daughters.)

This is because the "rules" for women have changed a lot over the last 40 years. The problem is that the "rules" for men haven't changed at all. The men of the last 40 years - men like your fathers and mine - were perfectly happy with the rules as they had existed for decades, if not centuries. So, we've not had much context for change.

Women, however, are different. In fact, we're in the midst of a world-wide revolution when it comes to women's rights. It wasn't that long ago that if a woman dreamed of being something other than a wife and mother, her dreams were considered naive and unrealistic. Now, there's no reason at all that they can't dream of becoming President of the United States. Politics aside, this makes me thrilled for my daughters can hope for in their lifetime.

LAURA

When it comes to marriage, women can and should expect to be more than companions with their partners. They can be friends and lovers, with relationships based on a deep and complex form of intimacy. If you doubt, this: Stop it. Right now.

Let's talk about exactly what "holistic intimacy" might mean. Clearly we are bursting the bubble on intimacy equals sex. We're moving beyond that definition to broaden your capacity for connecting meaningfully in a multitude of ways.

I think Terrence Real has cracked the code on this better than most. He expands intimacy to include five facets. Imagine them as the five spokes of a wheel. If any one spoke is broken, the wheel won't turn properly. So what are they?

Intellectual, emotional, physical, sexual, and spiritual. Let me note two things...first, 'physical' and 'sexual' are not the same. And 'spiritual' does not mean religious. It means that, together, you're chasing a larger goal on behalf of the relationship.

ZACH

Let's quickly run through the "spokes of the wheel".

Intellectual intimacy is a cognitive connection that occurs when couples are able to verbalize and share their thoughts on areas they are passionate about. This is conversation that evolves, evokes excitement, that leads to discovery, exploration and deeper understanding of one another. I rarely feel closer to Rebecca than when we solve a problem together. We have this strange combination of book smarts and street smarts that creates a great context for intellectual intimacy.

Emotional intimacy is a sharing of feelings, a high level of transparency of openness and vulnerability. Couples often feel a peak of emotional closeness when they experience a personal tragedy where emotions run high and partners are able to turn toward one another in support of their feelings. But emotional intimacy is also built in the small, day to day interactions that keep you tethered to one another. I almost don't want to even share my best story of this...it's actually quite intimate for me.

Last Christmas, was the first Christmas we didn't spend with family. It was just us. There were a lot of reasons for this, but the alone-ness brought up a lot of stuff for me. One day we received a holiday card from a family that I had spent a ton of childhood holidays with. I started crying. Like bawling. Overwhelmed with a ton of nostalgia, regret, guilt and also hope. Rebecca dropped what she was doing and came over and just hugged me until I calmed down. My younger daughter looked at me like I was an alien. But that kind of emotional intimacy was priceless. I'll never forget it...pfft.

LAURA

Ok, next is Physical Intimacy: Decide right now that physical intimacy is not the same as sexual intimacy. Physical intimacy is more proximal. By this I mean you literally share the same proximity. You are near each other.

Physically intimate couples share life together. They take care of one another's health and well being. They connect in physical, but non-sexual ways that can be profoundly intimate even in broad daylight.

Next time you're out together, try holding hands...interlock your fingers and rub your thumb along your partner's skin. Oh man, the other day, I heard the most heartbreaking story from a recent new mom telling me about how she missed just holding her husband's hand since the birth of their first born. Her hands were now

occupied by baby, stroller, diaper bag, cell phone, car keys and wallet. Sometimes you don't notice the lack of physical intimacy until it's gone.

And then there's Sexual intimacy, certainly the most obvious, but also the most complicated. Sex can actually be completely void of intimacy. I have had some clients describe intercourse with their partner synonymously with masturbation..a solo act of sexual gratification. The inverse, a sexually intimate encounter involves a vulnerability of expressing love through sex and mutual gratification.

One thing that we do know about the best sexual relationships is that the couple makes sex a priority. AND they do a good job of nurturing the other forms of intimacy above. We're going to talk more about sex later in the course, but for now, I'm gonna park it in favor of a greater goal.

For now that goal is intimacy...specifically intimate conversation. I have a very strong bias that conversation is at the heart of intimacy. Any of the venues for the way to nurture any of these forms of intimacy is through intimate conversation. This is an art. It's the art of attunement.

ZACH

Finally, spiritual intimacy. Again, let me quote Terry Real. He says, "Healthy intimacy always demands dedication to the higher good of the relationship itself. In this sense, every form of real intimacy is spiritual." I love this. It implies that what really matters for healthy intimacy is a commitment to something bigger than just a husband and a wife. Your values and your goals are an essential - if not the essential - part of your spiritual intimacy.

But how do you get to true intimacy. My bias is that intimacy is created through conversation. I want to give you a template for "intimate conversation". I love teaching this to clients. It's an acronym that was created by one of Dr. Gottman's graduate students Dan Yoshimoto who I had the pleasure of working with many years ago.

- Awareness
- Turning
- Tolerance
- Understanding
- Non-Defensive
- Empathy

The value of intimate conversation is that it is absolutely the basis for intimate intercourse.

LAURA

Consider this...Can you imagine having an intimate conversation about sex? If the answer is yes, then you should have one. If not, let me suggest that the best sexual relationships, the most intimate, are between people who have an ability to talk about their sex lives.

But for some reason, we've decided that sex is somehow not a topic of polite conversation. No matter what you think about the sanctity of the marriage bed and whether or not marital sex is sacred, you have to acknowledge that even Hollywood has differentiated and hidden marital sex.

ZACH

It's true. Pause for a minute and think about every single sex scene you've ever seen depicted in popular culture...including pornography. How many of those scenes include a man and a woman married to one another. It's very few. I bet it's less than 1 in 10.

We know, if only unconsciously, that true intimacy is more complicated than just sex. It's time to bring that whole "intimacy" conversation into the open which, I think, you'll find is way more intimate than leaving it in the bedroom.

LAURA

Consider asking open ended questions about sex - intimate conversation - but not in the bedroom. Have them around the kitchen table, in the car, on your Sunday walk. You'll be surprised where these conversations can lead.

Ok...I don't want to create a total buzz kill now that you're all excited about intimacy, but we've not yet considered one very important and practical reality. Simply put, you may not be ready for intimacy.

I don't want to insult you, but the simple fact is there might be a perfectly legitimate reason why intimacy in your relationship seems fleeting. Remember: True intimacy occurs when two mature people choose to share and pursue a higher purpose together

What makes you think you're mature? Or ready to share? Here's the harsh but gracious truth: Intimacy may be difficult because you lack maturity.

ZACH

Perhaps you're being held back by the ghosts of your childhood.

Perhaps you're being held back by a legitimate diagnosis: depression, OCD, aspergers.,

Perhaps you're being held back by some other commitment - to work, or alcohol, or exercise, or another person.

Each of these signals a lack of maturity ... at least a lack of marital maturity. If we've struck a nerve here, I urge you to get professional help. Any of these things will keep you from achieving the intimacy that your relationship deserves.

I don't mean to taunt you with your immaturity...that would be cruel. But I do want you to take your maturity seriously. If you suspect that you (or your partner) may be on that list above, even the suspicion of that, will hinder your movement.

LAURA

So...here we are at your "next step". It's time to decide how to move...Perhaps you can take a minute to identify where you get hung up in the A-T-T-U-N-E conversation. Or perhaps it's time for some soul searching about the things - not connected to your relationship - that are keeping you from achieving intimacy. Ultimately, your next step is simply to stay on the path - remember, slow and steady wins the race - so put one foot in front of the other.

Our goal is to help you construct a deeper sense of intimacy in your relationship, which includes expanding your definition of intimacy and taking a look at the greater whole.

In the activity sheet "Holistic Intimacy" we've given a few examples to get your creative juices flowing. Our hope and your goal is to experience at least one small win in your relationship to create momentum and continue moving forward. Hold yourself accountable to getting this win!

Remember, slow and steady wins the race. You can do this. Just take those next steps and we'll see you in the next video.