

Intimacy

In “Intimacy: The Art of Relationships,” published in *Psychology Today* in 2016, researcher Lori H. Gordon writes that, “At the heart of intimacy, then, is empathy, understanding, and compassion; these are the humanizing feelings. ... Sexual problems in a relationship are frequently the by-product of personal and relational conflicts and anxieties. For too many couples, sex has become a substitute for intimacy and a defense against closeness. Most poor sex stems from poor communication, from misunderstandings of what one's mate actually wants—not from unwillingness or inability to give it.”

Intimacy brings together the acts of sex (body) and feelings of connectedness and caring (brain). Sometimes it starts with just a touch!

I have a patient, Dolores, who has confided in me that, due to her strong religious beliefs about marriage, she would never seek sex outside her marriage and would not consider leaving her spouse, but he stopped touching her years ago. Dolores has shared with me that this has been so hard on her emotionally and spiritually. She no longer believes she is physically attractive and has often reported feeling undesired or undesirable because of a lack of intimacy in her relationship.

The simplicity of touch creates a bond between two people.

“The gentle breath on the back of your neck, a brush of the knee or feather-like kiss on your hand can produce a sexual sensation, depending on who is delivering the touch and to whom,” writes Samantha Evans—nurse, sexpert and co-owner of the online sex toy retailer Jo Devine—in her article, “The Lesser Known Erogenous Zones - And How To Find Them.”

Whether the touch is a feather-soft tickle or a suggestive spank depends on what each partner likes.

For many individuals, physical touch is one of the key “languages of love” that they crave. In his 1992 book *The Five Love Languages: How to Express Heartfelt Commitment to Your Mate*, author Gary Chapman writes,

Touch as part of intimacy can be thrilling or exploratory, suggestive or demanding.

Touch:

- Provides a connection
- Conveys affirmation
- Reassures
- Decreases stress
- Improves self-esteem