



Pause With Purpose

...to refresh

...to grow

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and
John Rottschaefer PhD
Certified Life and
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Intimacy

Ever since our first father Adam failed to find a suitable partner among the fish, birds, and animals of the created world, mankind has struggled with the desire for, and fear of, intimacy. We might enjoy some time alone, but then ache when it produces feelings of isolation and loneliness. We seek company, in person and on-line, hoping to find the connection that will allow and support the intimacy we desire. At times, we even sacrifice our safety, our dignity, and our values in a misguided effort to capture or retain a source we mistakenly believe provides us with this intimacy.

So what is this jewel of great price, this thing we call intimacy? Simply put, it is the state of being deeply and thoroughly known, and of knowing your partner in the same way. Too often, intimacy has been confined to the area of sexuality, so that "being intimate" is understood as being sexually involved with someone. While this can be a possible part of the picture, intimacy is so much more than a physical phenomenon.

At its heart, intimacy is a deeply emotional, intellectual, and spiritual experience. It involves sharing our most personal thoughts, feelings, fears, dreams. It allows another person

beyond our protective barriers into the vulnerable world of our inner life. This can only safely happen within a context where we are accepted, valued, loved, and enjoyed ... where we know that what we reveal will not be used to shame or harm us.

Intimacy is a gift. It can't be demanded, only given. Wrapping intimacy in anything less than freedom distorts it into simple assault.

To be healthy in its openness, intimacy requires certain conditions. Among these are:

1. **honesty**. - Openness is only as healthy as it is real.
2. **humility**. - Since intimacy is an offering of our personal, imperfect self, we allow others to affirm it rather than boasting of it our self.
3. **trust**. - Only trust, built through a history of consistent safety, will create the secure setting intimacy requires.
4. **respect**. - While safety builds trust, safety itself grows from deep mutual respect for each other, and an ongoing decision to live out that respect.
5. **gratitude**. - Gratefulness given and received reflects the value of the personal gifts exchanged.

Just as certain conditions promote intimacy, others act as "intimacy busters". These include:

1. **fear**, the emotion that raises protective walls and increases distance between people.
2. **shame**, which sends us into hiding.
3. **pride**, which doesn't allow us to admit flaws or weaknesses.
4. **selfishness**, which inhibits the ability to give, which is so necessary for intimacy.
5. **hurtfulness**, which makes us too unsafe for intimacy.
6. **laziness**, when we don't expend the effort to be aware or to share.

Without question, intimacy is a potent force. It melts barriers and strengthens bonds as it feeds empty hearts and deepens relationships. We must be wise, however, as we consider when and where to pursue intimacy. Certain boundaries are necessary, appropriate, and should be respected. Indeed, indiscriminate intimacy invites both trauma and heartbreak.

So, let's be wise, courageous, and connected. Let's grow in our own strength and confidence so we can be open with others and share the rich benefits of healthy relationships.

It's worth the risk.



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CONTACT INFORMATION

Your thoughts and comments are warmly welcomed. I would also be happy to share with you more about life coaching and how it can assist you to be your best, personally and relationally, at home and at work.

Mailing Address -
John Rottschafer, PhD CLC
Free to Be Life Coaching
12317 Verlin Dr
Gowen, MI 49326

phone - (616) 450-4615

e-mail -

john@freetobelifecoaching.com

www.freetobelifecoaching.com



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Spirituality and Intimacy

As we consider the nature of intimacy, it is interesting to note that it has the potential to involve all that we are - body, mind, and spirit. Depending on the depth of intimacy we desire, everything about us is a potential area for sharing - our thoughts, our feeling, our strengths, our weaknesses, our preferences, our joys, our concerns.

In intimacy, we enter into the lives and hearts of others, and they into ours. It is interesting that within the Christian belief system, this is actually what our God desires to experience with us. He promises to reveal Himself more and more to us as we seek to know Him more. He also asks that we share all that we are with Him, so that we share an intimate union of love through which we take on more and more of His characteristics.

Sadly, we often focus solely on our efforts to be "good" and to avoid "sin". Given this, a hypothetical question is posited - would God rather we be sinless with no need or desire for a relationship with Him, or would He rather have an intimate love relationship with us sinners who gratefully share Christ's righteousness?

Remember, Jesus' death, as payment for our brokenness and rebellion, was all about reestablishing relationship between God and mankind.

Let's focus on what is most important for God and for us!



"The miracle is this - the more we share, the more we have."
- Leonard Nimoy

"Passion can never purchase what true love desires: true intimacy, self-giving, and committment."
- Anonymous