

## **Real Intimacy**

I've counseled many couples who were married, separated or divorced for a while, and now find themselves trying to reconcile and give the relationship a second chance. Often I see a gulf between them that counseling cannot bridge. They're moving in different directions. One partner wants to recapture the intensity of their past intimacy, as if they could somehow get inside a time machine and return to the season prior to their separation.

The other partner has moved on to a new focal point, usually their career or the children. He or she has realized that they cannot depend on the other person to fulfill all their needs or direct the course of their life. As they look into the future, the only relationship they want is one that they feel like they can control. Can you relate? In the absence of love, many of us fall for work or sex or money or some substance that makes us feel good temporarily.

Today we have more technology, more counselors, more Viagra, more sexy lingerie, and more marriage seminars than ever before, and yet our divorce rate continues to cross the fifty percent mark. What is it that we're looking for that more sexual education and opportunities cannot provide? Could it be something as basic as the intimacy that comes from sharing daily life and personal realities together? I'm often amazed at hearing divorced men tell me that the things they miss most about their wives are the way they cooked meatloaf, the silence they shared at the end of the day after tucking the kids into bed, and the clutter of her perfume bottles on the vanity in their bathroom. Too often we overlook the small details which contribute to the connection we feel with other people.

During a recent Dr. Phil show in which I was participating, we counseled a woman who struggled with sexual addiction, compelled to have sex with strangers. A guest expert on the show noted the bitter irony that sex addicts are running away from intimacy by acting out sexually. Even though they are engaging in the most intimate of acts, they are disengaging and blunting their emotions to avoid the pain of connecting in a healthy relationship. True intimacy requires transparency and vulnerability, honesty and acceptance, and trust. True intimacy requires deciding to love.