

COUPLE TALK*Communicating with Your Partner*

The New Year, A Good Time for an Intimacy Checkup

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At the beginning of each year, couples often make New Year resolutions about what they want to do individually. What about what you and your partner can do for your relationship or marriage? When was the last time you and your partner looked at the previous year to assess where your relationship was and where it could go?

The New Year (or even your anniversary date!) is a good time to consider an intimacy check up. Think of it as preventative maintenance on your marital relationship. Many people spend more time and effort on the preventive maintenance of their cars than they do on their relationships!

To better understand where you and your partner are regarding your level of intimacy, set aside some time to sit down together and complete an "intimacy checklist." Below are six areas of intimacy important to maintaining a healthy and stable marriage. On a one-to-five scale (with 1 being "lousy" and 5 being "outstanding") rate where you feel you are as a couple in these various areas of intimacy. Do this on your own, and then come together to share your scores and thoughts with each other. Give yourselves permission to share candidly with each other.

- **EMOTIONAL** intimacy brings you a feeling of closeness with and trust in your partner. You are able to share feelings and emotions without fear or reprisal or ridicule.
- **SOCIAL** intimacy occurs between friends who share common activities and learn to work together. This type of intimacy grows out of accepting your personality differences and using them in complementary ways.



- **SEXUAL** intimacy is achieved through learning your partner's likes and dislikes in lovemaking. It means learning his or her love language and how he or she likes to be romanced.
 - **INTELLECTUAL** intimacy means that you share ideas in depth with each other. You value each other's opinions and can accept differences of opinion.
 - **RECREATIONAL** intimacy involves having fun together. You like to play together and you share many similar interests.
 - **SPIRITUAL** intimacy involves sharing your deep beliefs and values. It also involves your willingness to talk about your similarities and differences together.
- What is your most developed category of intimacy? Where do you want/need more growth as a couple? Recognize that areas with a lower rating can mean even greater potential and marital growth possibilities.

Adapted from Drs. Britton and Bobbye Wood's 2003 article, "Did you fall in love or are you rising in love?" for Family Information Services, Minneapolis, MN.



HELPFUL RESOURCE

The Association for Couples in Marriage Enrichment (A.C.M.E.) is an international, non-profit, non-sectarian organization whose purpose is to promote better marriages by providing enrichment opportunities and resources that strengthen couple relationships, increase intimacy, and enhance personal growth, mutual fulfillment, and family wellness. To learn more about A.C.M.E. and various marriage enrichment exercises, publications, and workshops they offer, visit them on-line at www.bettermarriages.org.