

# Foundations

Late Summer

## Your Place in my Heart

It's funny – maybe it's because we live in the northeast that when I think of intimacy, I think of cold weather. Snuggling on the couch, sipping hot chocolate together. Lying in front of a fire – these all evoke feelings of loving closeness. While pictures of couples in romantic scenes usually do not have them wrapped in a down comforter, that's the picture in my mind. It could be because more of the year is cold than warm, or because it's been a few years since my body was a swimsuit delight, but whatever it is, summer scenes do not ring the chimes of intimacy for me.

### Private Moments

I guess everyone has pictures in their mind that speak to them. Your picture of intimacy might be on a secluded beach, or in a candle-lit café, or on a dance floor, dancing to romantic music. Whatever it is, the experience of intimacy goes way beyond the image. Steve and I don't abandon intimacy until the season conforms to my picture of it. We have special, private moments even when the temperature soars into the 90's and beyond. The reality of private moments between you doesn't have to fit the pictures in your imagination in order to give you joy. They just have to be warm, special moments between you.

### The Comfort Factor

We've found that sometimes there is great intimacy in sorrowful moments.



Intimacy

When my sister was dying, Steve's embrace was the place where I felt safest and able to put down the burden of sorrow for a little while. When Steve lost a job, my touch was the one thing that still felt hopeful in a very uncertain world. If you haven't had that experience, you have something precious to look forward to, because Hollywood spends a lot more time on romantic intimacy than it does on the intimacy of comforting one another.

### Inside Jokes

Some of our other moments of great intimacy have come from sharing a joke. Times we had together that reduced us to helpless giggles are stories that we continue to remind each other about.

Nobody else lived those moments, so while we can tell the stories they're never as funny to anybody else. It's a true example of "Guess you had to be there."

### Yours to Create

So I hope you have wonderful images of intimacy on your mind, but I also hope that you have hundreds of experiences of intimacy with your spouse that don't fit the picture, because you wouldn't want experience to be limited by an idea. I hope you'll be open to seeing the closeness between you in whatever guise it presents itself. Have yourselves a lifetime full of intimate experiences with one another in many different settings and seasons. In my opinion, there's nothing better.

# Healthy Relationship, Healthy Heart

Research is supporting the positive effects of a long-term, loving relationship on health. Here are some of the findings from a book entitled *Love and Survival* by Dr. Dean Ornish, best known for his work on low fat diets for reversing heart disease:

- Researchers at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland asked a simple question of 10,000 married men with no history of chest pains (angina): “Does your wife show you her love?” Those men answering yes were found to experience significantly less angina in the next five years than husbands responding no – despite such negative indicators as elevated cholesterol, high blood pressure, diabetes or electrocardiogram abnormalities.
- Yale scientists surveyed 119 men and 40 women before they submitted to angiography tests. Those who reported feeling most loved and supported were the same subjects found to have markedly less blockage in the arteries. The factor of feeling loved and supported – or unloved and unsupported – was independent of any effects of diet, smoking, exercise, family history or other risk predictor.

In 1952, Harvard doctors selected 126 healthy male students at random. The students were asked to describe the nature of their relationships with their parents. In 1987, medical records were obtained for the subjects, who were in their 50s. More than 90 percent of the men who didn't perceive warm



relationships with their mothers had been diagnosed with serious illnesses such as coronary artery disease, hypertension, ulcers and alcoholism, compared with 45 percent of men who cited loving relationships.

Though Dr. Ornish still recommends heart patients eat no more than 10 percent of their daily calories in the form of fat, in this book he is liberal in his praise for what can't be found on any menu.

“The diet can play a significant role,” he said. “But nothing is more powerful than love and intimacy.”

## Walls Around Your Marriage

When you have something valuable you do what you can to protect it. Fences, walls, locks, are all forms of protection people use to safeguard their valuables. Creating and maintaining intimacy forms the borders of a marriage.

We all know that our vows call us to sexual fidelity, but there is another thing that's harmful to a marriage, and that's emotional infidelity. It refers to one sharing with someone outside the marriage thoughts and feelings they are not sharing with their partner. The outside person could be a friend or a co-worker. Through social media, it could be someone thousands of miles away. Emotional infidelity violates the intimacy of marriage because it crosses the boundaries that define two people as a couple. But in order to violate a boundary one has to exist in the first place.

What defines your marital territory? What do you share that others are excluded from? In some marriages it's jokes or stories that hold a special meaning, in other marriages certain signs of affection are reserved just for the two of you. For most people seeing their spouse giving someone a hug or a kiss on the cheek would be perfectly innocent and acceptable but to see your partner holding hands with another would be cause for concern.

Protecting the boundaries of your marriage takes two willing and trustworthy partners. Let each other know that the job of protecting your intimacy is important, and that you're on board to keep those walls strong.

# Build Intimacy



What are ways that you can deepen the intimacy between you, or to protect the intimacy you currently have?

## How to...

You know the old saying about building a successful business – location, location, location. Well, with intimacy in a marriage, it's time, time, time! You can't expect to build intimacy or preserve the intimacy you have in five minutes a day. **Schedule time for each other, and make that time a priority.**

## Make time for your sexual life together.

While sex is just one form of intimacy, it's an important one for married couples. This is the form of intimacy you reserve for one another, and it creates a bond that will comfort and sustain you in hard times. Don't ignore or neglect it. As author Evelyn Whitehead once reminded her readers, making love is really *making* love.

## Keep the humor

Sometimes when sex is not an option (if you're apart, or you've just had a baby) shared jokes can go a long way toward reminding you what's so special about your relationship. Humor is a kind of intimacy that deepens as the years go

along. Sometimes someone else will say something and you'll just exchange a look. The look says it all – there's a private joke you both remembered that wouldn't mean anything to anyone else.

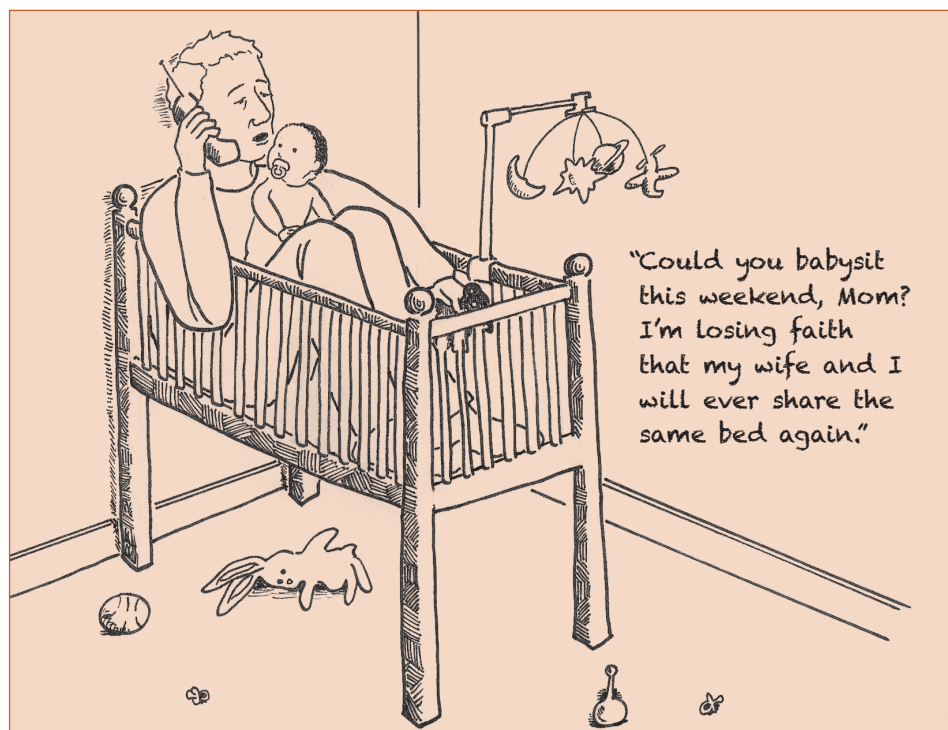
## Speak the right language

In *The Five Love Languages* author Gary Chapman claims that there are different

ways people express love, and different ways they are open to hearing it. Your spouse may not hear love the same way you do and if you do for him what you'd like done for you he might not recognize the message. If you feel loved when you get a gift, don't assume the same is true for your spouse. A gift of your time, or physical touch may be a clearer message of love. Check out the quiz at <https://www.5lovelanguages.com/quizzes/couples-quiz/>

## Have fun building the bond between you!

There are not many things in life more fun than building intimacy. It can involve swimming, eating out, cuddling, cooking together. It should be a way of tapping in to all the things you both enjoy. You have chosen to love each other and to live that love out in marriage. Sharing your favorite activities with your favorite person is the way you build that love. As the Barefoot Contessa always says, how easy is that?



# Exercise

Intimacy develops in many different areas of your marital life. Think about these different kinds of intimacy and which areas you see as most important in your relationship.

On a scale of 1 to 5, how important do you think each kind of intimacy is currently in your relationship.

	You	Spouse
<b>Emotional intimacy</b> <i>feeling close, able to share our deepest thoughts, hopes and desires</i>		
<b>Intellectual intimacy</b> <i>sharing our ideas, talking about current affairs, literature, our philosophy of life</i>		
<b>Sexual intimacy</b> <i>experiencing the closeness and union of our bodies</i>		
<b>Recreational intimacy</b> <i>having fun together sharing the hobbies we love</i>		
<b>Work Intimacy</b> <i>sharing common tasks, whether in our jobs or in our tasks at home</i>		
<b>Communication intimacy</b> <i>using good communication in clear, honest discussions</i>		
<b>Crisis intimacy</b> <i>dealing with the big challenges of life, either personal or in the larger world</i>		
<b>Commitment intimacy</b> <i>the feeling of trust between us based of faithfulness and friendship</i>		
<b>Spiritual intimacy</b> <i>coming together around beliefs and practices involving faith</i>		



# I Have Called You Each By Name

In many cultures today people change their names to signify that a new phrase of their life has begun. Some people change their last names when they marry, as a symbol of their starting a new family. In our present American culture, some women take their husband's last name, some couples create a new name (often by hyphenating their former last names) in some cases, the husband adopts his wife's last name.



Marriage may bring about a change in how we are addressed or how we address others. Friends of your parents or relatives may indicate that now you should call them by their first name instead of Uncle Henry or Mrs. Smith. When you become a parent for the first time it is startling to hear your child call you mom or dad.

The first step to a closer relationship may begin with a name. "My name is Tom McGrath but my friends call me Mac." "My name is Sonia but my husband calls me Sunny which is the name my parents called me growing up."

In the Bible, to name something meant that you had power over it or that you were given power by someone else. Abraham was given his name when he was chosen by Yahweh. Adam and Eve named the animals. Simon was renamed Peter and Saul became Paul. Even more exciting, names give an indication of relationship. Theologian Michael Horton says that in the Bible, naming is also treaty-making, and that the fact that God named humans expresses both an equality and also a sign of a covenant relationship.

So there is a spiritual element in the way we address one another! The titles, "my husband" or "my wife," the terms of affection, "Honey," "Beautiful," are signs of the covenant we have established with one another. They mirror the covenant that God made with all of us as His people, and that Christ makes with each of us as we are baptized.

The prophet Isaiah quotes Yahweh, who said "*Fear not, for I have redeemed you, I have called you by name, you are mine.*" (Isaiah 43:2). Jesus says that the Good Shepherd knows his sheep, and calls them each by name.

Do you have special names for each other? Even if you just use your own given names, when your spouse uses your name, the way they say in conveys love, and it often sounds different on their lips. Names are powerful. Remember that the way you name one another in your marriage reveals, and increases, your intimacy with one another.

A photograph of a small white boat with a blue stripe, floating on a vast expanse of blue water with gentle ripples.

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A NEWSLETTER FOR MARRIED COUPLES

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