

INTIMACY WITHOUT SEX

When you talk about intimacy, there is usually a sexual connotation. Tell someone that you have been intimate with a woman and he will immediately think that you had sex with her.

There is more, a lot more, to intimacy than sex. In fact, the word intimacy comes from the Latin “intima”, meaning inner or innermost. Webster defines intimacy as “belonging to or characterizing one’s deepest nature; suggesting informal warmth or privacy; of a very personal or private nature.”

For me, intimacy is an experience that takes place when two persons, (not necessarily of opposite sex) reveal their innermost selves to each other. It takes courage to be truly intimate because opening up one’s deepest thoughts and feelings is no small matter. Telling another about your darkest secrets calls for courage of a very special kind.

This is why so many people find it difficult, if not impossible, to be intimate. You may know a person for a long time without understanding much about him or her. It takes a kind of uncommon heroism to make yourself vulnerable to another. This is why intimacy, deep, true, and meaningful intimacy is not at all ordinary.

Seen this way, intimacy might have nothing to do with sex. I have good friends (male and female) with whom I have shared intimate moments that had nothing to do with sex. These were times when we were able to communicate and share our innermost thoughts and feelings. As a counselor, my clients tell me things that they have never told anyone on the planet. They unburden their hearts and we talk about matters that they never felt comfortable taking up with anyone else. That is what I call intimacy. Non-sexual intimacy is a powerful tool to deepen friendships. It is most dynamic when two persons want to reach out to each other in a nonsexual way.

If you want to get close to someone, it isn’t all that difficult. Simply find the time and, most especially, the courage to open up yourself to the one you wish to be close to. There is an excellent chance that there will be a like response.

Because it is so hard to make intimate disclosures, many persons have never experienced intimacy. They have what therapists call “intimacy disease”. They desperately look for ways of getting close and, since they know nothing about real intimacy, they resort to sex. Because of the nature and pleasures of sex, they mistake it for real intimacy. At least that’s what they believe. So they crave for more and more sex but find that it ends up being meaningless and empty. Nor does it bind two people together in love for very long. Sooner rather than later, they find that sex does not have the power to hold them together in a true growth pattern.

Sex that is lacking in intimacy is simply sex. Nothing more, nothing less, and by itself it cannot stand for very long.

