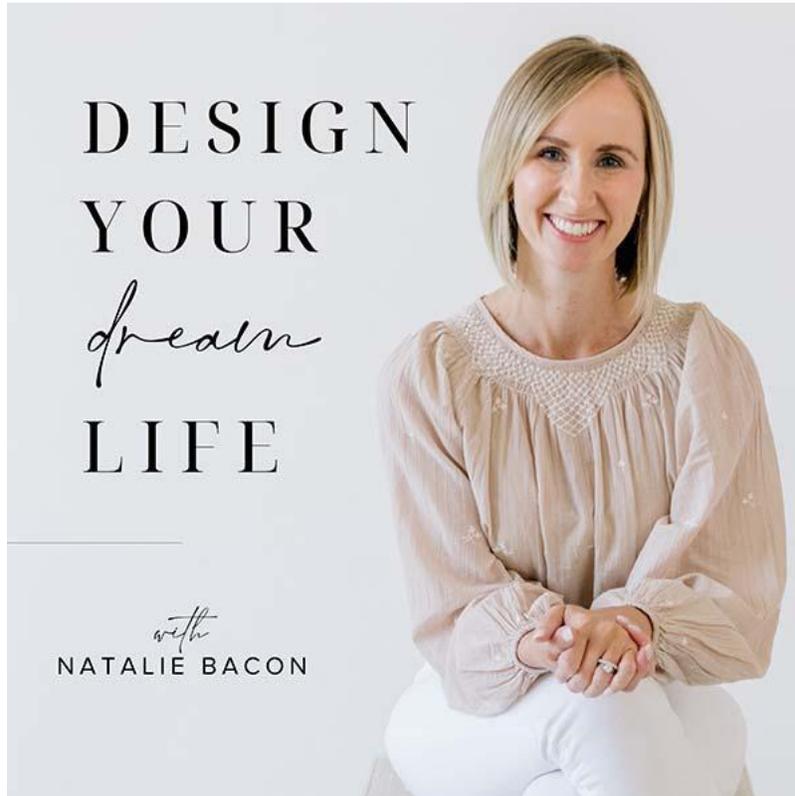


Intimacy In Marriage



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Natalie Bacon

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Hi there. Welcome to the *Design Your Dream Life* podcast. My name is Natalie Bacon, and I'm an advanced certified mindfulness life coach as well as a wife and mom. If you're here to do the inner work and grow, I can help. Let's get started.

Hello my friend. Welcome to the podcast. I am delighted to be here with you today. We are going to talk about intimacy in marriage. Before I get started, I want to invite you to download the podcast directory. I have been updating it and making sure that it has the best podcast episodes organized by category in addition to the first eight episodes that you should listen to, particularly if you are either new to my work, or you want a refresher on how to practice and do the inner work.

You can grab that. It's free. You can download it at nataliebacon.com/directory. If you already have downloaded it in the past, you can redownload it or go to the link that you received in the email and refresh it, and you will get the updated version. We make sure to always give you the updated version so that you can always have the best episodes right on hand. I just love this directory. I hope you do too.

So I've been coaching a lot of clients in *Grow You* about marriage and connection. I started studying it more and noticing patterns in my clients who are coming to me with different challenges. I came up with this episode.

Now there are different types of intimacy that I'm going to talk with you about today. I'm going to go over five. I did not invent these. I don't know who did. I think it's a psychological kind of theory. I find it to be really helpful for my clients and for myself in my own marriage. So I want to share them with you here and give you ideas for how you can increase intimacy, and just give you a new lens through which you can think about intimacy.

I think we often use the word intimacy as code for sex. Physical intimacy is just one type of intimacy. So I'm going to talk with you about all five types, give you examples, and kind of share with you how to increase intimacy in each category. As well as go through an example from a *Grow You*

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member that I worked with this client on that was really powerful and helpful.

So I want to start with the problem. I think we tend to blame our partners for lack of intimacy. Sometimes we call it intimacy. Other times we call it connection. So there's this underlying pattern that I'm noticing of the mindset if my spouse was more like me and did things the right way, then this wouldn't be a problem.

I say that because when we identify this thought and this way of thinking and we say it out loud, it almost sounds a little ridiculous. We know that we don't want to be married to ourselves. Yet, we have this underlying belief that we haven't identified that we are acting as if our spouse should be a reflection of who we are. We think that we are right. We're sort of centering ourselves.

What we want to just notice is that who you are being is just one way of being in the world, and how your spouse is being is another way. We don't want to assume that your spouse should be a replica of you. You actually don't want this. You don't want to be married to yourself. So with that in mind, I want you to think about these different types of intimacy as tools that you can use to increase intimacy with yourself, increase intimacy in your marriage, and increase intimacy in any other relationships that you want to.

What I don't want this to turn into is an episode where you just can't wait to send it to your spouse and think that they're the ones who need the work. Instead, let this be a new way of thinking about intimacy for you. All right.

The first type of intimacy is physical. This can be any sort of touching. It can be holding hands. It can be hugging. I think there is so much strength and connection in physical intimacy that isn't even sexual intimacy. So when you think of physical intimacy, think about it not just in terms of sex. Okay. Of course, sex is one type of physical intimacy, but another type is any sort of touching.

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I think that, particularly if you have kids in the home, physical intimacy that is nonsexual can be hard to come by. We can get so busy in our day to day lives and the routines and parenting that the hugging and the holding hands and the rubbing the shoulder or any sort of non-sexual touch can get lost. This is a reminder that increasing that type of physical intimacy can really be a way to connect in an easy, practical way throughout the day that you may have forgotten about.

The second type of intimacy is emotional intimacy. This relates to sharing your feelings, listening to your spouse share their feelings, and doing it in a way where you are validating their feelings. It's being able to tell each other your fears, your disappointments, any strong emotions you're feeling, as well as the really happy, amazing emotions. It's when you feel like the other person is seeing you and you are seeing the other person, specifically with respect to feelings.

The idea with emotional intimacy is that you and your spouse feel safe and comfortable expressing your emotions around each other. So, for example, let's say that you are feeling worried. You can sit down with your spouse and share those worries, share your feelings, and he's there to support you, to listen to you. Not try to fix it, but instead just see that you're a human being experiencing these feelings. Conversely, your spouse comes to you. He's feeling stressed. Maybe it's about work. You are there for him to talk with about his feelings. You listen and offer support without trying to fix his feelings.

Another example is just talking about positive and negative emotions as they come up. You allow space for it. When I say allow space for it that just means there's a lack of judgment. So if your spouse comes to you and says I'm feeling so stressed, you say something like tell me more about that. I'm here for you. Let's talk about it. Instead of having the attitude okay let me fix this. You shouldn't be stressed. Or going into this mode where you aren't seeing their experience.

The third type of intimacy is intellectual intimacy. This is where you share your beliefs about anything. It could be about something small, like reading

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a book or watching a movie. It could be something bigger like how many kids you want to have, or your political beliefs.

The idea with intellectual intimacy is that, again, there's that non-judgement when you share ideas. There's openness and curiosity and love and respect. There isn't defensiveness when beliefs are different. Both partners feel comfortable being able to talk about their beliefs in a way where the other person doesn't necessarily have to agree with them.

Certainly, there are going to be lots of areas where you don't agree with your spouse. But you can come together and discuss those ideas without shutting the other person down, without thinking that you are automatically right, and the other person is wrong. You can hold space for you having your beliefs and the other person having their beliefs. It's okay that they're different.

One example of this would be you and your spouse discussing political beliefs which are different from one another. You're interested and curious about your spouse's opinions. You're not mad or defensive. Yet you still after the conversation have your own opinions. Or it could be that you read a book and talk with your spouse about the ideas you learned from it. Maybe he didn't read the book, but he listens and asks questions, and you both discuss ideas from there.

The fourth type of intimacy is experiential intimacy. This is where you are doing activities together and sharing experiences that lead to memories. These memories are unique and special to you and your family or your marriage. They also can lead to inside jokes and a really special connection.

So I was thinking about this with respect to my own marriage. Steve and I have so many examples of this in terms of our experience living in a high rise downtown Chicago during the pandemic. We have inside jokes about it. We also have a way of describing a penny during that time. Penny is our dog, our first puppy, mini golden doodle.

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We say that those were her Sex in the City days because she was living in this beautiful high rise and getting to go out multiple times a week with all of her dog friends. It's almost hard to explain because that's the point of experiential intimacy. It's the "you had to be there" type of intimacy that's shared with your spouse.

Another example of this would be you take a family trip, or you do a staycation, or any other type of experience that you do together and that you form memories with. It could also be something as simple as cooking together at home. It's the activities. It's the doing and creating memories from that.

The last type of intimacy is spiritual or religious intimacy. This is where you share spirituality or religion. It doesn't mean that you both have to be of the same religion. In fact, you could be of different religions and have a very strong religious intimacy because you are both very open and connected and discuss your religious beliefs as well as respect each other's religious practices. You feel really connected around religion.

Alternatively, you could be of the same faith and not have a lot of religious intimacy. Maybe you feel very uncomfortable praying in front of your spouse or something like that. That's not to say that that's wrong. It's just a cue for you to notice oh that's interesting. I sort of want to hide that part of myself. You can be of the same faith. Again, it doesn't have to be religion. It could also be any sort of spiritual practice that you do together. Maybe talking about spirituality or going on a meditation retreat together. Anything like that.

So those are the five types of intimacy. After I did all my research on that, I got really curious about the definition of intimacy. So I looked it up, and I want to share it with you here. Intimacy is closeness between people in personal relationships. Let me repeat that. Closeness between people in personal relationships. Then this definition goes on to say it's what builds over time as you connect with someone, grow to care about each other, and feel more and more comfortable during your time together. It can include physical or emotional closeness or a mix of the two.

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This was the definition that I saw on Google. I think it came from Healthline if I'm correct, but I liked this definition. Very simple, very straightforward. You can see how if we define intimacy as closeness between two people in a personal relationship, that all five of these types of intimacy fall into that definition.

As you are thinking about intimacy and sort of evaluating, as the brain likes to do, the level of intimacy that you have in your marriage, I want to mention here that your spouse doesn't need to meet all five types of intimacy. This can actually be really transformative in your marriage. So you may decide that physical intimacy is one that is going to be exclusive to marriage, which is very often the case. But the other types of intimacy, you may decide that you want to get met from other sources.

So, for example, if you really want to increase your intellectual intimacy in relationships, but that's just not something that your spouse really enjoys. They don't really enjoy talking about ideas or their beliefs. You may start to seek out a new friendship where this person really fulfills that intimacy need for you.

I think this can be so powerful because instead of putting so much pressure on our spouse to be our everything, all of the time, we can see oh there are other ways that I can have these needs met. So if I want to talk about my feelings and my spouse just isn't really into that, instead of trying to force it, I can say that's a need. That's an intimacy desire that I have that I'm going to seek out with a girlfriend.

Conversely, if you know that your spouse really enjoys going out and having new experiences, you may decide that you want to increase that level of intimacy by planning other activities or trips that you can do together. It's just a different way of thinking about the components of connection in a marriage that can be really powerful for you as you grow as a spouse.

I suggest starting with not where you want to go, but first where you're at right now. So if you think of that GPS analogy. There's the starting point,

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and then there's the destination. So instead of thinking about okay, where do I want to increase my intimacy start with just assessing intimacy, both inside your marriage and outside your marriage in each of these areas.

So you might not do that for physical. Physical just might be inside your marriage. But for the others, how is your intimacy both inside your marriage and outside of your marriage? That gives you the starting point. So I gave you a few examples of where you might want to increase it. But before you go about doing that, take inventory of each area, and where you think you're at with respect to intimacy.

So you might notice that you're not sharing intellectual intimacy with anyone right now. That's a desire of yours. So it's just good to know that you would say you are lacking in intellectual intimacy. Like how's it going and each of these areas for you? Then you can say okay, where do I want to increase?

Maybe you have a lot of experiential intimacy, but you find that you don't have any spiritual or religious. That's not to say you're doing it wrong. What I want you to do is get curious about that. Do you like that? Do you want to change it? Do you want to change it in your marriage? Do you want to change it outside of your marriage with a friend in another way?

The last thing I'll say about that is I don't want you to use these types of intimacy as a scorecard for how well you are doing as a couple in your marriage, right. So if you listen to this, and you're thinking oh my gosh. We don't have strong intimacy in any of these areas. I don't want you to think that that means something bad about your marriage. Instead of using it as a way for you to evaluate your marriage, I want you to use each of these types of intimacy as a way to simply evaluate your yourself and where you want to go.

So if you're noticing, I don't have a lot of physical intimacy. I would like to increase it. That's just good to know. Don't take it a step further and make it mean oh my gosh, our marriage is doomed. This is bad. We don't have intimacy that we should. Okay. The same is true for all the other types of

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intimacy. I really just want this to be a useful tool for you to use to grow in your marriage and in your other relationships.

Now, I want to share with you a real practical example from one of my clients inside Grow You. She is the wife, and she is married to a man. She came to me and said, "I've been married for 18 years. We have teenagers at home. I'm wondering what to do together with my spouse to not feel so blah." She said that her husband wants to talk more. She wants to go out more. She said, "What should I do? How can I work through this?"

So through the lens of what I taught on this podcast, we can see that the husband has a desire for maybe more intellectual or emotional intimacy. He wants to talk more about ideas or feelings, anything like that. The wife wants more experiential intimacy. She wants to go out and make memories. So when you see that it's each spouse having two different wants, you can diagnose this challenge so much more effectively.

So in this case, what we came up with was an idea for her to plan some dates where she and her spouse go out. So going out into town out to dinner where they would have new experiences at different restaurants, fulfilling her desire to get dressed up and go out on the town, but also to make it happen in a space conducive to having conversations, which is what he is desiring.

This wasn't easy for her at first to think about what to talk about. She was thinking we've been married for so long. What else is there to talk about? We sort of know each other so well. I pointed out to her that those thoughts are keeping her really stuck from exploring her spouse in a new way. So noticing that those are just thoughts. They're not facts.

I told her to come from a place of curiosity, which is simply I wonder. Start wondering about your spouse with fresh eyes. I wonder what his hopes are for the future. I wonder what his fears are. I wonder what his beliefs are. I wonder who he wants to become in this next season. I wonder what emotions he feels most often. Curiosity is I wonder, I wonder, I wonder.

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So this shift really was so empowering for my client. She was much more energized about topics that she could talk about, and felt so much more competent going into these upcoming dates with her spouse. I want to just add in here it can be really easy to focus on the past, on how things have been in your marriage. But if you focus on the past, that's what you create more of.

So what you want to do is focus on the future, focus on possibility, focus your mind on new and different ideas that you haven't even considered. So this can be hard to do, particularly the longer that you've been married. But the more that you do this work, we have a mindful journaling course that you could do this with inside Grow You.

If you're in there, I recommend doing that. Write about the wife or the woman or the spouse that you want to be in your partnership, in your marriage. This can be really empowering to get you out of feeling stuck or feeling blah or feeling irritated. Those are kind of the most common feelings that I coach on with respect to the marriage relationship, but any feeling that you are feeling.

I do want to add here that this episode and these teachings are specifically for marriages that are healthy. So if you are experiencing trauma, or you would not describe your relationship or your marriage as healthy, I do not want you to think that this means that you should use these tools. That's sort of outside the scope of who I am speaking to here. This is really for those of you who are in relationships and want to increase your intimacy. These are some tools that I hope will help you do just that.

A final note here for you I have. Intimacy is something to focus on for yourself as a way to become more open and vulnerable. It can be tempting to hear this episode and want to share it with your spouse so that they understand all five types of intimacy. That's fine. I'm all for sharing this episode.

But mostly, it is powerful for you, for you to hear it, for you to process it, and for you to apply it. It is harder to do this way. It's so much easier to say hey

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spouse, hey husband. Here's this episode. Do this. It'll make our marriage even stronger. It is harder to do the work yourself. But that is where you will truly see the biggest transformation.

So that is my encouragement to you to think about where you're at in each area of intimacy, where you want to increase it, where you want to increase it specifically in your marriage, and where you want to have other relationships where you can increase that type of intimacy. That's what I have for you this week my friends. I will talk with you next week. Bye, bye.

If you loved this podcast I invite you to check out Grow You my mindfulness community for moms where we do the inner work together. Head on over to nataliebacon.com/coaching to learn more.