

Fear Of Intimacy

Do emotional walls & barriers, secrets & long silences hamper your relationship? Fear of intimacy is common in adults, especially if you've been scarred in the past.

It is the exact opposite of the close relationship you had with your best friend when you were growing up. You may be lucky enough to have a best friend now, but the depth and scope of those childhood friendships may seem unbeatable because you shared all your secrets. Fear of intimacy -- hiding behind emotional walls and barriers -- wasn't usually an issue. Overcoming fear of intimacy and anxiety wasn't even on the radar screen. Fear of intimacy is definitely a grown up problem.

Fear of intimacy involves the reluctance to open up and reveal your true self. This may be because of your personality temperament or a consequence of how your family communicated. Your temperament may be an anxious and somewhat withdrawn that shies away from revealing yourself or 'opening-up' to your partner. Personality characteristics such as introversion and extroversion can also contribute to fear of intimacy issues, and so can depression and anxiety.

Or your family may have been one within which open and emotional communication was avoided at all costs. Or perhaps because you've been hurt in the past. That is, you may have made efforts when growing up to be close to your parents or others but found yourself being rejected, hurt, or even punished for your efforts. If you grew up in an emotionally and socially closed environment and never learned how to be vulnerable to either friends or lovers, you may have a hard time opening up now. This is fear of intimacy.

We've all been betrayed and hurt by loved ones in big and small ways – a thousand tiny betrayals. Regardless whether the pain was accidentally or deliberately caused, we're naturally reluctant to open ourselves up again. Not wanting to get hurt can lead to an extreme fear of intimacy.

Fear of intimacy is different than fear of commitment. You can be married and not know your partner emotionally, intellectually, or spiritually. In fact, loneliness in marriage is more difficult than being lonely as a single person or widow. To be with someone who has no inkling of your longings, fears, anxieties, dreams, or hopes is a lonely experience indeed. This kind of marital loneliness can spring from fear of intimacy in one or both partners.

If you feel this way it is sometimes too easy to blame your partner. For every woman who blames her husband for being afraid of intimacy, there is another one who pretends to want intimacy but actually is comfortable with a distant partner because she is let off the hook of really letting herself be known.

The strongest foundation of an intimate partnership is a good friendship. Whether you're friends or lovers (or both) there are three elements of a strong, healthy relationship: authenticity, communication, and honesty. These three elements can lower anxieties about letting yourself be known at a deeper level.

Authenticity: This is when your feelings match your words and actions. In your relationship you may feel lonely, neglected, disillusioned, or hopeful but if your

behaviour toward your spouse is inconsistent with these feelings then you begin to experience conflict within yourself and behave without authenticity. As I said above, some women pretend to want intimacy but actually make it difficult for it to happen because their efforts at authenticity are weak. Ask yourself how authentic you really are? If you suggest that you are not authentic because of how he is, then think again. Maybe you are more afraid of the consequences of being authentic – for you. Instead of hiding behind fear of intimacy, step out and reveal yourself. You'll feel vulnerable and afraid - there's no getting around that! The consequences between you may be negative but the consequence within yourself may be positive.

Communication: Mutual self-disclosure occurs when the two of you share your personal and everyday experiences. You open up at the same level; for instance, you both discuss experiences of being betrayed in the past – or neither of you shares it. You meet each other at the same level in terms of the amount and type of personal experiences and thoughts you disclose. If mutual self-disclosure doesn't happen, then you're in an unbalanced relationship. One partner has opened their heart, while the other has hidden it away. This fear of intimacy that can be reduced simply by talking about it. Paradoxically, by talking about the fear of intimacy or closeness one becomes close.

Honesty: You talk about what's going on in your life, how you really feel and what you really think. You reveal what's important to you, which builds trust in your relationship. You don't play games, such as expecting your partner to read your mind or dropping hints instead of saying what you really mean. You may still have a fear of intimacy, but you're honest about it. The longer fear of intimacy festers, the worse it gets - and the more difficult it is to overcome. Now's the time to face your fear of intimacy and embark on a journey toward building authenticity, honesty, and risk-taking in communication. If you do it without anger, with a soft-heart, and with a shy sense of humour, you just might succeed!