

build intimacy not only sexually, but on many other levels as well.

Nurturing Intimacy

The soul yearns for moments of intimacy. And the authentic self within us all is magnetically drawn towards any opportunity to be intimate, not just physically, but emotionally and communicatively as well. Through the act of intimacy, we are unveiled, revealing our unprotected, unlimited, and unbounded radiant self. For this reason, intimacy is the dance of the soul, yet sheer treachery to the ego.

Intimacy occurs whenever we are courageous enough to dissolve our protective boundaries—any time we are not consumed with the desire to be better than another. It occurs in any instant we choose the position of vulnerability over being defensive. In the decision to be intimate, we choose our macro-identification, rather than the micro-self. We override the need for control and protectiveness, and instead choose transparency and openheartedness.

The courage to be intimate comes from changing our belief and from understanding that transparency and vulnerability do not equate to a threat of injury or loss to our real self. Intimacy is not a show of weakness, nor indicative of a powerless person. Rather, it is a sure indication of an emotionally matured, integrated personality.

Our socially programmed idea that intimacy is to be experienced only with those safest or closest to us is in need of change. Because intimacy is a violation to the ego, both individually and collectively, strides

taken towards its accomplishment will require patience and compassion. Because the very idea of intimacy is a threat to our ego persona and thus our autonomous self, we spend more time avoiding intimacy than embracing it. The truth is that we can be intimate with everyone all of the time, if we truly understand what intimacy is.

To be intimate with another means to be willing to set aside our need to have power over another person, and to share our fullness—our shadow and light sides. It means breaking social, religious, and ethnically constructed rules which are meant to separate us from one another. These are rules that are meant to uphold private thoughts and desires, personal information and orientations, and, in particular, any mistakes we may have made.

Being intimate takes courage because it will usually feel uncomfortable at first to bust the rules. The rewards are well worth the effort, though, if we can allow the emerging feelings of foolishness, vulnerability, and transparency to act as a salve upon our parched souls, which hunger for intimacy's nurturing.

Many people say that it is necessary for us to place boundaries around ourselves in order not to be violated, abused, or taken advantage of. I do not subscribe to that belief. From my observation, we need more surrendering of boundaries than building them. When we have the courage to be ourselves transparently, unveiling our vast emotions which encompass both the shadow and light sides of our humanness, we will, in turn, finally be able to receive ourselves and each other that way, too.

I do believe that the Great Wall of China, the Berlin Wall, and the fences we place around our hearts and properties, as well as all the “rules” that are also meant to keep us away or separated from one another, are reflections of the ego mind, which is committed to that goal. The outer walls are nothing more than an outpicturing of the inner fear of unity, equality, being seen, or taken advantage of.

One way that we can begin to lead more intimate lives is by asking better questions—questions that offer up the opportunity to reveal what inspires us, makes us smile, or causes us to be sad. As a baby step towards that goal, next time you are at the checkout counter, try *not* saying to the checkout person, “Hi, how are you?” when you don’t plan to really listen for the answer. Instead, try looking at them while searching for their best feature, and then compliment them on it. Or compliment them on being very fast or caring. Try asking them *if they are having a great day*. All of these are small acts of intimacy, because they are looking more deeply into the other person in hopes of connecting and merging, even if only for an instant. We are so hypnotized into shallowness, but intimate act by intimate act, we become more comfortable with intimacy and eventually begin to crave it in all our encounters.

Before we can hope to have intimacy with our mate physically, we need to establish emotional and spiritual intimacy. We will only share ourselves with those with whom we feel equality and with whom we feel safe, and by whom we are not criticized or unappreciated.

Whenever we begin to harbor feelings of anger, hurt, or resentment that we are unwilling to discuss,

the erosion of intimacy begins. The by-product of our silence will in time become the need or desire for a wall or boundary around us. In reality, what we are saying to our mate is, “You have hurt me in some way, and so I do not want you to have an open invitation to my body.” We punish one another by withholding ourselves in various ways. Some withhold words; others withhold their body. I do both. No matter how much work we have done to cultivate intimacy in our relationship, if we start holding on to, rather than expressing, our hurts and resentments, our walls will go up. Over years, this resentment will extinguish the fire between the couple.

This scenario played out in an incident between Allan and me a few years ago. (Although it occurred long before my frank discussion with him, described in chapter four, about the lack of fire I felt for him, it could repeat at any time at which resentment is allowed to poison the relationship.) One evening, Allan was “spooning” me in bed with his hand cupped around my breast. He loved to let his hand “dance” over my body, and at times I hated it. I felt violated and resentful; feelings of rage would come over me, and I told him that I felt he was overstepping my comfort zone. He felt emotionally “slapped” by my response.

Years had gone by without my ever mentioning how I was feeling about his advances. The whisper of the ego said, “If you tell him how you are feeling, he will feel rejected, and you will be seen as cruel.” Time after time, I silenced my words, as my emotions screamed, “Don’t touch me!”

My silence was a by-product of the rage and feeling of violation I had been swallowing for years, and which was swiftly eroding my desire for intimacy. Any yearning I may have felt in my soul towards achieving an intimate union was being suffocated by the anger I was harboring inside for countless infractions of which I was unwilling to let go. I had deduced correctly that the letting go of the hurts of the past couple of years would have paved the way back into our oneness. I also knew that there was still a strong ego-pull within me that wanted to make Allan suffer for a myriad of things, such as being mean to my kids, being aloof, controlling me with his money, always needing to be right, and so on. I realized that for these things I wanted him to suffer as I had suffered, more than I wanted to set him (and thus us) free. Consequently, the ego was winning in its quest to block intimacy in our relationship. I did not recognize this at first.

Then, through my deeper yearning for truth and honesty, and by asking myself the right questions, I realized that by not telling Allan of my personal boundaries, I was doing more damage than I could possibly have done by sharing.

The ego often tells us to be silent rather than communicative, in hopes of creating enough pent-up rage so that we will eventually blow up, saying or doing something that we will deeply regret later. Recognizing this, I decided to share.

My heart pounded in my throat, and tears rolled down my face as I shared with Allan that I often sat in the bathroom crying because of the trespasses I felt he had done. Allan lay silent—yet I felt his pain filling my heart, his emotions coursing through my veins.

“How did we get here?” I wondered. I knew that his soul hungered for my being more than for my body. I knew that all of us have at times misinterpreted the yearning for physical intimacy in that way. He was innocent, as was I, and he only interpreted his hunger in the ways he had been conditioned and hypnotized to do, just as I had been hypnotized into the belief that I needed boundaries.

Then, with gentleness, he stated, “I thought we had paralleled our paths to eliminate boundaries and separations—to experience our oneness? I thought we were moving ever closer towards intimacy, acceptance, and freedom? I think you are afraid of intimacy, just like me!”

Wham!—his words echoed through my whole being, stringing together lifetimes of fear, as if they were pearls. He was right; I was terrified of intimacy, but not with my clients or friends—I had overcome that fear long ago. No, I was terrified of intimacy with Allan. “He is my other self,” I thought. Dancing intimately with him, melting all my protective boundaries with him, being transparent with him, merging with him, somehow, magically, allowed me to own myself completely.

I suddenly awakened to the remembrance that intimacy was the dance of divine love, the kissing of the face of God. In an instant that felt like eternity, I was being offered the opportunity to be my authentic and innocent self, as well as feel all that I had been terrified to feel, yet pained for.

It always astonishes me how our fears *are the dragons protecting our deepest treasures*. I realized that I had gone numb some time ago, and the tingling, like

that which occurs when our leg wakes up after we have pinched off the blood supply, hurt.

I have concluded that intimacy is something we both ache for and are terrified of. This is so because we have correctly associated intimacy with the loss of our individualized self. Gratefully, however, when we engage in acts of intimacy, what rushes to meet us instead of loss is a more authentic identity. Frailty and smallness are exchanged for strength, expansiveness, and that experience we so crave—transparent love!