

Introduction

When we began our relationship two decades ago, we fell deeply in love. Now, twenty years on, we love each other deeply. Where we once had an exciting and passionate relationship, we now have an exciting, passionate and intimate relationship.

In that twenty years we have loved, cared for each other, argued and made up countless times. We have talked, laughed and cried together. We have brought up our children and stepchildren together. We have learned, grown and in recent years worked and taught together. All of these experiences - the joyful and the painful - have combined to contribute to the intimacy in our relationship.

We have learned that true intimacy is the experience of connecting deeply with one another. When we are connected in this way we are aware of each other as individual, remarkable beings. We connect with the very essence of each other.

This connection was not possible when we first met. Falling in love brought us together, but it did not immediately create intimacy. We have had to build our intimate relationship step by step - we had to create a conscious relationship.

Through our commitment to personal growth, we gradually learned to be more conscious. After a time, consciousness became a choice and in choosing it we acknowledged that the path would not be easy, but the rewards would be spectacular. We know that it is possible for any couple, with the right skills and understanding, to build a relationship of true intimacy.

We have written this book as a helpful guide to achieving deeper intimacy in relationship. We do not intend it to reflect all that can be said on the subject of relationship. If you find yourself experiencing relationship difficulties, we strongly recommend that you consider working with a relationship professional.

Chapter 1

True Intimacy

There are differing ideas about what intimacy means. You will have your own ideas about intimacy which you bring to reading this book. You might believe that intimacy is holding hands and cuddling. Perhaps sitting talking quietly with your partner is what intimacy means for you. Or perhaps you feel it is a particular way of making love with your partner.

Of course, all of these are part and parcel of an intimate relationship and we can certainly do all of these things in an intimate way, but what is it that makes them intimate?

True intimacy occurs when we connect at a deep level with our partner. It is a connection of our *essence* with the *essence* of our partner. As we connect with them, and they with us, each of us is able to let the external mask of our personality drop away. As we do this, we can allow ourselves to be open and undefended, that is, vulnerable.

When we experience being vulnerable in this way, it can be extraordinarily joyful and intensely satisfying. There is no other experience like it, because the feeling of wholeness that accompanies it unites us with ourselves and all of life.

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At the same time, feeling vulnerable with another person can be uncomfortable. If we are unprepared for feeling open and undefended, intimacy can feel unsafe. As we will see later, this is why so many of us instinctively avoid it.

With intimacy, our deepest joy is connected to our deepest fear.

As we have allowed our relationship to become more intimate in this way, it has also become more satisfying for each of us. While the early days together were passionate and exciting, the intimacy we have now is a much deeper and richer experience. Far