

# Four Foundational Columns of Intimacy

Couples often get caught up in thinking about their “level of intimacy” in black-and-white ways. We either “do” or “do not” have intimacy. To further complicate things, “intimacy” is a loaded word that gets defined in different ways. I find it helpful to categorize “intimacy” into four different types of columns that create a foundation for the relationship. The following exercise is meant to help you do a couple assessment of where you do well and feel connected, and where you might want to spend some time improving. I find that most couples tend to find strengths in 2-3 of these columns and struggle in 1-2 of them. Give yourselves a “grade” for each type and then use this as a springboard for conversations that celebrate your strengths, as well as motivate you to strengthen areas that are currently weak.

## 1. Emotional Intimacy:

1. How well are we able to talk about and share our feelings with one another?
2. How in tune are we with the other person’s body language?
3. How safe is it to talk about a variety of topics, even topics that we know we differ on?
4. Do we trust each other?
5. Do we feel primarily accepted by the other?

## 2. Intellectual Intimacy:

1. How interesting do we find each other?
2. Is it easy to have a variety of conversations on a variety of topics?
3. Do we share similar interests or hobbies?
4. Do we have fun together?
5. Is there an ability to connect and be curious about topics we may not share an interest or knowledge about?

## 3. Spiritual/Ethereal Intimacy:

1. Do we have a sense of shared values between us?
2. Are we aware of and support each other’s dreams and aspirations?
3. Do we have a sense of shared meaning and purpose in life?
4. Whether we share religious beliefs or not, do we support each other’s sense of spirituality?
5. Do we find awe in our connection and attraction?

## 4. Physical Intimacy:

1. Do we share a satisfying sex life?
2. Do we have ways to show and enjoy non-sexual affection?
3. Do we make room for differing libidos and sexual preferences in a way that honors both of our needs, fantasies and desires?
4. Do we sense a sensual or flirtatious energy between us?
5. Do we balance stability and mystery in ways that keep eroticism alive and prioritized in our relationship?