

Uncompromising **INTIMACY**

Turn Your Unfulfilling Marriage Into A Deeply Satisfying, Passionate Partnership



Alexandra Stockwell MD

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For Rodd, with all my love.

For our children Josephine, Christopher,
Gabriel, and Matthew—this book is here
for you when you want to read it.

For couples everywhere who want
passionate, deeply connected relationships.

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CHAPTER 1

IS THE COMFORT OF COMPANIONSHIP AS GOOD AS IT GETS?



- Is it even possible to sustain emotional intimacy and sensual passion in a long-term relationship?
- Can we sustain our erotic connection?
- Can we create a fantastic sex life if we never really had one to begin with?

These questions plague many couples; couples who love one another deeply. They whisper in the background when you yearn to feel intimate connection with your beloved, when you yearn to feel cherished and adored. And the questions simmer to the surface as you want to be supported in becoming the best version of yourself. You also want to offer this kind of connection to your partner. But you can't figure out how. Maybe you have read a number of books on how to improve your relationship, or how to improve yourself. Maybe you have done a little

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therapy at one point or another, experiencing some short-term benefit that didn't last. Maybe you don't really know what you want anymore, because it's too hard to figure it out. And if you did know, you wouldn't know how to create it anyway. Yet you are absolutely certain that you both want to stay together, so it really is worthwhile to figure out how to enjoy one another more.

These mostly unspoken challenges linger in the air, silently. You only really notice them in the rare moments you are alone, or when you look through old photographs and feel an ache for rekindled connection. Or perhaps you feel jealous when you see a friend from college in a happy, flirtatious photo with her husband while on vacation. You want so badly to feel how she feels, to have what she appears to have. Mostly though, you don't let these thoughts derail you because there is so much good in your life. You and your partner are devoted to your family, to the raising of your children, and to providing for all their needs. For the most part, you don't doubt that he's the right partner for you.

Even so, you aren't happy, and you can't figure out what to do about it.

First of all, let me tell you that you are not alone. Far from it!

As a society, we are collectively struggling in our attempts to build lasting relationships. The divorce rate is staggeringly high, as is the huge percentage of couples who are dissatisfied with the quality of their relationship.

While maintaining a relationship is obviously challenging, this book is *not* about staying together. It is for you, because you *do* want to stay together. You and your partner are committed, and the question is not *whether* to stay together. It is *how*!

- *How* do you co-create a relationship that fulfills your true yearning, one that doesn't just look good on the outside, but truly feeds your soul?
- *How* do you create a relationship that fuels your purpose, and brings delight and play to every day?
- *How* do you create a relationship with both planned and spontaneous adventures to places you want to visit?
- *How* do you create a relationship where you feel the solidity that comes with knowing someone well, plus the delight that comes with discovering new things, having new experiences, and learning more about your partner?

The problem of *how* is completely understandable. Because as mammals, one of the primary ways we learn is through imitation. But when we look around for great long-term relationships worthy of emulation, we come up very short. And when we don't have strong imprinting, it's hard to know *how*.

When I first became a relationship coach, early in working with a couple, I used to ask them who they admired. What were the relationships that inspired them and motivated them—either in their own family, or in their extended network of friends and acquaintances, or in movies, literature, or celebrities. Every time the couple would look at one another, wondering, and come up empty. I never had anyone answer the question with clarity and conviction so eventually I stopped asking. In the process I learned much about the lack of role model couples along with the huge need for them.

This isn't to say that there aren't people who really admire the love their parents or grandparents share. But that doesn't mean it is the relationship they want to be experiencing. Times change rapidly with the generations, and what worked for your grandparents is unlikely

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to work for you. Consider how gender roles are different, women's relationship to work and purpose has changed, and our expectations of what we will experience in a marriage have evolved. What that means is that we have an overload of examples of long-term committed relationships that are not what we are looking for, and a dearth of those that would be worthwhile aspiring to.

In other words, we lack a roadmap or, as I like to say, a blueprint for the kind of relationship we yearn for.

The research is consistent with this dilemma: While the divorce rate is high, the data on those who stay together is equally discouraging. Actually, we don't have very much data because there are few entities that fund such research. When it comes to incidence and patterns of disease, or even education, there are many corporations that see financial benefit in collecting data, but that isn't true when it comes to relationships. One exception to this is Durex, the condom maker. As part of a study, the Durex company interviewed 29,000 couples and found that 54% were dissatisfied with the quality of their relationships. Other research has shown that up to 84% of married couples aren't happy with the intimacy they experience.

In working with couples, I have discovered there are three main kinds of relationships: *toxic, termination, and toleration*:

A toxic relationship is one in which fear and anger govern most interactions. This can involve violence and abuse of various kinds. A toxic relationship doesn't have a safe enough container to do the work in this book. If you are reading this book and that is your situation, I encourage you to turn to another resource for support and return to this book when your relationship is more stable

In a termination relationship, one or both people have already given up on the relationship. Maybe you have already filed for divorce, or perhaps you are waiting to do so for one reason or another. There are often significant financial reasons to stay together, or you need psychological stability and are not ready to rock the boat. In fact, one in four couples stay together until all the children are out of the house; they stay together for the sake of the children even though they would otherwise separate. If you are in a termination relationship, there will be valuable material for you in this book that you can use to improve the mood in your home. You will learn how to co-parent and co-create with your spouse in a way that is more satisfying for both of you. However, the promise of this book—to show you the path to creating emotional intimacy and passionate, deeply satisfying sex—is for readers who are in relationships where both of you are committed to the relationship and willing to do what it takes to make it fantastic.

If you are, in fact, committed to making the relationship work, you may be in the third kind of relationship, the toleration relationship. The vast majority of couples are in toleration relationships. These are relationships where they have learned to live with things that don't feel great and don't really work for them, but they are overriding their unmet needs and desires in order to save the relationship.

In the toleration relationship, there is no question whether you love each other, because you really do. Furthermore, there are countless things you love about the life you have built together. You can depend on one another to show up for your children, to be punctual to important events, to do your best to provide for your family, and to be there for each other most of the time. But, despite all of this felt love and evidence of commitment, your life together feels relatively stale, mundane, and unfulfilling. It might be painful to admit, because in a toleration relationship the hurt is often buried deep below the surface.

In fact, it's important to you that your relationship looks good on the outside; you don't want to trouble your kids, and you certainly don't want others to think there is anything wrong. You may think to yourself that so many other couples deal with much bigger problems, so why focus on what isn't working.

You are personally and professionally competent, and it throws you off to discover any sense of incompetence when it comes to intimate relating. You don't want to deal with it, or even acknowledge it, even to yourself. Instead, you put more time and energy into your work, or a volunteer project, or working out, or pursuing a new hobby, or making yoga and meditation a regular commitment. You engage with *anything* that takes you away from what isn't working in the relationship, so you don't have to face it directly.

You have probably, at some point, tried bringing this up with your partner, but it never goes well. You don't feel heard and it's not satisfying. Typically, he ends up defensive and blaming, or completely withdrawn, which leaves you even more frustrated than before.

So instead, in the evening after dinner is cleaned up and the kids are set with homework, you watch Netflix and fall asleep, or you read your own book and give him a peck on the cheek before turning out the light. It's not satisfying, but it works.

In this kind of relationship, you are among the majority of couples that talk about something other than kids and logistics for less than four minutes a day. There is no talk of your dreams, your desires for the future, new insights about life. Instead, you stick to the topics that are straightforward and emotionally uncomplicated, except every now and then when you can't contain it and express your emotions in an intense jumble. You share much of what isn't working for you, your partner is thrown off guard, and you end up back where you

were, waiting for the sting to lessen again. I often describe this kind of relationship as “conflict-free and passion-free.”

At first glance, especially from the outside, “conflict-free” might look pretty good. And I am certainly not an advocate of conflict for conflict’s sake. But if you turn down the volume on what matters to you in everyday life, papering things over to keep the peace, and compromising on things that are important, you end up sacrificing more than you ever meant to. Avoiding topics because they will be awkward or unpleasant means you are holding yourself back, and abandoning your own soul for the sake of the relationship. Inevitably, if you compromise in your daily life on a regular basis, it is very challenging to dial things back up and bring all of yourself forward when it’s time for passion and sensual communion in the bedroom.

We are whole beings, and when we numb ourselves, override our needs, ignore our desires, neutralize our yearnings, and withhold our truest feelings on a regular basis, we don’t have easy access to them in times of passion and intimate self-expression.

This is where *The Blueprint For Conscious Partnership* comes in. It shows you the way to cultivate the fourth kind of relationship: The Conscious Partnership.

In conscious partnership, you and your partner treat your relationship as the vehicle for personal transformation. You learn to bring all of yourselves to the relationship, learning to love who you are and accepting all of who your partner is. This naturally leads to erotic intimacy, hot sex, soul-stirring passion, and the knowledge you need to continue to expand from there for the rest of your life.

There aren’t too many couples who have cracked the code and live true conscious partnership, and those who do aren’t always forthcoming

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about it because the experience is intimate, sacred, and often private. Even so, there is a growing revolution of couples who are transforming how they relate to one another. They are consistently accessing new depths of satisfaction with one another, and finding joy and satisfaction emotionally and sensually. Reading this book is your next step to becoming one of those couples!

Exercise

Get pen and paper, and write a page or two in response to these questions:

- What kinds of relationships did your parents and other main role models have?
- Were they toxic relationships, characterized by anger and fear?
- Were they termination relationships, with divorce or separation while living under the same roof?
- Were there qualities of toleration, where each of them held back parts of who they were and what they needed, in order to maintain the status quo?
- Or were you one of the rare children who grew up with one or more parents in a conscious partnership, wherein self-expression, sovereignty, emotional intimacy, and passionate connection were the norm?
- What insights do you have about your own relationship after writing your response to the questions above?

Learn More



I hope you enjoyed the first chapter of *Uncompromising Intimacy* and that you see your own marriage reflected in one of the four types: Toxic, Termination, Toleration, and Conscious Partnership.

The rest of this book describes how to transition from a Toleration relationship into Conscious Partnership; how to stop compromising in order to enjoy improved communication, emotional intimacy and ultimately sensual passion as well.

Get the full book and learn how to transform your marriage into a deeply satisfying and passionate partnership.

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