
INTIMACY & SEX: *EXPECTATIONS VS REALITY*

Leonardo & Shaneka McClarty, September 20, 2025

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

- Where did you go on your first date?
- Who said, “I love you” first?
- How did you know they were the one you wanted to marry?
- What song was played during your wedding dance?
- What are you hoping to learn today?



ABOUT THE MCCLARTY'S

- Married 22-years
- Parents of 3 daughters
- Our Love
- Our Pain Points





WHAT WE WILL COVER

Intimacy Challenges

Expectations vs Reality

Spiritual Context of Marriage

Actionable Steps for Couples

INTIMACY THREATS

COMMON LANDMINES IN RELATIONSHIPS

Money Conflicts

Financial issues often create tension and disagreements that can weaken emotional intimacy between partners.

Communication Issues

Poor communication leads to misunderstandings and emotional distance in relationships.

Sexual Intimacy

Challenges around sex can cause emotional disconnection and strain the relationship bond.

Religious Differences

Conflicting religious beliefs may create tension and affect shared values in a relationship.





THREATS TO INTIMACY

Selfishness prioritizes personal needs over partner's wellbeing. (James 3:16)

Poor Communication causes blame and suppresses honest dialogue. (Proverbs 15:1; Proverbs 18:13; Joshua 22:11-31)

Comparison breeds jealousy. (2 Corinthians 10:12; Galatians 6:4-5)

Resentment leads to unresolved issues that creates deep resentment undermining intimacy. (Hebrews 12:15)

THREATS TO INTIMACY

Erode Intimacy decreases both emotional and physical closeness.

Attack Trust secrets, lies, betrayals
(John 8:44; Matthew 7:24-27)

Isolation removes vital support systems fostering relationship growth.

Normalization of Divorce creates as an easy escape weakens commitment and undermines marital stability.



**BUILDING AND
NURTURING INTIMACY**

Practice Selflessness: Each partner should prioritize the other's needs as highly as their own—serving, not keeping score. (Philippians 2:3-4)

Foster Open Communication: Create a safe space for honest dialogue, even about hard topics. Listen to understand, not to win. (Ephesians 4:29; Proverbs 18:2)

Commit Daily: Marriage isn't a one-time promise; it's a daily choice to love, forgive, grow, and show up—even when it's hard. (Colossians 3:13)

Cultivate Gratitude: Regularly express appreciation for your partner. Gratitude strengthens connection and guards against entitlement. (Ephesians 5:20)

Protect Intimacy: Nurture both emotional and physical closeness. Be intentional about staying connected and making each other feel wanted and known.

STEPS TO BUILD AND NURTURE INTIMACY



Fight Fair: Disagreements will happen—what matters is how you disagree. Stay respectful, avoid personal attacks, and seek resolution, not victory. (James 1:19-20; Proverbs 16:24)

Surround Yourself with Support: Build relationships with others who value marriage —friends, mentors, faith communities—who will encourage growth, not division.

Forgive Freely: Let go of resentment. Forgiveness doesn't ignore hurt, but it chooses healing over punishment. (Colossians 3:13)

Celebrate Together: Mark the wins, big and small. Shared joy is bonding. (Philippians 4:4)

Build a Shared Vision: Work together toward common goals—whether it's raising a family, building a home, or serving others. Shared purpose deepens unity. (Genesis 1:28)

STEPS TO BUILD AND NURTURE INTIMACY



PURPOSE OF SEX IN MARRIAGE



SPIRITUAL AND EMOTIONAL DIMENSIONS

- Procreate (Genesis 1:28)

- Spiritual Protection

(1 Corinthians 7:2)

- Comfort (2 Samuel 12:24)

- Service (1 Corinthians 7:3-4)

- Satisfaction (1 Corinthians 7:9)

STEPS TO DEEPEN SEXUAL PASSION AND FIRE



Remember your first love (why you fell in love or attraction)



Remove (distractions; stressors; work; people)



Release (hurt, resentments, grudges)

STEPS TO DEEPEN SEXUAL PASSION AND FIRE



Return to your first love (actively pursuing your partner)



Reserve time for one another



Rapture (get caught up in intense pleasure; flirting; touch; words)

EXPECTATIONS VS REALITY

STRESS AND FATIGUE

Barrier: Busy schedules, work, kids, and responsibilities drain energy and desire.

Solutions:

Prioritize rest and self-care—quality sleep and relaxation improve libido.

Schedule “unplugged” time together (date nights, walks, or shared hobbies).

Divide household or parenting tasks more evenly to reduce resentment.

Practice relaxation techniques like deep breathing, prayer, or mindfulness before intimacy.



Barrier: Unresolved conflict, lack of communication, or emotional distance.

Solutions:

- Set aside time each week to talk openly and without distraction.
- Address conflicts early instead of avoiding them.
- Use affectionate touch outside of sex (hugs, cuddling, holding hands).
- Consider couples counseling to rebuild emotional safety and trust.

**EMOTIONAL
DISCONNECTION**



Barrier: Feeling unattractive or self-conscious can reduce desire.

Solutions:

- Focus on health and self-care, not perfection.
- Practice affirmations and self-compassion—speak kindly to yourself.
- Encourage your partner and express appreciation for their body.
- Create an environment that fosters confidence (dim lighting, music, comfort).

BODY IMAGE AND SELF-ESTEEM ISSUES



Barrier: Pain, hormonal changes, chronic illness, or medications.

Solutions:

- Consult a healthcare provider for hormone evaluation or medication review.
- Explore alternative positions or lubricants for comfort.
- Use physical therapy, pelvic floor therapy, or sex therapy when appropriate.
- Focus on nonsexual intimacy during healing (massages, shared baths, cuddling).

PHYSICAL AND MEDICAL ISSUES



Barrier: Mismatched libidos or differing preferences.

Solutions:

- Discuss frequency and preferences honestly without shame.
- Find middle ground—intimacy can include nonsexual closeness or touch.
- Engage in mutual foreplay or shared activities that build arousal.
- Avoid using sex as a bargaining tool; instead, foster mutual understanding.

DIFFERENT SEX DRIVES



Barrier: Screen time, pornography, and digital overload reduce connection.

Solutions:

- Create device-free zones (bedroom or dinner table).
- Replace screen time with shared rituals like reading together or prayer.
- Seek accountability if pornography has become an issue.
- Set digital boundaries—no phones during intimacy or couple time.

DIGITAL DISTRACTIONS



Barrier: Aging, menopause, parenthood, or grief affect sexual patterns.

Solutions:

- Adapt and redefine intimacy—what worked at 25 may change at 45 or 65.
- Seek medical or holistic support for menopause or low testosterone.
- Emphasize emotional connection and affection, not just intercourse.
- Extend grace to each other and celebrate small moments of closeness.

LIFE TRANSITIONS- SEASONS OF CHANGE



*WE'D LOVE TO SHARE
MORE, BUT....*

The end
