



Therapy for the Sophisticated Gay Man

NEWSLETTER

Kemp L. Smeal, MA, MFT

714.647.7577

License #MFC36925



EXPERIENCING INTIMACY IN MY RELATIONSHIP

July / August, 2007 Issue Ten

Can you relate to the following situation at any time in your life?

“My boyfriend and I have been together as a couple for approximately 6 months. When we first started dating and spending more time together, I felt very close to him emotionally and physically. I now feel like we are not as emotionally and sexually intimate as we were before. I really love and care about him and am concerned that something is wrong with our relationship and don’t know what to do about it...”

Personal relationships often go through developmental phases involving periods of negotiating degrees of emotional closeness and distance with our partners, friends, families, or work associates. It’s normal to struggle with these phases and to know how to navigate through the relational passage into a deeper, more meaningful relationship. Following are some ideas on how to begin creating more intimacy in your relationships.

7 WAYS TO HELP DEAL WITH PRESSURE AND STRESS OF TRYING TO FIT IN!

- **Accept** your struggle with intimacy as a **normal** part of your relationship and individual growth process. See it as an **opportunity** to learn more about yourself and your partner as you choose to work on **growing** and **nurturing** your relationship.
- Explore how your personal relationship history with former partners, friends, and family members may impact your ability to be close or distant in your relationship. Examine what earlier patterns of negotiating emotional closeness and distance in these relationships may be contributing to the experience of pain in your current relationship. What did you learn about being intimate from your earlier significant interpersonal relationships with your parents, or caregivers, siblings, friendships, and other important relationships? Are you and/or your partner afraid of being hurt, abandoned, or abused in the relationship, and protecting yourselves by avoiding emotional closeness with each other?

- Sometimes people struggle with intimacy because of being blocked by fear. Fear can prohibit a natural flow of expressing thoughts and feelings within the relational interaction, and can create distance, anger, stress, depression, and fatigue in each person. Reflect on whether you may be fearful of being known more deeply by your partner; and if so, what may be causing you to be afraid. Do you have any unresolved issues of shame, guilt, internalized homophobia, or other things that may be contributing to your anxiety about relating authentically with your partner, and other people?
- Risk talking with your partner about your thoughts and feelings related to your concerns about the current level of closeness or distance you experience with him. By the way, an open, honest, and respectful dialogue can help build intimacy in a relationship.
- Seek the support and care of a professional therapist who is trained to help you and your partner deal with the underlying issues contributing to pain and intimacy problems in your relationship.
- Give yourself permission to invest in any amount of time, financial resources, and support necessary to help you attain your desire/goal of experiencing more authenticity in relationship with your self and your partner.
- Try to enjoy the process and journey of acquiring increased self-awareness, self-confidence, and self-worth as a result of your commitment to caring about yourself and the health of your relationships.

Happy summer to you,

Kemp

Next Issue:

Investing in Personal Therapy

I'm thinking of seeing a therapist to help me deal with some issues in my life I am struggling with. But, I am kind of afraid to start looking at my self and problems, and also wondering if therapy can really help me. Is it going to be worth the investment of time, energy and money?

Upcoming Issue:

Communicating 101

I want to communicate more effectively with my partner but don't feel like I have the skills and knowledge to know how to do this communication thing better! What can I do to start learning things I need to know so we can have clearer communication in our relationship?