



Intimacy Anorexia

1. Would your spouse say that you keep yourself so busy you have little time for him/her? (This could include activities like spending time on the computer, watching TV, reading or volunteering.)
2. Would your spouse say, if an issue comes up in the marriage, that your first focus is on him/her before you see your contribution to the problem?
3. Would your spouse say that you withhold love from him/her?
4. Would your spouse say that you withhold praise from him/her?
5. Would your spouse say that you withhold sex from him/her?
6. Would your spouse say that you withhold spiritually from him/her?
7. Would your spouse say that you are unable or unwilling to share your feelings with him/her?
8. Would your spouse say that you have ongoing or unwanted criticism of him/her?
9. Would your spouse say that you use anger or silence as a way to control him/her?
10. Would your spouse say that you use control or shame him/her over money issues?

If Bob answers five or more of these with a yes, he probably has an intimacy anorexic pattern of relating to Susan. I also frequently ask, "Would your spouse say he/she feels more like a roommate than a lover?" If the couple is together, I have them rate each other, rather than rate themselves on these questions.

Defining and explaining intimacy anorexia gives clients a practical way of understanding why their marital relationships are lacking a truly intimate connection. Doing so may also speak to the lack of therapeutic progress from previous involvement with other counselors. Like food anorexia, intimacy is a choice. However, the more one chooses to withhold, the easier it becomes. Whereas in food anorexia people starve themselves; in this dynamic, spouses are starved. . . leaving him/her in pain and not the anorexic.

What causes a heart to close off toward a spouse? In the book *Intimacy Anorexia: Healing the Hidden Addiction in Your Marriage*, I describe four triggers that I have seen recur with both male and female intimacy anorexics:

1. Sexual trauma
2. Attachment issues with the opposite gender parent
3. Sexual addiction
4. Role Modeling Neglect