

Married
&
Alone



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Introduction

Intimacy Anorexia is the active withholding of emotional, spiritual, and/or sexual intimacy from the spouse. If you've been married to an Intimacy Anorexic for any length of time, you have most likely experienced many painful feelings. You may regularly feel unloved, disconnected from, misunderstood, and even blamed or criticized. Although you are married, you feel alone much of the time - married and alone. These feelings are absolutely legitimate, and your experience is universal: across all ages, religions, economic levels and cultures, those wed to Intimacy Anorexics have had similar experiences.

Intimacy Anorexia is no respecter of gender. It afflicts women just as it afflicts men, and it may have affected you. If you are a spouse who has been trying, for years or decades, even, to be loved, begging to be loved, you are not alone. The world is full of many others in lonely, painful marriages like yours.

Since the book *Intimacy Anorexia: Healing the Hidden Addiction in Your Marriage* was published, I have received countless emails about individual's battles with Intimacy Anorexia and I have counseled with many couples who struggle with this issue as well. The great news is that Intimacy Anorexia is gaining recognition and is being acknowledged by the culture at large and progressive clinicians. Though the phenomenon of Intimacy Anorexia is becoming familiar in the public, the spouses' stories have yet to be told, however: the personal story of how Intimacy Anorexia has affected them. Their story must be told, for they, too, must be given a voice so that they can be understood by family, friends and counselors.

I have committed the pages of this book to the spouse of the Intimacy Anorexic: the one who feels alone despite this coupledness, the one who wants to tell her story. No matter your level of experience with Intimacy Anorexia, my hope is that you hear the pain and feel the strength of heart described by those who have felt unloved for long periods of time and are finally able to tell their story as part of their own healing process.

My hope is that whatever reason you have for reading these pages, you will be touched by the journey of these courageous men and women and realize that you are worth being loved, whether your spouse has decided to pursue recovery or has chosen his or her anorexia over you.

Chapter One



It's Not Your Fault

Say these words aloud: “It’s not my fault.” Take these words in. Really take them in. Then, take the deepest sigh of relief you’ve ever taken, and let this truth wash over you: You are not, in any way, responsible for your spouse’s intimacy anorexic behavior.

For as long as you can remember, you may have been desperately trying to please your anorexic spouse, to no avail. You have likely bent yourself this way and that, trying to do the impossible: evoke love from someone who does not choose to give love. You may have dieted, read self-help books, or hemmed and hawed, not knowing what to do. Despite your best efforts, you have most likely gotten nowhere.

It is time to stop your efforts and realize that you are amazing just as you are. Your spouse’s choice to withhold love is not a reflection of your worthiness; it is actually not about you at all. It’s not about your height, your weight, your in-

come, your housekeeping skills, or anything else about you. If it was your fault, then your efforts would have led you to be loved for more than just a couple of short weeks after a herculean effort or huge argument.

I understand the pain you have experienced as a spouse of an Intimacy Anorexic. Whether man or a woman, you have been blamed, ignored and untouched by, as well as disconnected from your spouse for years or even decades. I understand that previous attempts at counseling have failed and at times you may have felt hopeless, possibly even as though you've gone insane.

 Your spouse's choice to withhold love is not a reflection of your worthiness 

This book may be your introduction to Intimacy Anorexia; it may be the first explanation you've received for your spouse's destructive behavior. For others, you may have been healing for years from the wounds as the spouse of an Intimacy Anorexic. Either way, I believe it is important to start at the beginning and define Intimacy Anorexia, listing its characteristics and its causes. By seeing Intimacy Anorexia for what it is, you will begin to understand it. By understanding what Intimacy Anorexia is, I hope you will come to agree with me that your spouse's Intimacy Anorexia is not your fault. Some information in this chapter is from the book *Intimacy Anorexia: Healing the Hidden Addiction in Your Marriage* (Discovery Press, 2010).

Marriage is the only relationship that by definition demands emotional, spiritual and sexual intimacy on an exclusive, committed basis over a prolonged period of time, or, as the vow goes, "till death do us part." All other relationships can

demand some of us, but not all. Even dating relationships can demand all three major aspects, but not on a committed or prolonged basis. That is why Intimacy Anorexics often look normal, or even wonderful, in the dating process, but on the wedding night or a month or so later, look completely different than the person the spouse thought they married.

Intimacy Anorexia can impact other primary relationships such as the children and extended family. In my professional experience, however, I have seen it primarily manifested in the marital relationship.

Definition - Intimacy Anorexia: the active withholding of emotional, spiritual, and sexual intimacy from the spouse.

Brief explanations of the key words contained in its definition can help to understand the definition of Intimacy Anorexia.

 Intimacy Anorexia: the active withholding of emotional, spiritual, and sexual intimacy from the spouse. 

Active: The word active is by far the most controversial word in the definition of Intimacy Anorexia. The Intimacy Anorexic claims no intentionality in his or her behavior despite the fact that he or she is clearly withholding love and pushing their spouse away, choosing to do so hundreds or even thousands of times.

A telephone conversation I had with a client illustrates this principle. This particular client is one who withholds love but denies that he intends to; because he doesn't intend to withhold emotion, according to his reasoning, he is not responsible for this withholding.