

What to Know

What words or phrases pop into your mind when hear the word “intimate?” Say them out loud or write them down.

Did you say or write down words or phrases like “a close friend,” “personal,” “confidential,” “emotional,” or “spiritual?” Or did you write down words or phrases like “sex,” “sexual,” or “making love?”

When some men hear the word “intimate” or “intimacy,” they think of sex. That’s because most men are raised to believe intimacy is only about having sex. Many boys and young men mark their passage from boyhood to manhood as the time they first had sex. Then they link how much of a man they are to how much sex they’ve had and with how many women they’ve had sex.

As a result, when men try to form long-term relationships with women, they lack knowledge about and skills to create other forms of intimacy. These forms are:

- **Emotional** intimacy
- **Intellectual** intimacy
- **Spiritual** intimacy

Each form is vital to a healthy romantic relationship.

This lack of knowledge and skills creates another problem. **It makes it hard to create intimate relationships that aren’t sexual.** These relationships include those with other men.

Your ability to form intimate relationships with other men is key to your overall health and well-being and how good a dad you can become. Far too many men lack comfort in creating truly intimate relationships with other men. As a result, they lean unfairly on their wives/partners (and maybe a few family members) as their sole source of emotional, intellectual, and spiritual support.

These non-sexual relationships also include those with a dad’s own children. Not being able or willing to have these kinds of relationships is one reason that some fathers abandon their families. **Do everything you can to develop these kinds of intimate relationships with your children.**

- ✓ **Physical**
- ✓ **Emotional**
- ✓ **Spiritual**
- ✓ **Intellectual**

What Else

Help your children learn to develop intimate relationships with others. This is a key role for a dad. But you must first gain comfort with the non-sexual forms in your own relationships before you can help your children learn how to create them.

Intimate relationships with other men will improve your well-being. Only in these kinds of relationships can you share your feelings and emotions about being a man and dad with people who truly know where you're coming from—other men and dads. No one knows what it's like to be a man and dad than do other men and dads.

What to Ask

Reflect on each of the questions below. Take your time. Write your answers if you like.

1. What's my level of comfort with non-sexual forms of intimacy in any relationship? What can I do to increase my comfort with them?
2. How much comfort do I have with non-sexual forms of intimacy in my relationship with my **wife/partner**? What can I do to gain more comfort?
3. How much comfort do I have with non-sexual forms of intimacy in my relationships with my **children**? What can I do to gain more comfort?
4. How much comfort do I have with non-sexual forms of intimacy in my relationships with other men? Do I fear this kind of intimacy with **other men**? What can I do to gain more comfort?

Learn More

There's no better place to create intimate relationships than with family. Here are some great tips to create those kinds of relationships.

Listen Well: Be a good listener and be amazed at all the things you'll learn.

Praise Often: "Praise for Being" and "Praise for Doing" tell others that you care about them and their self-worth, and that you believe in them. Praise for **Being** involves praise for who someone is. Praise for **Doing** involves praise for what someone has done.

Use Gentle Touch: It's often said that touch is the mother of our senses. Gentle touch is a fuel that creates closeness. We all need to be touched. A good dad knows the value of gentle touch.

Play a Lot: The family that plays together stays together. This family eats together and holds family meetings. Family activities that involve play help develop close ties.

Strike Bargains: Know when you need to strike a bargain with family members. When you bargain, you respect others' needs, wants, desires, and thoughts. Being willing to bargain builds respect between you and others.

Eat Together: Sharing a meal is a great way to build closeness. It allows time for family members to share what happened during the day, both good and bad.

Create Family Traditions: A tradition is something you do over and over again that has special meaning. The most powerful traditions are the ones families do on a daily or weekly basis.

Respect Others: Respect family members, and they'll be more likely to respect you. All of the tips above create respect.