

BUILDING INTELLECTUAL INTIMACY

The first week, you will discuss intellectual intimacy. You may wish to begin by rereading the section entitled “Understanding Intellectual Intimacy” in chapter 4. In building intellectual intimacy, you are seeking to discuss more of your thoughts with each other. “What have you been thinking today?” is the question you are trying to answer. This involves telling not only the experiences each of you has encountered throughout the day but your thoughts about those experiences—how you viewed them. It also involves discussing the desires that have occupied your minds today. Here are some ideas to stimulate your thinking.

Divide the day into three-hour segments, beginning at 6:00 a.m. Tell each other some of the thoughts you had in each of these segments of your day. For example, “Between six and nine this morning, I had the thought how glad I was that you bought grapefruit yesterday because I had a real desire for citrus fruit this morning. On the way to work I had the thought that before the year is out, I hope we can afford to buy a new car. I guess I thought about that when the heater was malfunctioning. After arriving at work and talking with one of the men in my department who is losing his job because of downsizing, I had the desire to help him find a job.” These are the kinds of thoughts that fill our minds day after day. Breaking the day into three-hour segments helps us remember some of these thoughts and leads us to telling things that we may never have discussed in the normal flow of conversation.

Discuss with each other your answers to the following question, “What has been my noblest thought today?” and then, “What has been my most negative thought today?” Intellectual intimacy is not built by only telling positive thoughts. We are a mixture of negative and positive, highs and lows. Intimacy involves discussing some of both.

Read the same article in the local newspaper and ask each other the question, “What are your thoughts about this article?” Please remember that you are not discussing it to critique the other person’s thoughts. You are there to simply receive them. Your purpose is to understand what your spouse thinks. It is legitimate to ask why the other person thinks what he thinks. The explanation will give you further understanding of what goes on inside your spouse’s mind.

Watch a movie or TV program with each other and afterward discuss it by answering such questions as the following: “Was there a message in this movie? If so, what was the message? What did you find objectionable in this movie? What did you find most interesting, and why?”

Read a book on marriage, one chapter per week, and tell each other one thing you learned about yourself in the chapter. Read a book on any subject, one chapter per week, and tell each other one idea you found intriguing or helpful in the chapter.

These kinds of intentional structured conversations, when practiced over a period of time, will stimulate intellectual intimacy. I want to stress that success in gaining intellectual intimacy is based on the assumption that we will respect each other’s right to think, even if those thoughts differ greatly from our own, and especially if those thoughts stimulate negative emotions inside us. “That’s an interesting thought. Would you like to explain that further?” fosters intellectual intimacy. “That’s the most ludicrous thought I ever heard. I don’t know how you could think

that” will almost immediately stop the flow of intimacy and erect a barrier. Check your own responses to make sure that you are not stopping the flow of thoughts by giving your spouse condemning statements or facial expressions. Loving conversation treats the other person’s ideas as just that—ideas. It does not judge the person negatively for holding such ideas.

WEEK ONE: INTELLECTUAL INTIMACY

This week we asked the question: “What have you been thinking today?”

We agreed to tell at least _____ thoughts to each other every day.

We experienced the following (check the statements that were true for you):

_____ Asking the question “What have you been thinking today?” became a humorous thing for us.

_____ At first we had trouble remembering [three] thoughts each day.

_____ It seemed awkward to be forcing ourselves to do this each day.

_____ Sometimes we laughed as we discussed our thoughts.

_____ Sometimes we cried as we told our thoughts.

At the end of the week, our conclusion was:

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