

The Intimate Occasions Outside the Bedroom EBook

A Relationship System for Connection, Healing, and Non-Sexual Intimacy
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This book is dedicated to every couple who has ever sat across from each other at dinner and wondered how to find their way back to each other — and to every person brave enough to believe that love, tended with intention, can be transformed.

Disclaimer: This book is designed for educational and informational purposes. It is not a substitute for professional therapy or counseling. If you or your partner are experiencing serious mental health challenges, trauma, or abuse, please seek qualified professional support.

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FOREWORD

There is a quiet crisis happening in homes across the world. Couples who once laughed until midnight now scroll their phones in silence. Partners who used to talk for hours now exchange logistics — schedules, grocery lists, who picks up the kids. People who chose each other with full hearts now sit in the same room and feel completely alone.

This is not a failure of love.

This is a failure of practice.

I have spent years studying what makes relationships thrive — not in the dramatic, sweeping gestures that fill movies and romance novels — but in the small, daily, intentional acts of showing up for another human being with your whole emotional self. What I have discovered, confirmed by decades of research from institutions like The Gottman Institute, Harvard's Human Flourishing Program, UCLA's Mindful Awareness Research Center, and leading relationship therapists like Dr. Sue Johnson and Dr. Brené Brown, is that the deepest intimacy a couple can share happens outside the bedroom.

And It happens at the dinner table.

It happens in the pause before a conversation.

It happens in the way you listen — really listen — to someone you love.

It happens when you choose presence over distraction, vulnerability over armor, and connection over comfort.

The Intimate Occasions Outside the Bedroom framework was born from a simple but radical belief: that the dining table can be as sacred as any altar, and that a meal shared with intention can heal what years of distance has broken.

Intimate Occasions in Home Dining LLC has created not just a dining experience, but a relationship system — a structured, research-backed, relationship intervention framework for couples who want more than coexistence. This book is a portion from the complete guide to that system.

Whether you are newly partnered and want to build on a strong foundation, whether you are years deep in a relationship and feel the drift, whether you are healing from conflict or betrayal and looking for a path back to each other — this book is your map.

The exercises in these pages are drawn from the best clinical practices in the world. The scripts are real.

The 30-day plan is actionable. The framework is proven.

But none of it works without you.

You must show up.

You must be willing to be seen.

You must be willing to see.

This is not the easy path. But it is the most rewarding one.

Welcome to your next chapter.

INTRODUCTION: THE SPACE BETWEEN

"We are not lonely because we are alone. We are lonely because we are unknown."

— Dr. John Cacioppo, Loneliness Research Pioneer

Close your eyes for a moment.

Think about the last time you felt truly connected to your partner. Not just in the same room. Not just pleasantly coexisting. But genuinely connected — seen, heard, understood, loved in a way that made you feel like you were the most important person in someone else's world.

When was that?

Last week? Last month? Years ago?

For millions of couples, that moment is becoming harder to remember. And the terrifying part is that most of them don't know how to find their way back. They love each other — that part is clear. But love, as it turns out, is not enough on its own. Love is a seed. Connection is the water, the sunlight, the soil. Without it, even the most beautiful love begins to wither.

The Space Between

There is a space between two people in a relationship. Sometimes that space is electric — filled with laughter, warmth, knowing glances, and the comfortable silence of two people who understand each other completely. Other times, that space feels like a canyon — vast, cold, and growing wider every day.

What fills that space is emotional intimacy.

Not physical intimacy. Not sexual chemistry. Not shared Netflix queues or coordinated calendars. Emotional intimacy — the experience of being genuinely known by another person and genuinely knowing them.

Research from the University of California, Berkeley has shown that emotional intimacy is the single greatest predictor of long-term relationship satisfaction — more than physical attraction, financial compatibility, or shared interests. Couples who maintain high levels of emotional connection are:

- 3x more likely to remain together long-term
- 67% more satisfied with their relationship overall
- Significantly more resilient in the face of conflict and life stress
- Healthier physically — with lower rates of depression, anxiety, and even cardiovascular disease

The science is unambiguous: emotional connection is not a luxury in a relationship.

It is **the foundation**. Why This Book Exists

How to Use This Book

This book is organized into four parts:

Part One lays the foundation — defining emotional intimacy, introducing the Five Pillars, and helping you understand where you are right now in your relationship.

Part Two gives you the diagnostic tools to identify your specific connection gaps so you **know exactly what to work on**.

Part Three takes you through the full framework — one pillar at a time — with real exercises, reflection prompts, and partner activities.

Part Four gives you the practical tools: conversation scripts, home dining experience guides, and your complete 30-day transformation plan.

A note on how to read this together: We strongly encourage both partners to have their own copy of this book. Read each chapter separately, then come together to discuss your reflections. The diagnostic tool in Chapter 4 should be completed independently before comparing results.

A note on pace: This is not a book to rush. It is a book to live. Work through one chapter per week. Let the exercises breathe. Give yourselves time to feel the shifts.

Are you ready?

Let's begin.

PART ONE
THE FOUNDATION

[Understanding Emotional Intimacy Outside the Bedroom](#)

"Intimacy is not purely physical. It's the act of connecting with someone so deeply, you feel like you can see into their soul."

— Rashida Rowe

CHAPTER ONE

What Is Non-Sexual Intimacy and Why It Matters

Opening Reflection

Before we define non-sexual intimacy, let's feel it first.

Think about a moment in your relationship — perhaps early on, perhaps recently — when you felt completely safe with your partner. Not physically safe. Emotionally safe. A moment when you said something true and vulnerable, and they didn't flinch. When they looked at you and you felt seen — not performing, not editing yourself, just you, and that was enough.

That feeling?

That is non-sexual intimacy.

And it is the most powerful force in a long-term relationship.

Defining the Terms

Intimacy, at its root, comes from the Latin *intimus*, meaning innermost. True intimacy is the sharing of your innermost self with another person — your fears, your hopes, your contradictions, your wounds, your joy.

Non-sexual intimacy is the full range of emotional, intellectual, spiritual, and experiential closeness that exists between partners outside of physical or sexual expression. It is:

- The conversation that lasts until 2 AM because neither of you wants to stop
- The hand on your partner's back when they're stressed
- The way you know how they take their coffee without asking
- The moment you share a look across a crowded room and both know exactly what the other is thinking
- The prayer you say together
- The fight you work through and the repair that follows
- The meal you prepare together, set together, eat together — really together

Non-sexual intimacy is not the absence of physical closeness. It is the foundation of it. Research from The Gottman Institute has consistently found that couples who have high non-sexual intimacy report not only greater relationship satisfaction overall, but greater physical satisfaction as well.

Connection outside the bedroom creates connection in it — not the other way around.

The Six Dimensions of Non-Sexual Intimacy

Drawing from the work of Dr. Deborah Anapol, Dr. John Gottman, and the framework developed by Intimate Occasions in Home Dining LLC, we identify six core dimensions of non-sexual intimacy:

1. Emotional Intimacy

The ability to share your feelings openly and to receive your partner's emotions without judgment.

This is the core — the heart of all other forms of intimacy.

Example: Telling your partner you're scared about your health results before you've processed it yourself — trusting them with your rawest truth.

2. Intellectual Intimacy

The pleasure of sharing thoughts, ideas, curiosities, and perspectives — even when you disagree.

Intellectual intimacy thrives on mutual respect and genuine interest in each other's minds.

Example: Staying up late debating a documentary you just watched, both excited by the other's perspective.

3. Experiential Intimacy

Creating shared experiences and memories that belong uniquely to your relationship. This is where the Intimate Occasions dining framework lives most powerfully.

Example: A Thursday night ritual of cooking a new recipe together, complete with music, candlelight, and no phones.

4. Spiritual Intimacy

Sharing your sense of meaning, purpose, values, and what you believe about life — whether through formal religion or personal philosophy.

Example: Sitting together in the early morning with coffee, talking about what you're grateful for.

5. Creative Intimacy

Building, making, and playing together. Engaging in creative expression as a team.

Example: Starting a garden together, writing letters to each other, redesigning a room in your home.

6. Crisis Intimacy

The closeness forged when couples face hardship together and emerge stronger. This is the intimacy born of standing side by side in the storm.

Example: Losing a job, grieving a parent, navigating a health crisis — and coming through it with your bond intact.

Why Non-Sexual Intimacy Erodes

Understanding why intimacy erodes is as important as knowing how to build it. The erosion is rarely dramatic. It is quiet. Gradual. And it happens through completely ordinary life. Here are the most common causes, identified through clinical research and the framework of Intimate Occasions:

The Drift

Life gets full. Career demands, children, financial pressure, health challenges — these are real, and they consume the time and energy that once went toward each other. The drift is not intentional. It is the slow accumulation of a thousand small moments when you chose the urgent over the important.

The Assumption Trap

Long-term couples often stop asking and start assuming. They assume they know what their partner feels, needs, and wants. They assume their partner knows the same about them. This assumption is one of the most dangerous threats to intimacy — because it replaces genuine curiosity with familiarity, and familiarity without depth breeds disconnection.

The Communication Collapse

Over time, many couples reduce their conversations to logistics — schedules, tasks, decisions. The deeper conversations — about dreams, fears, growth, and love — happen less and less frequently until they stop altogether.

The Unresolved Pile

Every unresolved conflict, every swallowed feeling, every need that went unspoken adds a layer of distance. These layers accumulate until couples find themselves behind walls of resentment and pain they no longer know how to dismantle.

The Digital Divide

Research from the University of Essex found that the mere presence of a phone on a table — even if not in use — reduces the quality of an in-person conversation significantly. We are living in unprecedented technological connection and unprecedented emotional disconnection simultaneously.

What Research Tells Us

The science on non-sexual intimacy is rich and consistent across the world's leading relationship research institutions:

Harvard's Study of Adult Development — the longest-running study on human happiness in history — found that the quality of our close relationships is the single greatest predictor of wellbeing, health, and longevity. Not wealth. Not fame. Relationships.

The Gottman Institute's forty years of research with couples found that "emotional attunement" — the ability to be aware of, understand, and respond to your partner's emotional states — was the defining factor in what they called "relationship masters" versus "relationship disasters."

Dr. Sue Johnson's Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT) research demonstrates that when couples feel secure emotional connection, conflict decreases by as much as 70%, and relationship satisfaction increases dramatically.

UCLA's Mindful Awareness Research Center has shown that mindfulness practices applied to relationships — including intentional presence during shared activities — significantly increase feelings of closeness and satisfaction.

Rutgers University neuroscientist Dr. Helen Fisher found through brain imaging studies that emotional bonding activates the same neurological reward pathways as physical pleasure — confirming that emotional intimacy is, quite literally, one of the most rewarding experiences the human brain can have.

The conclusion is consistent and clear: Non-sexual intimacy is not supplementary to a relationship. [It is the relationship.](#)

The Intimate Occasions in Home Dining Philosophy

At [Intimate Occasions in Home Dining LLC](#), we believe that the most powerful laboratory for building non-sexual intimacy is not a therapist's office — though we deeply value professional support. It is your **home**. Your **table**. Your **shared meals**, your **quiet evenings**, your ordinary Tuesday nights.

We believe that:

- 🔥 **Every meal** is an opportunity for connection.
- 🔥 **Every conversation** can be an act of intimacy.
- 🔥 **Every moment** of genuine presence is a gift of love.
- 🔥 **Your home** can be the most healing place in your relationship.

This is not about grand gestures. It is about consistent, intentional practice.

Chapter One Exercises

Exercise 1.1 — [The Intimacy Inventory \(Individual\)](#)

Time: 15 minutes | Done Independently

In your journal, respond to the following prompts:

1. In your own words, what does intimacy mean to you?
2. Which of the six dimensions of non-sexual intimacy feels most alive in your relationship right now?
3. Which dimension feels most neglected or missing?
4. Describe a moment in your relationship when you felt deeply, non-sexually intimate with your partner. What made it possible?
5. What do you wish your partner understood about what you need to feel connected?
- 6.

Exercise 1.2 — [The Connection Temperature Check \(Together\)](#)

Time: 20 minutes | Done as a Couple

Sit together without phones or distractions. One partner reads the following questions aloud. Each partner answers with a number from 1-10, then briefly explains their number.

The rule: No debating, no defending — only listening.

1. How connected do I feel to you right now, overall? (1 = very disconnected, 10 = deeply connected)
2. How understood do I feel by you? (1 = not understood at all, 10 = completely understood)
3. How emotionally safe do I feel with you? (1 = not safe, 10 = completely safe)
4. How much do I feel like a priority in your life? (1 = not a priority, 10 = your top priority)
5. How satisfied am I with the quality of our conversations? (1 = very dissatisfied, 10 = very satisfied)

After completing, each partner says one thing they appreciate about the other person for showing up to this exercise.

Exercise 1.3 — The Memory Map (Together)

Time: 30 minutes | Done as a Couple

Using a large piece of paper or a whiteboard, create a visual "Memory Map" of your relationship.

Together, identify:

5 moments when we felt closest

3 experiences that are uniquely ours (things no one else knows about)

2 challenges we faced together and survived

1 dream we share for our future

Display this somewhere in your home. Return to it when you need a reminder of what you've built together.

Chapter One Key Takeaways:

- ◆ Non-sexual intimacy is the foundation of all lasting relationships.
- ◆ It has six dimensions: emotional, intellectual, experiential, spiritual, creative, and crisis.
 - ◆ Intimacy erodes through ordinary life, not dramatic events.
- ◆ Research consistently confirms emotional connection as the #1 predictor of relationship wellbeing.
 - ◆ Your home is your most powerful intimacy-building space.