

*The*  
Intimate  
Connection



SECRETS *to a*  
LIFELONG ROMANCE

DR. KEVIN LEMAN

  
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*To my wife, Bucky—  
Still my best gift ever.*

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# Introduction

## How to Get Now What You Had Back Then

Think back a little, or a lot—depending on how long you and your spouse have been together—to those first days when you were falling in love. Remember those euphoric tinglies? That intense desire to learn all you could about each other? The fairy-tale time when you couldn't wait to talk to each other, to hug each other, to spend every moment possible together, and it was the two of you united against the world?

Contrast that with the present day. Does the following scenario sound all too familiar?

It's a typical Friday night, and every member of the family is running out the door to separate destinations. You're an unusual family if you were able to fit in dinner together before the great split happened.

You've managed to pick up your two younger kids from school after your part-time job. After a quick dinner, compliments of Colonel Sanders, you're dropping 15-year-old Jessica off at the movie theater and 11-year-old Alex at a friend's house to hang out. Your 17-year-old is driving himself to his football game. You'll get there by the end of the first quarter if you hurry.

Your husband is working late on a project so he will hightail it straight to the game. The only time you've "talked" to him today was during a brief exchange of who will be where, and when. After the game, you'll pick up the two younger kids at their locations while he heads home for tepid leftovers.

You know exactly what to expect when you get home—a trashed living room from the week, a kitchen sink piled high with dishes, and laundry creeping out of your teens' bedrooms. You sigh as you drive home, estimating how long the nuclear fallout will take to clean up so that you can fall into bed. You know you won't be able to sleep before you clean up the mess, because you don't want to face it first thing tomorrow morning. And you need to be in the car by 9:00 for Alex's soccer practice.

Life today is fast-paced and complicated, isn't it?

If you're like most couples, the euphoric "I'm in love" feelings and deluge of sweet time together just being in each other's presence have turned into a dizzying swirl of grocery runs, long workdays, barely saying hello in the morning before you rush separate ways, and tucking the kids into bed before you fall asleep, exhausted.

Somewhere along the way, you may feel like you've lost each other. Your communication has become routine and mundane. You no longer have time for those long walks hand in hand to share your hearts, goals, and dreams. That partner who was once exciting to you now might look a little bland. You may even wonder as you lie awake at night, *Isn't there more to marriage and a life together than this?*

But imagine that after that crazy Friday, you walked in the door and this sight greeted you instead: Your kitchen is spotless—dishes done, counter wiped, garbage taken out. Your living room is picked up, and the pillows are even aligned on the couch. You peek in the laundry room, and the laundry has been sorted and there's a load already in the washer. There's even a red candle glowing in the kitchen with a note beside it:

*I love you, hon. There's another surprise waiting for you in the bathroom.*

You peek in the bathroom door. The usually trashed room has transformed into a beautiful spa. Your fuzziest towel—a red rose adorning it—and a bottle of chilled water are by the tub. You inhale the lovely lavender scent of the bubble bath your man has drawn for you. Then you spot another note:

*Just relax. I'll take care of everything.*

A strange notion hits you: *Is this really my house?*

Yes, it's your house. But an amazing transformation has taken place because of the secrets I'll share with you in this book. That same transformation is possible for you and your spouse, when you understand each other's needs and learn to communicate in ways each of you will understand and accept. That's what this book is all about—creating a long-lasting, intimate connection.

In the chapters ahead, we'll

- unravel the complex needs of men and women
- discover who your spouse really is
- look at the warning signs of relational breakdown that may be creeping into your marriage
- explore how the backgrounds and birth orders of you and your spouse impact how you react to each other and to situations differently
- reveal the best ways to communicate—ways your spouse will listen to
- learn how you can best show love to your unique spouse
- grapple with healthy ways to deal with anger and frustration
- determine how to short-circuit the destructive games couples unwittingly play and turn them into positive, relationship-building activities

- give you ideas and an “I Promise” Challenge for building, regaining, and keeping intimacy in your marriage long-term

If you’re reading this book, you picked it up because you crave a more satisfying marriage. You don’t want to be just roommates who only intersect over the basic necessities of life and television reruns.

Perhaps you long for sweet touches, for a stimulating flow of conversation, and to share your days and dreams with the kind of life partner you’ve always dreamed of. Or, frankly, you know your marriage is on rocky ground and you want to do what you can to save it. Or perhaps you just got married, feel like the honeymoon ended too soon, and want to do what you can to make your marriage what you dreamed it would be.

No matter what your relationship with your spouse is right now, you can have the lifelong intimacy you longed for when you were dating or said “I do.” *The Intimate Connection* reveals how.

Ready to get the marriage you deserve? Let’s plunge in.

## SECRET #1

# Acts of Love Create an Unbreakable Bond

If you want to change your spouse, try  
changing yourself first.

Flash back to that busy Friday for a minute, where you've been running yourself ragged all day, and you know there's a mess for you to tackle at home. Then you walk in the door and *voila!* A mess-free living room and sparkly clean kitchen await you. Don't forget that romantic surprise in the bathroom too.

Ladies, how would you feel at that moment? I bet most of you can relate to the first "messy" part of the story. You've been there, done that, and sighed every night you've seen it. But when I got to the part about the dishes washed, the living room picked up, and the first load of laundry in the washer, you likely rolled your eyes and said, "Oh, I thought this was a *true* story."

Gentlemen, if you're the one reading this book, you might have felt a bit uncomfortable. Many of you can relate to the working-hard-all-day concept and then running somewhere to a kid's activity.

By the time you finally get home, you're starving and exhausted. The last thing you can think of is more work, like cleaning up the house. That's especially true if there was a strong division of male and female roles in the house you grew up in.

You might have been romantic once—to turn your bride's attention and affection to you instead of any other males who were interested in her. But once you said "I do," you figured you got the job done . . . and done well. After all, you captured the prize—the special lady you wanted to spend a lifetime with. Romance is no longer the first thing on your mind because you've already accomplished that mission. Now you have to focus on other competitive things, like jostling for positions with others in your field so you can grow your career and put food on your family's table.

***An intimate connection doesn't just happen without effort on both your parts. It includes expressions of love—sacrificial acts of giving—that reveal an understanding of each other's unique needs and desires.***

But an intimate connection doesn't just happen without effort on both your parts. It includes expressions of love—sacrificial acts of giving—that reveal an understanding of each other's unique needs and desires. The most intimate of all acts—sex—is the culmination of the couple's continual, shared closeness. It's most definitely not gained through the game of "I'm Tarzan, you Jane—gimme," or vice versa. That sort of relationship is one-sided, is unfulfilling to both parties, and likely won't last.

But a husband and wife who can communicate well and share such deep intimacy that they want to do acts of love for each other? Now that's an unbreakable bond.

### **Want to Change Your Spouse?**

Most people want to change their spouse but aren't willing to do the work to change themselves. As a wise coach I know once told

me, “They don’t care what you know until they know you care.” Here’s what I mean.

Ladies, if you were the one who walked into that clean space on a Friday night, you’d also likely walk back out of the house and check the number on the door to make sure it was your place and that you hadn’t unwittingly entered someone else’s in your tiredness. When you walk back inside and see your husband switching the load of wash for you, something magical will happen. You’ll get stars in your eyes. Romantic music will begin to play in your head. Your house will suddenly feel like a castle. You’ll feel like a princess.

That man of yours will never look more like a knight in shining armor than at that moment. You know he understands your needs and is going out of his way to meet them because he loves and treasures you. He may have a balding spot on the back of his head, and his abs may not be what they were 10 years ago, but suddenly he’s the romantic figure of your dreams . . . and incredibly sexy.

*Intimacy truly is an  
all-day affair.  
And it starts with  
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other’s needs and desires.*

That’s why I’ve always said that marital intimacy doesn’t begin in the bedroom. It starts in the laundry room, the kitchen, and anywhere else you two intersect. Intimacy truly is an all-day affair. And it starts with communication and understanding each other’s needs and desires.

## Meet Rob and Maria

Rob worked long hours at a newly launched office downtown, then headed home to his wife, Maria, and their toddler. Formerly a full-time nurse at a local hospital, Maria now worked four nights a week so she could be at home with their daughter, Emily, during the day. She also paid their bills and handled the calls for any home repairs.

In spite of her sleep deprivation and the exhaustion of dealing with their active youngster, Maria managed to pull off a home-cooked dinner some of those nights. And each night she'd welcome Rob home with a kiss and ask him about his day.

He never asked about hers. He'd simply grunt a perfunctory "Fine," then head to the shower. She'd simultaneously finish cooking dinner and keep their daughter occupied so he had time to de-stress.

Over dinner, when she asked if he liked the new Crock-Pot dish she'd tried that day, he'd grunt, "Yeah."

She'd tell him a funny thing their daughter did that day.

His response? Grunt #3.

She'd mention a milestone at work.

Grunt #4.

After that, talk would shut down. Maria knew it was purposeless.

With dinner finished, Rob's routine was to plop on the couch and watch TV while Maria did the dishes, gave Emily a bath, and got her ready for bed.

From Rob's perspective, he'd already done his day's work. Since his wife only worked part-time, it was only right that she take care of the kid and the housework. That way they were even, he figured, and he didn't think anything else about it. After all, his mom had always been home and took care of him and his brother as they were growing up.

But inside Maria a cauldron of resentment was growing. What had happened to the romantic guy who gave her flowers and opened the car door when they were dating? Now she felt like Velcro Woman—with every family task and responsibility sticking to her.

Her husband had turned from being the helpful partner she thought she'd have into a couch-potato teenager wannabe. He avoided all responsibility by passing the buck for anything that happened at home to his exhausted wife.

Guys, I'll shoot it to you straight. If Rob's actions sound anything like yours, it's time for you to man up. There are two in this marriage, and you both need to pull your weight in the household chores. If you have kids, it took two of you to create them, so two of you should be responsible for them.

Just being a mom is a 24-7 job, even without a part-time job to boot. And women who work *outside* the home return from their jobs to work *inside* the home. They've essentially got a double job. Yet, because many men don't understand that relationship basic, scenarios involving lack of communication and lack of caring about each other's feelings play out all across America every day.

*Scenarios involving lack of communication and lack of caring about each other's feelings play out all across America every day.*

### **Rob and Maria, Three Years Later**

Maria's frustrations came to a head after their daughter's kindergarten open house. The next week, she came to see me.

"He's so insensitive and thoughtless. He never takes how I feel into consideration," she told me.

She'd asked Rob numerous times to go with her, since it was after his work hours. But he'd told her, "It's just kindergarten. All they do is play anyway. It's not like it's serious work. You go. You're taking the kid, right? I could use some quiet." Then he'd gone back to his channel surfing.

That night she'd fixed a quick supper of hamburgers after juggling kindergarten paperwork and a medical checkup for their daughter in the afternoon. She didn't have time to clean up the kitchen before she and Emily left for the school's open house.

When they arrived home at 8:30 p.m., Rob was still slouched in his favorite chair, watching a Monday night football game. He

didn't say, "Hi, hon, I'm glad you're home," or ask how the evening had gone. He didn't even acknowledge their return.

Then Maria walked into the kitchen. Not only had Rob not done the dishes but he hadn't made a single move toward straightening anything up. The lids weren't back on the mustard or mayo jars. A sticky knife and wadded-up napkins rested on the counter. Nothing had been put back in the refrigerator, including a half gallon of milk, which was now room temperature. The slices of cheese, lettuce, tomato, and onion—not a good odor after two hours—simply rested on the same plate she'd put them out on.

"I was angry," she told me. "Enough that I made a little noise putting things away in the kitchen."

"Just a *little* noise?" I asked her. I was surprised she hadn't marched back into that living room and launched her couch potato off that couch. It would certainly have been tempting.

But Maria was the epitome of self-control and used to being the sacrificial lamb of their family. So she banged the fridge door a few times. She clanged the silverware. She even stomped between her husband and his TV screen to take the garbage bag out the front door, instead of going out the kitchen door as usual. Then she tucked their new kindergartener in bed and read her a story.

By the time Maria had finished, she was furious and exhausted. All she wanted was to crash into bed and not wake up until morning. Pulling the covers up to her chin, she rolled to the very edge of her side of the bed . . . as far away as she could get from him.

Fifteen minutes later, both Monday night football and the news were over. Her husband shot her that Bullwinkle the Moose gaze, climbed into bed, and snuggled next to her.

When she stiffened and tried to move even farther away, he tried to sweet-talk her with the six words no woman wants to hear: "Geez, what's the matter with you?"

In seconds, the atmosphere surrounding both husband and wife in that bedroom resembled the arctic before any glacial melting.

But here's what's fascinating. Though Rob had acted insensitively for years, Maria came to see me because she wasn't ready to give up on him yet. She said she still loved him, even though most of the time she wasn't exactly sure why. She wanted to know if there were ways she could change him . . . and their relationship. She longed for the kind of intimate connection she had dreamed they'd have when they got married.

"You can't change another person," I told her. "That's up to them. But you can make some changes in your own responses, which might prompt him to make changes in the way he responds to you."

Is that easy? No, especially if the other person is someone like Rob, Mr. Couch Potato, and you seem like the one doing all the work. But if you could get the mutually satisfying marriage you dream of, isn't that worth your best shot and a little bit of work on the front end?

## Change Starts with You

If you want to change someone else's behavior, you have to start by changing your own behavior first. Handing your spouse this book and saying, "Here, I think you should read this because you need it" won't do either of you any good. It will just anger your spouse and shut them down.

But if you read this book and demonstrate by your own actions—little things that show your spouse how much you care—that you want to make things better between the two of you, I guarantee you'll see a steady improvement in your marriage.

Relationships are not like microwaves, though. They can't instantly produce a product. If there is a long history of not communicating, ignoring each other's needs, and having some distance wedged between you, one act of love and some sweet words won't be enough to convince your spouse you mean business and are determined for things to

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change. But slowly, steadily, as you focus on the principles in this book, the everyday changes you're making will transform your heart and actions and make their way into your spouse's heart and actions.

Right now you might feel a little like Maria and need some pointers to get your relationship turned around and headed in the right direction. Or perhaps the disconnect between you and your spouse is enough that you're ready to toss your marital towel out of the ring and call the match over. Maybe your communication isn't as good as you think it could be, or you have a few difficulties you'd like to work out. Or your relationship simply feels bland and boring, and you'd like to make it more mutually satisfying.

Wherever you and your spouse are in the above descriptions, or if you're somewhere in between, let me encourage you. It is possible to create a marriage where the two of you mutually respect each other, desire to please each other, are sensitive and tuned-in to each other's needs, and consider the other your number-one priority in life. It all starts with communication skills, adds acts

## MAN TO MAN

Helping your wife with the myriad things she does (many of them for you) isn't being a wuss. It's being the manly rock she needs and deserves to count on. Nothing's more attractive than a man who has dishpan hands and does little somethings that make his wife and her girlfriends say, "Aw, how sweet."

You may have been married for 20 years, but your wife still has a girly side. When you show her sensitivity and thoughtfulness—taking into account her feelings and the fact she's Velcro Woman, with multiple people and responsibilities sticking to her—you are truly a MAN.

So be that knight in shining armor, her very personal fairy tale come true. Light a candle, roll up those sleeves, and handwrite a love note. You'll be glad you did.

of love, and moves outward to grow intimacy in all areas of life, including emotional and sexual needs.

## The Essential Ingredient—Motivation

How can you have the love-of-a-lifetime relationship you long for and deserve? Where you are free to share intimate thoughts and feelings without fear of judgment? Where you understand each other's backgrounds and the ways they affect how you express love? Where you think first of the other person and not what you'll get from them?

It starts with the critical ingredient of motivation. Your spouse is the one who knows you best, and any false motives will be spotted a mile or more away.

If a guy thinks, *Hey, if I clean up the apartment, maybe I'll get some action tonight*, his actions will backfire because he doesn't have the right motivation. But if he comes home to a messy apartment and thinks, *Wow, we've both worked hard this week. I bet she'd love to come home and have it clean. That would make her so happy*, then he's on the right track.

What will his happy wife think? *What an amazing man I married. I'm so glad I married him. He's just the best. And he's mine.* The next time she's on the phone with a girlfriend, she sings his praises, fully knowing her husband is listening.

That wonderful man might even be rewarded with a surprise bonus—his favorite home-cooked dinner the next week when his wife gets home early from work, or a nice roll in the sack with her on the soft rug in that cleaned-up living room.

See how it works?

We all long for connection. Yet today many husbands and wives live a married-singles lifestyle. They meet and connect on the basics just because they reside in the same location and share a refrigerator. But husband and wife live their own separate lives—including work, friends, and hobbies. In many of those homes,

## FOR WOMEN ONLY

Your girlfriend just got two free tickets to a movie premiere on the night you and your husband have set aside as a date night. What would you do?

**Option A:** Go with your girlfriend, because you know your husband will understand. After all, it's free, and it's a great opportunity to spend time with someone you enjoy.

**Option B:** Turn the offer down nicely since you have previous plans.

**Option C:** Tell your friend you're unavailable that night because you have previous plans, but ask her if there is any other available showtime.

What did you decide?

Your response is a litmus test for your relationship. Is your husband your first priority, or is that friend?

If you chose option A, you might have a fun evening. But you'll hurt your marriage in the long run. Your guy won't likely say it, but his feelings will be a little hurt. Even if he tells you, "That's okay. Go ahead. Sounds like a fun night," don't do it. It's a step on the road to disconnection. If you're not willing to say no to something you want to do in order to spend time with your husband, you're starting down a slippery slope. There's no magic dust here. To stay connected, you have to make time together a priority.

I'm not talking about just doing routine activities together—like bowling or watching movies. On activity-driven dates like that, you're more likely to talk about your hook or slice or the movie plot than each other. So why not try a simple picnic or stroll around the block as a replacement? Anything that leads you and that man you love to talk, connect your hearts, and get on the same page.

If you chose option B and told your guy, "Ellie had movie premiere tickets for tomorrow night, but I turned her down. I want to spend time with you, and it's our special night," he'll be smiling for a week, thinking about what a lucky guy he is to have married you.

If you chose option C, you'll have both a happy guy *and* a fun night out with a friend.

It wasn't that hard to do, was it?

(If you're a guy who's sneak-reading this, the same exact advice goes to you.)

nothing at all happens behind bedroom doors, or it occurs only as a “duty,” like doing the laundry on Saturdays. Their romantic relationship is hardly the culmination of an entire day full of affection, consideration, love, and unity.

All marriages have bright spots and some negative moments or days. However, if you picked up this book because the number of distant or dissatisfied days is growing, then kudos to you. You’re smart to catch your relationship in time before you start sliding downhill. Many spouses have root problems in their marriages—ones we’ll discuss in this book—that they try to cover over by spending time with everyone except their spouse. To turn things around, you have to put the brakes on for a while, evaluate what’s happening and what each of you really needs, and then begin to roll down the marital road positively from there.

Acts motivated by love will produce all kinds of long-lasting dividends in your relationship. Those acts mean, “You’re so important to me that I will do anything I can to make life more pleasurable for you.” Such acts create a contented, loving, grateful atmosphere in your home that will drive the two of you back into each other’s arms time and again and divorce-proof your marriage.

If your husband has your back and steps in to help when you’re feeling stressed, you’re not going to look twice at the handsome new assistant in your office.

If your wife greets you with a kiss in spite of your kids’ shenanigans, genuinely shows interest in what matters most to you, and whispers in your ear, “I’m so lucky I married you,” even with sticky strawberry jelly on her sleeve from making PB&Js, she’ll be more attractive to you than any other hottie you might encounter.

Can your marriage become one like that? Yes, it can! This book will give you the road map to renewing your relationship so that your marriage can become the mutually satisfying,

***Acts motivated  
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fulfilling love of a lifetime that you dream of. But first, you'll have to take a few risks:

- opening your heart and mind to surprising revelations about your preconceived notions . . . that you had no idea you have
- taking a good look at yourself and your background, as well as your spouse's
- realizing how the unique backgrounds of you and your spouse influence your way of thinking and subsequent behaviors, both individually and where you intersect as a couple

Most of us don't truly understand ourselves, so how can we understand our spouse? And without that understanding, it's nearly impossible to truly become one in marriage. So you must be able to recognize your own feelings and identify why you do what you do—you've been preconditioned, most of the time without your knowledge. However, with the powerful answers you'll receive from the revelations in this book, you'll be able to reprogram even gut reactions to proactive responses that will grow your relationship with your spouse.

But keep in mind that a book is just a book. It can give you time-tested advice and ideas, but you and your spouse are the ones who have to commit to trying out some of them, as well as inventing your own. Also, every relationship is unique because it's comprised of two individuals from two unique backgrounds. Depending on those backgrounds and where you are in your relationship, some of the ideas in this book will be perfectly suited to you. Others you might decide to take a pass on.

I encourage you to personalize this book. Highlight and pursue ideas you like. I know the suggestions here work, because they've transformed the relationships of hundreds of thousands of couples. The examples I've included are based on real stories of couples I've counseled. However, every piece of advice won't apply to every reader. So if you run across advice that doesn't apply to or fit you,

cross it out or skip those pages. I won't mind. Relationships are handmade. What's important is that you make this book your own and that you follow through on the actions needed to bring about changes in your marriage.

Do it for yourself.

Do it for your spouse.

And do it for your kids, your "someday" kids, or those youngsters around you who are continually watching.