The “Fear of Intimacy Club”
Are You a Member?

If you have a fear of intimacy, welcome to the club. Membership in this club is not very rewarding and is certainly not encouraged. However, don’t be too discouraged if you have already signed up for membership. You see, many people have joined this club and many more are joining each day. Club membership is NOT exclusive. In fact, all it takes is a hurtful experience in childhood or in any of your relationships.

If you look around you, you will see club members everywhere. If by chance you haven’t been able to determine who has membership in the “Fear of Intimacy Club,” let me give you a few pointers so you will recognize the characteristics required for membership.

Fear of Intimacy Characteristic #1: Emotionally Unavailable

Look for people who are uncomfortable sharing emotions. These individuals have learned through hard life experiences that it is dangerous to feel or to let their feelings be known. Generally speaking, they have learned that sharing emotions gets them in trouble. For men they were taught “boys don’t cry” and for women they were told that they were being too emotional.

Fear of Intimacy Characteristic #2: Fear of Touch and Physical Intimacy

Identify people who are uncomfortable with touch. Holding hands, hugs, or even standing close to them can make them uncomfortable. These members may have been significantly hurt by others. They may have had hurtful experiences like physical or sexual abuse as a child. They generally need to feel in control of their life due to earlier life experiences. When, or if, they feel out of control or like you are getting too close to them physically, they may push back from you physically or emotionally.

Fear of Intimacy Characteristic #3: Overly Jealous and Lacking Trust

Other members have a significant challenge in trusting others. These individuals fear rejection and abandonment. They often struggle with jealousy in their relationships. They have a hard time believing that people close to them can love them for who they are. You may be accused of lying to them or cheating on them, even if your actions would not warrant such accusations. These members are “Gold Club” members. They have experienced significant hurt in previous relationships. The most common experiences they have include: unfaithful parents, unfaithful partners, others who have taken advantage of them, etc.
Fear of Intimacy Characteristic #4: Shy and Overly Self-Conscious

Some members have a hard time talking. These individuals may be shy and self-conscious. They are afraid that they will say the wrong thing. These individuals are overly concerned about the judgment they will receive from others. These individuals are great members of the “Fear of Intimacy Club.” They avoid sharing their thoughts, dreams, and passions out of fear that they will be made fun of. Their membership likely came early in life as they felt like others were watching them and passing judgment on their every action. These individuals are very sensitive and kind people once you get to know them. They want others to know them, but are afraid that they won’t be good enough.

Fear of Intimacy Characteristic #5: Needy and Dependent Upon Relationships

You will also find members of this club who are clingy in their relationships. They are often emotionally smothering in relationships. They do this because of their internal fears of being rejected or abandoned. These individuals will often speak like they are victims of their circumstances. In their relationships they often make others feel like the problem, rather than taking any responsibility for relationship problems. They are NOT very good at accepting feedback about their behaviors.

They NEED validation. Their needs are impossible to meet all of the time. They are dependent on others for validation of their worth. Being alone is very difficult for them, which is why they will often go from one relationship to another. Seldom, if ever, would you find them by themselves. If they are by themselves they tend to turn to outside comforts such as drinking, sexual behaviors (e.g. viewing pornography), spending money, or eating. These behaviors are used as comforters to help them avoid thinking about their own life and behaviors.

In relationships these individuals can be overwhelming. They often need reassurance that they and the relationship are okay. If for some reason they feel that their partner is pulling away they may take drastic measures to regain attention. For example, they may threaten to leave the relationship. In the worst case scenario they will say something like, “If you leave me I not be able to continue living.”

Perhaps you are asking in what way these individuals fear intimacy. The answer is simple. Their strong need for validation prevents them from achieving intimacy. In fact, their own behaviors guarantee that they will NOT reach their intimacy potential. When they are in a relationship, their own behavior sabotages the intimacy. Their actions typify the behaviors of someone who doesn’t understand intimacy. Their strong need for acceptance and intimacy stems from fears of being hurt or rejected. Their fear of intimacy comes when they actually are “in” a potentially intimate relationship. They unwittingly self-sabotage their relationships often because things are too good to be true.
Fear of Intimacy Characteristic #6: Demanding of Love

A final group of members that you need to be very cautious about is the group who are out to hurt others. These individuals have been so hurt in life that they have vowed to NEVER be hurt again. Their membership to the Fear of Intimacy Club is guaranteed, but don’t talk with them about it. They may bite your head off. Surprisingly these individuals are more difficult to detect by outsiders. They generally put on a good face in public because they want others to like them. However, in one-on-one relationships they can be brutal. They punish those closest to them. They are manipulative and controlling. They don’t see the impact of their cruel behavior on those close to them. They lack empathy and compassion. They are often lifetime members of the Fear of Intimacy Club. Sadly, most of them go through many relationships destroying the self-worth of those they meet.

Understanding the Characteristics

As you review the characteristics for membership in the Fear of Intimacy Club you may see specific characteristics that apply to your significant other or you may even see characteristics that apply to you. Let me give you a warning here. First, this list of characteristics is not designed to help you criticize or condemn yourself or your partner. Both self-criticism and condemning others are characteristics of long-time members in the Fear of Intimacy Club.

Second, the purpose of this list of characteristics is to help you increase your awareness of the key behaviors and elements of this club. As you increase your awareness of these characteristics and the impact they have had on your life, your eyes may be opened and your life significantly altered. For example, you may choose to get out of this club if membership has hurt your life. Or, if your significant other is a member of this club, you may need to learn how to invite him/her to join another club -- in a kind and loving way. Either way, your life will change as you increase your awareness of the relationship limitations of being a member of this club.

If you are like many of the people I talk to you may be asking, “What should I do if my partner or I have lifetime memberships to this club?” Or maybe you want to know what to do if your loved one has “club membership” and won’t give it up? Or you may be asking what you can do to get out of this club. Now comes the challenging part. The Fear of Intimacy Club doesn’t like giving up members. Members have repeatedly told me that it is hard to get “out” of this club. This makes sense. I suppose it is easier to avoid taking risks or dealing with the negative painful experiences of the past than to confront them. Yet I am convinced that if everyone knew that there is another club that brings joy, happiness, contentment, and real satisfaction they would be clamoring to join that club. There is a club like this; let me tell you about it.
The “True Intimacy Club”

The “True Intimacy Club” is unique. Most people spend a significant part of their lives desiring to be a member of this club, but few ever really join it. In this section I will outline the benefits members receive in this club and then I will explain the characteristics required for membership.

The benefits of being a member of the True Intimacy Club are exciting and, for some, unbelievable. Here’s a short list of these benefits:

- Better emotional well-being
- Help during depressive episodes
- Less vulnerability to the negative outcomes of stress
- Greater relationship and life satisfaction
- Less loneliness

Can you believe that there is a club with these types of benefits? The amazing thing about joining this club is that membership is not limited--anyone can join. It is a choice that you and I make each and every day. Anyone desiring to join this club can receive the wonderful benefits if they are willing to pay the price.

Sadly, many people want membership but they are not willing to get the right information and apply what they learn. Without the right information they are misled and believe it is too difficult. Far too many have been taught false methods and believe that they have tried their best. Unfortunately, they tried using the wrong strategies.

Others have been given bad advice about what it takes to be a member. There are others who simply believe that becoming a member is too hard. These individuals have accepted the idea that is it easier to not try at all rather than try and fail until they get it right.

Some individuals believe that they can find a short cut, thinking that they can become a member of the True Intimacy Club without having the characteristics. They attempt to find intimacy in all the wrong places and end up being hurt. The outcome? They find it is easier to join the Fear of Intimacy Club.

Only when individuals have the correct information and knowledge can they join the True Intimacy Club. Remember very few people ever enjoy the benefits of membership. Let me give you an example. Dr. William Glasser (a well-known psychologist) recently said, “I’d say about 75% of people in the country who are married are unhappy in their marriage.” (1) These couples likely joined the wrong club. They are certainly not in the True Intimacy Club.

If you want the knowledge and understanding of how to join this club, let me give you the secret to membership. Let me warn you in advance that the information is not complicated like many would have you believe. It is NOT rocket science; it is straightforward and quite simple.
Here are the characteristics of and qualifications for joining this club.

**True Intimacy Characteristic #1: Find and Create a Safe Environment**

Intimacy in its deepest form requires a safe emotional climate, where emotions can be shared without judgment. Club members have learned the importance of creating a safe environment where they and others can share emotions. In fact, club members encourage the sharing of emotions—they are not afraid of tears or expressed hurt. They realize that emotions are powerful indicators of what a person is feeling inside. Members of the True Intimacy Club have also learned to understand their own emotions. Dr. Daniel Goleman calls this “Emotional Intelligence.” (2) The couples who achieve emotional intimacy in their relationships find comfort in knowing that they can openly share their emotions with each other without fear of being ridiculed or belittled. They seek to understand each other’s emotions.

**True Intimacy Characteristic #2: Being Comfortable with Physical Touch**

The second characteristic for membership in the True Intimacy Club is being comfortable with touch. Remember that members of the Fear of Intimacy Club struggle with physical touch. Conversely members of the True Intimacy Club are comfortable holding hands, giving hugs, and they are comfortable with their own sexuality. These members are confident in themselves—but they don’t flaunt what they have. They don’t need to. These same individuals have personal boundaries and expectations of how they will be treated. They NEVER take advantage of others. They are respectful of others’ boundaries. In their committed relationships, they enjoy simple touches of affection. They are comfortable holding hands in public. They make their significant other feel valued and loved. Sex for them is NOT solely about sexual gratification. It is more about connecting and feeling close to their partner.

**True Intimacy Characteristic #3: Trustworthy and Honest**

One of the strongest traits of individuals in the True Intimacy Club is their ability to trust others. This comes from a clear understanding of people. These individuals understand themselves. They are not afraid of people, yet they are aware of people who could hurt them. This unique ability allows them to create relationships with people who are also healthy and still recognize that some individuals cannot create intimate relationships because of unresolved issues.

Another element of their characters is that they are trustworthy people. Others know that they are honest and truthful in their dealings. This creates an environment where other people are more willing to open up to them because their actions are reliable and predictable. They understand that if they want a healthy relationship they have to be dependable so others can trust them. The outcome of this behavior is that they are able to have stable intimate relationships.
True Intimacy Characteristic #4: Share Self with Others

When individuals join the True Intimacy Club they realize that it is safe to share themselves with others. They don’t hold back their talents from others. This allows them to feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and feelings with others. How do they do this? They understand that in order to create intimacy they have to open up and let others into their lives. This allows them to contribute to conversations. They are less concerned about saying the wrong thing because they are relaxed and enjoy the process of learning and sharing with others. Their confidence is not overbearing which makes them teachable and willing to learn from others.

They create relationships where others are comfortable with them. In their close intimate relationships they engage in deep conversations but can also talk about nothing and still feel close to others. They share their thoughts and dreams with their partner. They are fun to be around because they open up and create intimacy with others.

True Intimacy Characteristic #5: Sense of High Self-Worth

Perhaps at the core of individuals who are in the True Intimacy Club is the powerful understanding of who they are. They have a secure sense of identity. They know who they are. They are whole. They can spend time alone without going crazy. They enjoy creating healthy relationships but are secure enough that they do not have to be “in a relationship.”

Their sense of worth permeates throughout their actions. They don’t have a need to hide any part of themselves from others. No secrets. Simply said, what you see is what you get with them. This allows them to be authentic and real. This type of wholeness cannot be faked.

Since these individuals know themselves, they often have high expectations for themselves. They want to succeed not for the glory of it; they simply want to become their best selves. In their relationships, they strive to find the right balance between taking care of their partner’s needs and maintaining a sense of their own identity.

Due to their sense of self-worth, they don’t hold back in relationships. They are comfortable living in their own skin. They are at peace with themselves and others.

True Intimacy Characteristic #6: Add Worth to Others

The final characteristic for membership in the True Intimacy Club is the ability to add worth to others. Due to their sense of high self-worth, they are able to “add worth to others” through giving of their time, talents, and efforts. This is perhaps the greatest quality that individuals in this club have. They benefit society by lifting others up, making the people around them feel good about themselves. They are comfortable lifting others up and enriching the lives of the people around them through their love. They genuinely value others.
They truly understand love. They know that they are lovable which allows them to go around loving others. If you have been around these individuals you know how comforting it is to be around them. They are warm, caring, and compassionate. They can walk into a room and bring sunshine with them.

**Conclusion**

Are you a member of the Fear of Intimacy Club? If so, I invite you to consider joining the more rewarding club. The benefits are exceptional and it requires less work. The rewards are peace of mind and peace of heart.

My invitation to long-term members of the Fear of Intimacy Club is to consider changing memberships. I invite you to review the required characteristics for membership in the True Intimacy Club often. Those who review these characteristics often and strive to implement the behaviors are most likely to reap the rewards of membership.

Let me remind you of the six characteristics of members of the True Intimacy Club.

1. Learn how to find and create a safe environment where emotions can be shared
2. Become comfortable with physical touch
3. Be trustworthy and honest
4. Learn to share yourself with others
5. Develop a sense of high self-worth
6. Add worth to others

As you strive to implement these qualities in your relationships, you will find that the fears of intimacy will subside within your heart and mind. You will begin developing positive relationship traits rather than staying focused on the pain and hurt of the past. Couples who learn to implement these qualities in their relationships report more satisfaction and deeper levels of intimacy.

Please consider joining the True Intimacy Club.

With deepest regards,

Dr. Kevin B. Skinner

P.S. If you are genuinely interested in joining the True Intimacy Club, I have created an online test designed to help couples reach their intimacy potential. This test allows couples to assess their relationship is six areas of intimacy. You will find it at [www.intimacytest.com](http://www.intimacytest.com)

The Relationship Intimacy Test is just being released and is available for a limited time for half-off when you join our online community at GrowthClimate. Our online community has relationship tips, date night ideas, online chats with myself and other
relationship specialists, articles, plus a forum for discussing common relationship issues. I personally visit this community often to learn from others and to provide feedback.

P.P.S—I am including my most recent CD’s “True Intimacy” and “Five Sure-Fire Ways to Strengthen Your Relationships” with your purchase. These CD’s offer over two hours of relationship help for couples.