

I'm Afraid to Tell You What I am Thinking!

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Most of us learn to hold back on some of our truths when we first start dating. We might not tell him about our crazy old boyfriend who used to pull our chair out from under us on the first date. We might not tell her that the way she says the word “Insurance” with the inflection in the wrong place drives you crazy. So we learn to hold back truths in the service of getting to know each other and not running her off before we have had a chance to find out if there is more.

Over time, if we have any skill at intimate connection, we are able to start disclosing more and more information about our past and our likes and dislikes. But some of us find speaking our truths to our partners a real challenge. We may have a hard time letting them know when they don't shave it scratches our skin raw. We might struggle with telling them when we have made a huge mistake that we are embarrassed about. Our fear of being seen for who we really are can be overwhelming.

What if I tell her and she leaves me? What if it makes him angry? How do we tell our truth and stay in connection? The reality is that if we don't speak our truth our connection is already starting to deteriorate.

When I first married I had a hard time telling my husband when I had spent money on things for myself. I was fearful that, like my first husband, he would be upset with me and it would start a fight. So I didn't always tell him when I spent money I was not sure he would approve of my spending. But eventually I learned that keeping secrets builds a wall between us. Over time I began to feel separate from him and he knew something was going on, he could feel the shift, but didn't know where it was coming

from. When we finally talked he let me know that he trusted my decisions and both of us knowing where we are financially would help us both make wise decisions about spending. It was an enormous relief.

Other things are hard sometimes too, like telling him certain things I don't like that he does, or how I would prefer him to touch me. Yet keeping those things to myself keeps him from really knowing me and understanding who I am.

Sometimes the ways we hold back are little and don't seem important, but even there they can make a huge difference in our sense of closeness. Speaking up when we want things in our house a certain way, or what we do or don't like about what our partner is wearing helps them to know how to please us. It doesn't mean they are required to concede to our desires, but it helps them know who we are and what we like and don't like. That translates to intimacy.

The word intimacy has its roots in Italian. It literally means, "In to me see". The more you can let your partner in to see you for who you are, the more she can see and know of you, the more intimacy you will actually have.

Increased intimacy means a deeper sense of trust between you. Trust breeds a better relationship. The opposite of trust is fear. The more trust we have in our partner the less we fear their reactions to our thoughts and feelings. The more trust we have the easier it is to resolve conflicts. Trust allows us to drop our boundaries and let the other person see our weakness and our flaws and still love us. That is the risk we take when we speak our truths. If we don't yet know that our truths will be accepted it's a scary thing.

But the reality is that if we don't speak our truths, we are just two people living in the same space together, not intimate partners.