

**before you
teach this lesson...**

Sex does not equal intimacy. Intimacy equals intimacy. What's so hard about that?

Well—maybe it's hard because most of us don't really know what intimacy means, let alone how to be intimate.

Intimacy grows between people who trust each other with their deepest natures. Intimacy rejects fakery and shortcuts. There's no such thing as instant intimacy. Instant attraction, yes. Instant crushes, of course. But real intimacy takes time. You can tell you're in an intimate relationship if you both choose being real instead of faking it, being warm instead of cool, being understanding instead of judging—not every day, maybe, but most of the time, for a long time.

The feelings that come with intimacy can be huge, spanning the distance from inexpressibly glad to unspeakably sad, from the hollow ache of separation to the giddy abandon of reunion.

But intimacy is not a feeling, it's a condition. Intimacy takes time and attention and energy. To some people, that sounds a lot like work. So sometimes people do things to *feel* intimate, even if they aren't really. It's rumored that some girls are interested in sex because it makes them feel intimate—and it's also rumored that some boys fake intimacy in order to get sex.

It doesn't take a genius to understand what happens when people pretend to be intimate. Intimacy Lite—less filling, but still intoxicating in sufficient quantities.

It also doesn't take a genius to understand why people might settle for Intimacy Lite. True intimacy is risky. Being intimate means facing the possibility of rejection and embarrassment. If I reveal the truth about me, I risk the possibility that you'll say, "Eww, that's creepy." Which, needless to say, is painful. And if you tell other people I'm creepy, the stakes rise to the level of humiliation, and who needs that?

That's why intimacy is so hard: because it's a high-risk investment. And everyone knows that Rule One of investing is *Don't risk more than you can afford to lose*.

So, after we get hurt a couple of times, most of us learn to lie back and play it safe, investing a little of our true selves but not enough to risk a serious loss.

It's a good strategy. Except for the fact that humans need intimacy—whether we want it or not.

Right from the start (Genesis 2:18), God declared that humans ought not to be alone; we need help to make it. God says, plain as day, it's not good for humans to be isolated. Most of us know instinctively that God is right about this. Dangerous as it is, what people crave, perhaps more than anything else, is authentic intimacy.

It turns out that sex is a handy substitute for authentic intimacy.

There's no question that sex feels intimate. Breathing the same air, sharing the same space, being *glued together* sexually is how the Bible puts it when it says two people are united as "one flesh" (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:5-6; Mark 10:7-8; I Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 5:31—the words translated *cleave* in the King James and *united* in the NIV mean *to glue together*). It's hard to get any closer than that.

But when a relationship comes unglued, so do the feelings. Sometimes the people come apart as well. Here's how a tenth-grade friend expressed her loss:

**my heart is locked
the key is gone
one took the key first
but he mocked my inner strengths
and beauties**

Intimacy is being open, honest, vulnerable, trusting, caring, and giving with another person who treats you the same way.

Fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me.