

Choosing Change: Intimacy Building Behaviors by Dr. Ken McGill

Think of Intimacy as any bit of knowledge, shared or learned, that helps you to know (or be known) better, that converts into behavior that ultimately helps the two of you become closer in the spiritual, intellectual, emotional, biological, sexual, and relational domains of your life. What follows are 47 suggestions for you to consider to be an "Intimacy Builder" ("IB"). Each entry has a keyword that's listed in bold, and together, the acrostic spells out: "INTIMACY BUILDING BEHAVIORS I WANT TO GROW AND ENJOY ARE..."

I	Intimacy Building ("IB") is a product of "Into-me-see" behavior, so that you know my thoughts, feelings, needs, wants, hopes, fears, challenges and more. <i>Is this knowledge transfer occurring?</i>
N	IB requires identifying the needs you both have, then engaging in creative discussion about how you could best partner with each other to meet your needs. <i>What creativity comes to mind?</i>
T	IB occurs when you take responsibility to use your energy to create and maintain the behavior, routines, healthy rituals and lifestyle that brings you enjoyment and protects your closeness.
I	IB seasons your interactions with safety, respect, accessibility, honesty, understanding, physical touch, realistic expectations, patience, priority, fun, sensuality, and fairness. <i>Anything else?</i>
M	IB couples who are married (or single) don't shy away from hard conversations nor conflict but embrace these opportunities as a way to gain information and learn about their partner.
A	IB jettisons avoidance and fault-finding; on the contrary, IB leans into conflict, engages in dialogue, discovers problems, empathizes with feelings expressed and works to repair ruptures.
C	IB couples think of and communicate what processes , behaviors and actions bring pleasure to them before, during and after their lovemaking, and take great strides to recall the "lovemap."
Y	IB occurs when yoga , meditation, reflection, recreation, and other activities and exercise are implemented because they bring refreshment, focus, and serenity to the self and relationship.
B	IB couples recognize that one of their primary jobs is to build up and encourage (versus discourage) their partner. They speak words that edify, strengthen and co-regulate each other.
U	IB couples understand that in order to move beyond the hurts and trauma of the past, they need to express their anger, devastation, fear, mistrust, and ambivalence unabashedly in the present.
I	IB couples invite inspirational and therapeutic people, processes, programs (and podcasts!) into their life because they want their lives to reflect love, compassion, hope, and forgiveness.
L	IB couples have identified and live by values and virtues that make sense to them and help them to be intentional with their behaviors and commitments, such as fidelity, care, love, will, and purpose.
D	IB couples listen to, inquire or facilitate the expression of their partner's dreams , hopes and desires and within reason, contribute supportive energy to help their dream become a reality.
I	IB couples are intentional and purposeful with their passion, and labor to demonstrate behavior that shows they're focused on "keeping and developing life within the ring" of the relationship.
N	IB couples realize that loving their neighbor (their spouse, children, etc.) therapeutically is in direct proportion to how they are loving their own selves. <i>Is this occurring in your home?</i>
G	IB couples work each day in the garden of their marriage and family. They know that virtues like joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, and gentleness don't just spring up without effort.
B	IB couples build into their daytime with one another and engage in opportunities to (re)create a life beyond trauma, where hope, fun, meaning, purpose, laughter, and love are experienced.
E	IB couples embed solutions in their talks because they've realized that communication without focusing on and presenting options, strategies and fulfilling needs is really complaining.
H	IB couples help their partner by delivering actions connected to their love language. Gifts, words of appreciation, acts of service, quality time and physical touch flow freely and in abundance.
A	IB couples also work to ensure Agape (Love), Phileo (Best Friend), Storge (Love for the Kids and Family), Epithumia (Passionate Soul Mate) and Eros (Connected Sex) are felt in their home.
V	IB people don't engage in, make excuses for, nor tolerate verbal abuse nor violent behaviors . IB couples know that traumatic behaviors kill off intimacy and perhaps a relationship too.
I	IB people investigate the origin of their traumatic thinking and behavior and seek immediate treatment for it because intimacy lives and thrives where there is safety versus oppression.
O	IB people work to become emotionally intelligent, which means observing what you're feeling, then practicing safe, self-regulating behavior to ensure you'll express or receive a message competently.
R	IB couples improve their relationship by re-routing their emotional energy toward behaviors that protect, empower, strengthen, validate and affirm the choices and decisions of each person.
S	IB people create boundaries and correction with shame-inducing or self-sabotaging internal (or external) talk, knowing that self- and other intimacy will be stymied until this occurs.

I	IB couples discuss ways to improve their relationship. Take five minutes to share, then listen to what the other thinks will create progress and improvement in areas where you desire greater intimacy.
W	IB partners engage in work to convey to their lover they're special, exclusive and are a priority, and that you'll "always have their back" when dealing with family, friends or others.
A	IB couples accept each other as they are but move to change for the better the one person they can change, which is yourself. <i>Is your focus on how you can become better in the domains of intimacy?</i>
N	IB couples do work to "change the narrative ," that is, the story that they tell themselves (and others) about their partner. The narrative change helps them to be positive, kind, inclusive and encouraging.
T	IB couples also focus on "good-housekeeping" tasks . These tasks discourage the build-up of unfinished business but do encourage the practice of "positive flooding" to express your love!
T	IB people recognize that warmth, openness, and truth-telling (along with the practice of other values) not only creates trustworthiness but makes you appear very attractive to your lover!
O	IB is enhanced when open-ended questions are used because they put the focus on the Speaker, which helps the Listener gain valuable insight into the thoughts, feelings, and needs of his love.
G	IB grows when the Speaker shares her appreciation and respect to the Listener for hearing and responding to her thoughts empathetically, which are skills that serve you both!
R	IB couples know that Respect , Intimacy, and Knowledge come from the Hebrew word <i>YADA</i> , so they cook generously with these ingredients, knowing they not only edify but also create closeness!
O	IB couples look for or develop opportunities to help their partner to heal when they've committed an offense. Operating in the "Good Samaritan" mindset is a way that IB people live.
W	IB people then work to live by their values, which helps them to create boundaries with harmful behavior, strengthen their recovery and become people who value and protect relational intimacy.
A	IB partners discuss and pay attention to things that matter to each other, especially to relationship building and intimacy-protecting behavior (where once there was erosion). To IBs this matters!
N	IB couples grow beyond conflict and grief because they nurture their spirituality, work their program, create safety and reconnection, and focus on solving problems and producing serenity.
D	IB couples know that dates and dining , cuddles and comfort, "thinking of me" and "thoughts about us," romance and repair and safety and sex are good dishes to cook and enjoy regularly!
E	IB couples envision then create a shared vision of what they want their marriage (and family) to look like, and through commitment work to ensure their shared vision becomes reality.
N	IB couples get the concept of neuroplasticity , which means their brains regenerate new growth that results in good interpersonal neurobiology with the regular practice of intimacy building behaviors!
J	IB couples honor, value, cherish, adore and treat each other like the precious jewel that they are; valuable, to be esteemed and as one who possesses great worth simply because they are.
O	IB couples openly court their partner and per my mentor Dr. Patrick Carnes , will flirt with, touch, romance and engage in foreplay, intercourse and commit to renewing agreed upon connections!
Y	IB couples who yearn for mutual attraction with their partner engage in behavior that highlights strengths and because of neuroplasticity, develop new abilities that may "wow" their partner!
A	IB couples engage in arousing , stimulating, sensual and enjoyable activity that celebrates their sexuality, and produces satisfaction, safety, security, sexual health that above all is sumptuous!
R	IB people become friends and lovers again because they practice reconciliation , which means they lay aside wrathful behavior and impart peaceful behavior in their heart and home environment.
E	IB couples realize they don't have to be an intimacy building expert , but they do need to be open, willing to learn, take the initiative to share, hear, heal and initiate intimate behaviors that coalesce!

This list of Intimacy Building activity isn't exhaustive, and I encourage you to discuss and "personalize" these suggestions with your partner to specifically design and develop intimacy building behaviors that you'd like to grow and enjoy in your relationship. What comes to mind that you'd like to grow, develop, implement and benefit from in your relationship? May God bless you in your sacred work of building Intimacy!