



Is the Honeymoon Over?



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Dear Dr. Grantham:

*My wife and I have been married for less than a year. She tells me she loves me and wants to be close to me, but we don't talk anymore. When we do she gets defensive, stops talking and retreats to another room...I am so lonely. What has happened to us? **Is the honeymoon over already?**" J.C.*

Dear J.C.:

When we think of marital intimacy we think of closeness, warm fuzzies, oneness, trust, safety to be ourselves, vulnerability, sex, etc. The definition of true intimacy (*intimi* in the Greek meaning inner or innermost) has to do with closeness and connectedness.

One of the biggest roadblocks to intimacy in marriage is transference. Transference occurs when we unconsciously have feelings toward someone that we originally felt toward other significant people in our lives.

Basically, I see two types of transference in the counseling office. The first involves assigning the messages and information we received from our parents to the current relationship. There is so much that our parents teach us, values, spirituality, morals, right and wrong, etc. Many things they teach us are beyond their own awareness—like intimacy. Through his actions, Dad teaches us what a man is like, what a father is like, and what a husband is like. Likewise, our Mother teaches us what a woman is like, what a mother is like and what a wife is like. The two of them together have tremendous impact on the way we act in relationships. We tend to repeat our parents' relationship patterns (good and bad) unless we deliberately work to change them.

Another kind of transference occurs when we bring the pain of a former relationship or marriage into the new relationship and act it out there. When partners are communicating well and children and finances are doing well, former relationship issues are not as likely to interfere. But when the relationship is stressed, the tendency is to react with the baggage and pain from other significant relationships, sometimes without realizing it.

After some 24 years of counseling couples, I know that even the healthiest of relationships require work. Couples have to "deliberately" work together on old feelings and pains, clearing the way for the kind of emotional intimacy that keeps the "honeymoon" in the relationship.