

“Finding One Another”

by Carlo Griseta

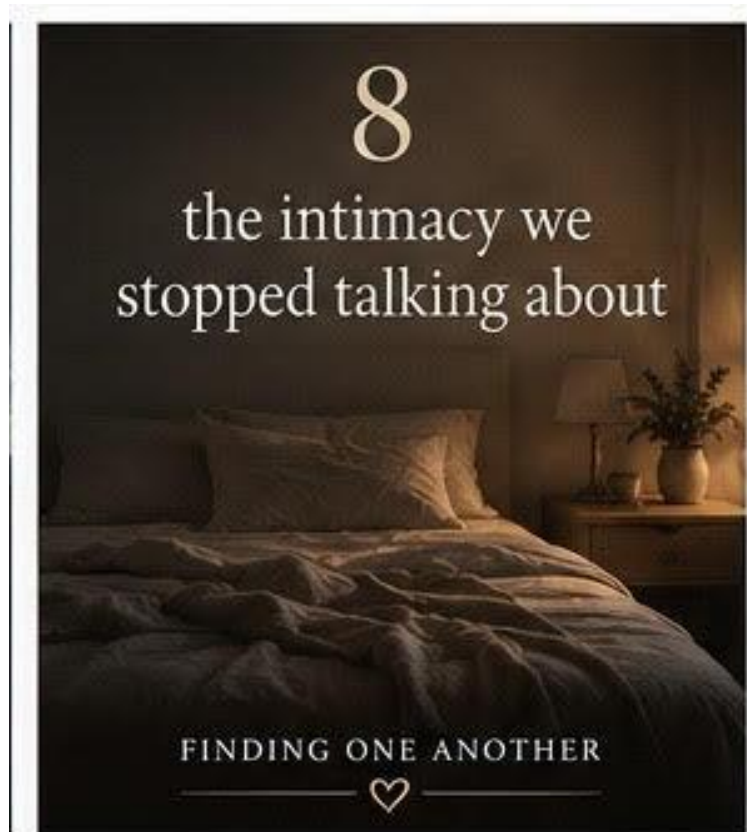
Chapter 8

The Intimacy We Stopped Talking About

Natalie missed being touched without wondering if it would lead to disappointment. Not just physical disappointment, emotional disappointment. There had been a time when affection between them felt natural: playful touches in the kitchen, holding hands in parking lots, lingering conversations in bed, spontaneous kisses, shared anticipation, warmth. Back then, intimacy felt connected to the whole relationship, now it felt complicated, fragile, and loaded with unspoken meaning. Ethan noticed the distance too, though he interpreted it differently. To him, the lack of physical connection increasingly felt like rejection. At first, Ethan tried initiating more often, then less often, then cautiously, then resentfully. Eventually he stopped trying altogether because repeated rejection hurt more than silence.

Natalie, meanwhile, did not feel emotionally safe enough for closeness anymore. Years of emotional disconnection, unresolved resentment, exhaustion, pressure, and feeling emotionally unseen had slowly affected her desire in ways she barely understood herself.

Neither of them knew how to speak honestly about it anymore. Every conversation around intimacy seemed to end in hurt feelings, defensiveness, or withdrawal. So, they avoided the subject almost completely, and avoidance created even more distance. One night they lay silently in bed facing opposite directions, the room felt emotionally cold despite their physical closeness. Ethan finally spoke into the darkness, “Do you still even want me anymore?” Natalie’s chest tightened immediately, because she knew the question beneath the question, not merely: “*Do you want intimacy?*” But: “*Am I still desired? Still chosen? Still loved?*” Tears



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filled her eyes unexpectedly, because the painful truth was: she missed closeness too, but closeness no longer felt emotionally simple. She turned toward him slowly, “*I miss us,*” she whispered. Not sex; the “us”, the safety, the playfulness, the tenderness, the emotional ease, the affection that once flowed naturally between them.

Ethan stared quietly at the ceiling, and for the first time in years, neither of them defended themselves, neither explained. Neither accused, they simply sat together in the sadness of realizing how much tenderness had quietly disappeared between them.

Reflection Reading

Intimacy Is More Than Physical

One of the most painful forms of distance in long-term relationships is the gradual loss of emotional and physical intimacy, and yet many couples rarely discuss it honestly. Not because it does not matter, because it matters deeply.

For many people, intimacy becomes emotionally complicated over time due to: unresolved resentment, emotional disconnection, shame, rejection, stress, exhaustion, aging, body insecurity, hormonal changes, caregiving fatigue, anxiety, trauma, emotional neglect, or years of unspoken disappointment.

Often couples interpret intimacy struggles very differently:

One partner may experience: rejection, loneliness, inadequacy, or loss of desire.

The other may experience: pressure, emotional unsafety, exhaustion, resentment, anxiety, or emotional disconnection.

Both people suffer.

But because intimacy feels vulnerable and emotionally charged, couples often stop talking honestly about it altogether. Silence then creates deeper misunderstanding.

One of the great misconceptions about intimacy is that it is merely physical. In reality, emotional intimacy and physical intimacy are deeply interconnected for many couples. Feeling: emotionally safe, emotionally desired, emotionally seen, emotionally valued, emotionally connected, often shapes physical closeness profoundly. This does not mean every couple experience intimacy identically.

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People vary greatly in: emotional needs, desire, expression, comfort, communication style, and physical affection, but healthy intimacy usually requires more than physical proximity, it requires emotional openness and safety.

Another painful reality is this: When couples stop talking honestly about intimacy, shame quietly grows. People begin privately wondering: “*Am I unattractive?*”, “*Am I unwanted?*”, “*Am I failing?*”, “*Why do we feel so distant?*”, “*Will this ever return?*” Without compassionate conversation, both partners often create painful assumptions about themselves and each other. Healing intimacy rarely begins through pressure or performance, it begins through honesty, emotional safety, gentleness, curiosity, and rebuilding connection slowly, because beneath many intimacy struggles still exists longing: longing to feel chosen, desired, cherished, emotionally safe, and deeply connected again.

Individual Reflection Questions

Personal Reflection

1. How has emotional connection affected intimacy in our relationship?
2. What feelings arise in me when I think about physical closeness right now?
3. Have I experienced rejection, pressure, shame, loneliness, or emotional disconnection related to intimacy?
4. What helps me feel emotionally safe and connected?
5. What fears or insecurities do I carry around intimacy?
6. Have unresolved hurts affected my openness toward closeness?
7. What kind of affection or connection do I miss most?
8. How comfortable am I discussing intimacy honestly?
9. What emotional needs may exist beneath my desire—or lack of desire—for closeness?
10. What would healthier intimacy look like moving forward?

Shared Conversation

Conversation Guidelines

Approach this conversation gently.

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Avoid: blame, pressure, humiliation, defensiveness, sarcasm, or keeping score.

The goal is emotional understanding—not performance.

Conversation Prompts

1. How has our emotional connection affected physical intimacy?
2. What do you miss most about the closeness we once shared?
3. What helps you feel emotionally safe and desired?
4. What has made intimacy difficult or painful at times?
5. Are there unresolved hurts affecting our closeness?
6. What kinds of affection or connection feel meaningful to you?
7. What would help us begin rebuilding tenderness slowly and honestly?

Weekly Practice

Rebuilding Tenderness

This week is not about pressure or expectations; it is about restoring emotional warmth and safe connection.

Assignment

For the next seven days: Practice intentional non-demand affection.

Examples:

Holding hands, sitting close, hugging intentionally, gentle touch, lingering eye contact, speaking appreciation, sharing memories, sitting together quietly.

No pressure for anything beyond emotional connection.

Additionally:

Each partner complete this sentence: *“I feel most emotionally close to you when”*

Share your responses slowly and without interruption.

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The goal this week is not performance, it is restoring safety, tenderness, and emotional presence.

Closing Reflection

Many couples stop discussing intimacy long before intimacy fully disappears. *Silence* replaces **honesty**, *pressure* replaces **tenderness**, *protection* replaces **vulnerability**, and slowly two people begin grieving closeness without knowing how to return to it safely. Intimacy is not rebuilt through force, it is rebuilt through emotional safety, gentleness, honesty, patience, and the slow return of trust and tenderness. Because beneath many guarded hearts still lives the longing: to be fully known, fully received, and deeply cherished again.