

INTIMACY NEEDS

Getting intimacy needs met is one of the key reasons why we build intimate relationships at all. For many people we hope to get multiple forms of intimacy needs met all in one primary relationship. But many of us look to outsource some or all of those needs to others.

Knowing which needs are met or unmet can help you be clear in all the relationships you're building. Let me give you a few examples to identify the different forms of intimacy in your own life:

SEXUAL INTIMACY

We often over-emphasize the importance of sexual intimacy in our lives so much that even the word sex is conflated with intimacy. Consider the ways you get your needs for sexual intimacy met. These might include watching porn, having intercourse, making out, masturbating, or daydreaming among many others. Are there ways you would like to cultivate more of this form of intimacy?

SENSUAL INTIMACY

For many people sensual (or embodied) intimacy goes hand-in-hand. However, it can be useful to look at the many ways we build asexual sensual intimacy with others. For example, I have a massage therapist I have worked with for six years. She's seen me through many life changes and knows my body very well, but we do not have any sexual connection or arousal as part of our relationship.

Another example is often found in athletic and performing arts. Many dancers have strong physical connections with their partners that aren't necessarily sexual but are deeply intimate and embodied. Think about your current level of fulfillment in and/or desire for embodied intimacy.

INTELLECTUAL INTIMACY

The act of learning and sharing knowledge is vulnerable and often deeply connective in intimate ways. While it may overlap with other forms of intimacy, sometimes there are specific intellectually intimate practices that bring fulfillment to our lives.

These might be working with a professional coach, attending a writing group, sharing your learning with others, or geeking out about a specific topic with someone. Again, consider the ways intellectual intimacy is present in your life and/or the ways you would like to cultivate more of it.

SPIRITUAL INTIMACY

There are many highly intimate ways we connect with our spiritual selves. It can be incredibly intimate to share learning, awe, inspiration, and revelations with others. This might be discovered in bible study, meditation group, yoga practice, retreat discussion, or on a hike. Consider the presence of and/or need for spiritual intimacy in your life.

FUNCTIONAL INTIMACY

Often overlooked, functional intimacy arises as we learn each other's habits of being in and navigating the world around us. Many roommates and families have highly functionally intimate lives. They know how the other likes to pay bills, load the dishwasher, end their day, or decompress.

Consider the forms of functional intimacy you share with others in your life. Notice if you have a need or desire to increase this area of intimacy in your relationships.

EMOTIONAL INTIMACY

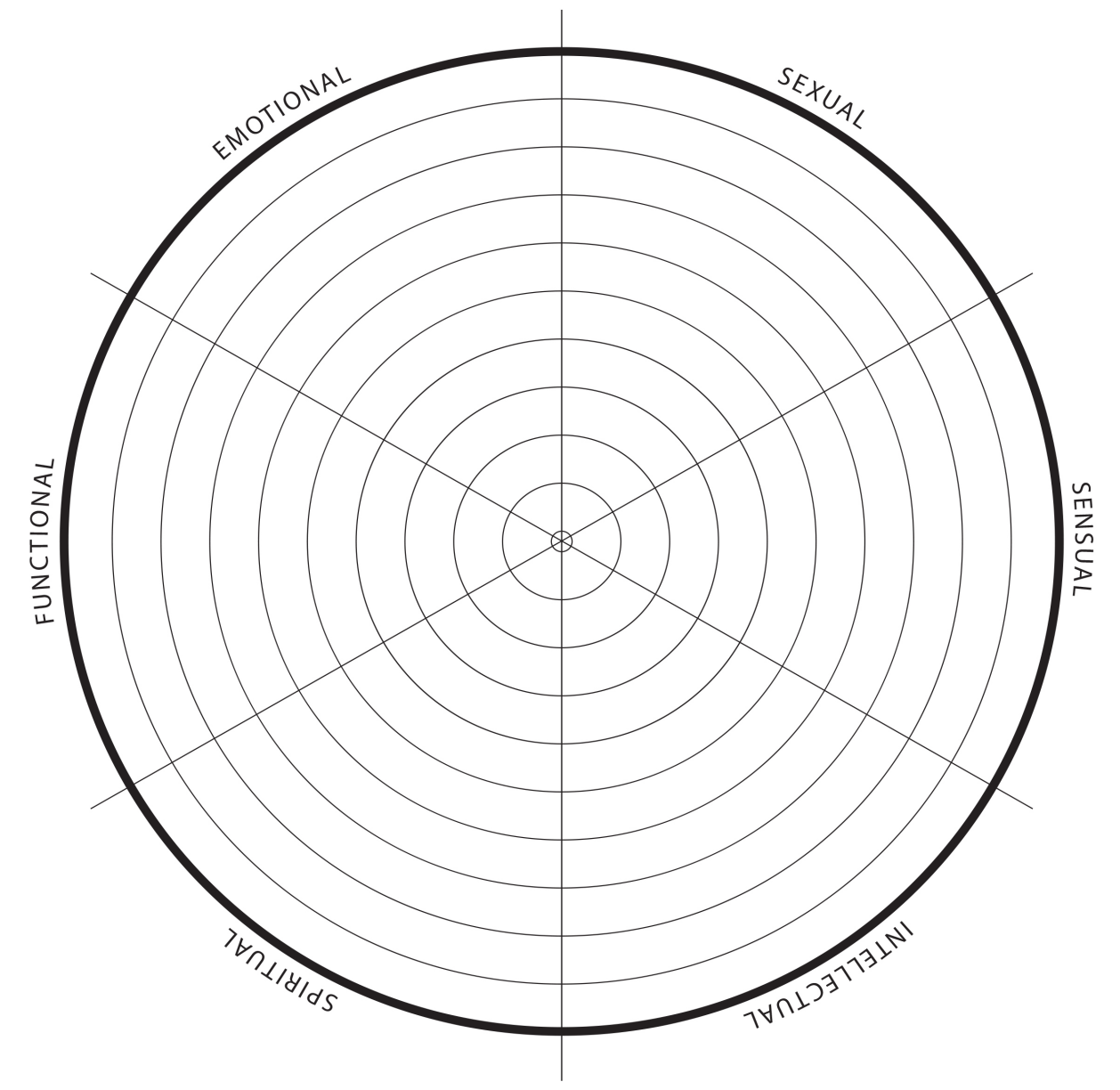
Emotional intimacy is often the foundation of deep friendships. It is formed when we are able to be emotionally vulnerable with people who gently hold us accountable, can lovingly acknowledge our imperfections, and will reliably show up with warmth.

When I reflect on emotionally intimate relationships in my life I think first of friends I can call when I am in emotional pain or confusion who will help me find clarity and connect with my integrity.

Consider the forms of emotional intimacy currently present in your life. Notice if you have a need or desire to increase this area of intimacy in your relationships.

INTIMACY SELF-REFLECTION

On the following page color in the diagram to create a snapshot of this moment in time by filling in each area of the circle as it corresponds to your need for intimacy being met.



Once you've filled in the sections of this circle answer the reflections below:

Which areas would you like to increase fulfillment?

Which specific actions or behaviors fuel each need for intimacy being met?

What behaviors or actions meet intimacy needs in more than one area?

Which areas overlap or connect?

How does your level of fulfillment change when you think about different relationships or friendships in your life?