

Can you be close without sex? Healthy intimate relationships vary but share one key feature, says psychologist

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Intimate relationships are similar in some ways, but different in others. Some intimate relationships are more sexual and powered by a lot of

physical chemistry at the beginning and stay that way. In other intimate relationships, partners feel very connected to each other, but neither is strongly focused on physical intimacy. It really depends on what works for each couple.

In relationships that are intimate but not sexual, if both partners feel that they're getting their needs met, and they feel close and mutually supported, then it works. It's perfectly healthy. It's also normal when some of the [intensity](#) or spontaneity that people experience in a brand new [relationship](#) settles into a dynamic that is more familiar or predictable. You don't need to have sex in order to feel close.

The issues around lack of sex in relationships really come when partners are not in alignment. The main goal, especially in [intimate relationships](#), is that partners are able to communicate with each other around what it is that they want and need. The first thing to remember when it comes to [communication](#) is that it's really important for people to speak about their own experience rather than accusing or focusing on what the other person should be doing. It's helpful to use "I" statements. Start out by saying, "I'd like to find some time for the two of us to talk about the relationship" or "I've been having some feelings that I'd like to share with you."

Sexual chemistry is very real: We all intuitively have a sense about that, but chemistry can change depending on the context. For example, when you're dating it might feel very different than when you're living together. It might look even more different when you're working, you have [young kids](#), and it's tough to find time just to sleep and exercise. It's not a coincidence that couples feel more chemistry when they are on vacation or having an adventure that's fun or exciting.

When it comes to maintaining sexual [chemistry](#), desire and sensuality are things that we have to cultivate and to attend to over time. That might

mean paying more attention to your own needs. That might also mean taking a little bit of extra time to figure out what your [partner](#) is wanting or needing. Relationships, whether they're sexual or not sexual, need to be cared for and renewed regularly. They are not automatically self-sustaining. You have to actually pause, pay attention, and care for them.

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