

How to Develop Deeper Relationship Intimacy: Shared Meaning

The Power Moves | 29 May, 2018 | by Lucio Buffalmano

Intimacy in a relationship is often correlated with how much shared meaning the couple has.

In plain English, it means this: the more in common you have, the more you'll feel closer to your partner.

This article describes and explains shared meaning and gives you a few ideas on how you can improve it to enjoy more relationship intimacy.

Spending time in nature could be part of their shared meaning

Contents

- [What's Shared Meaning](#)
 - [Why Building Shared Meaning](#)
- [Creating Intimacy Via Shared Meaning](#)
 - [#1. Talking about your shared meaning](#)
 - [#2. Share a dream or vision](#)
 - [#3. Develop Daily Rituals](#)
 - [#4. Celebrate Anniversaries](#)
 - [#5. Develop Cultural Artifacts](#)
 - [#6. Start Joint Activities](#)
 - [7. Write Down Your "Couple's Values"](#)
 - [Some Ideas for Shared Meaning](#)
- [Intimacy & Shared Meaning Examples](#)
- [Shared Meaning in Perspective](#)
- [SUMMARY](#)

What's Shared Meaning

Shared meaning is all about sharing a common culture.

And what constitutes a common culture in a relationship?

Here are a few examples:

- References
- Inside jokes
- Daily habits
- Anniversaries
- Symbols and rituals
- Foods you both enjoy
- Couple secrets
- Knowledge of each other's dreams

But it's also all the little things you do sometimes that you don't even talk about. You might not talk about how much you enjoy a good Italian wine on the weekend for example. But if you do it constantly, that's part of your culture and shared meaning.

And if you are both loud and crass instead of book worms, that's also shared meaning.

Why Building Shared Meaning

First of all, as we've already said, couples who develop shared meaning are much more likely to develop intimacy.

And second, shared meaning helps form the glue that keeps couples happily together for the long haul.

A new relationship indeed, with its butterfly love period, is naturally exciting. A new relationship doesn't have much shared meaning but it doesn't need any: [limerence](#) makes the couple stick together.

But limerance, or the puppy love period, ends.

And when it ends, shared meaning helps build a deeper connection that outlasts the initial infatuation.

Shared meaning indeed can create a deeper bond than the initial infatuation.

Shared Meaning is Friendship

Have you heard or read around that friendship is the key of great relationships?

Well, that's actually true.

But what most articles don't explain is *how* to develop that friendship.

A shared meaning, together with [knowing your partner well](#), forms the building block of a friendship.

And friendship is what great couples refer to when they can't even think about the possibility of their relationship ending.

It's because they are so close to their partners and the shared meaning is so deep that losing their partners would mean losing a part of who they are.

Creating Intimacy Via Shared Meaning

In [The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work](#) Gottman says that a shared meaning takes years to develop.

But there are many ways you can use to make that process faster and more effective.

Here are a few:

#1. Talking about your shared meaning

This one works like a charm.

I know, because I always do it when I am seeing a girl on a constant basis.

Remember the example of the couple enjoying a good Italian wine on the weekend?

We said that maybe they don't talk about it, but it's still shared meaning.

Well, what if they started talking about it instead as "their" thing?

When you talk about it, you make the shared meaning somewhat "official" and you strengthen it. It's not about your individual taste which happens to overlap: it's about the two of you.

#2. Share a dream or vision

Sharing a dream, goal or visions is possibly the biggest shared meaning you can have.

In [solving conflicts](#) we talked about how important it is to understand our partner's dreams. Working together towards that goal is an even bigger glue.

But it doesn't have to be something tangible: sharing a vision or common values also creates a larger meaning in life that transcends the smaller day to day differences.

#3. Develop Daily Rituals

Find out something that you can do at periodical time intervals together. It could be evening dinners, or weekend getaways.

#4. Celebrate Anniversaries

Wedding anniversaries or birthdays are an example.

But it can go beyond that. It could be a spring picnic, or a winter hot wine at the same Christmas market. Or a walk in the woods in autumn.

#5. Develop Cultural Artifacts

Pick something that is meaningful for you and make it a symbol of your relationship.

For example I met my first girlfriend when we were both living in Poland and we both loved it. So some Polish food and drinks became our relationship symbols.

And of course it can also be movies, cities or songs -which you can [start seeding from the dating period](#) by the way-.

#6. Start Joint Activities

Starting joint activities you can do together is another concrete example of a shared culture.

It could be a sport, or volunteering, or even committing to raising your children with a certain set of values.

7. Write Down Your “Couple’s Values”

Some counselor suggest you can also write down the values of your marriage.

I'm not a big fan of this one though.

People develop and writing down things can become constrictive.

If a partner realizes they're moving on, for example, they might silently start to believe you have no shared meaning anymore.

I believe it's best to let your shared meaning grow with you without committing to anything in writing.

Some Ideas for Shared Meaning

- Hug every time you're back home
- Cuddle time before falling asleep
- Exercise together
- Booking holidays during the same period
- Movie nights
- Chores together
- Taking breaks during heated arguments

Intimacy & Shared Meaning Examples

How I Met Your Mother has an example of inside jokes that fosters shared meaning:

Lily and Marshal also have lots of recurring moments of shared meaning and intimacy during the show:

Shared Meaning in Perspective

Shared meaning is one of the levels of the sound relationship house of Gottman. It's very important, but don't forget the other layers:

- [Love maps](#) (knowing each other)
- [Fondness and admiration](#) (the other building block of long term love)
- [Turning towards](#) (emotional bank account)
- [Handling conflicts](#)

SUMMARY

Sharing meaning and building a couple culture is one of the best ways to reliably improve your relationship's intimacy and overall health.

It's one of the layers of the Gottman's solid relationship house, and this article showed you examples and tips on how to grow your shared meaning.

Archived from theredarchive.com