

Milestones to Intimacy in Marriage

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MILESTONES TO INTIMACY IN MARRIAGE

INTRODUCTION

A milestone is a stone set up beside a road to mark the distance in miles to a particular place.

When a new road is constructed, milestones are placed on the roadside with a spacing of one mile between two milestones.

Regular travellers by road look out for these milestones. The milestones show them:

1. How far they have travelled already
2. How much farther they still have to travel in the journey to your identified destination.

When you have travelled a road route many times, you become familiar with the location of different milestones. You may even have identified landmarks that help you to know how far you have travelled without the milestones.

A very popular landmark is the Redemption Camp on Lagos - Ibadan Expressway. Even visitors travelling to Lagos for the first time are told, "When you get to Redemption Camp, know that you're almost in Lagos".

Marriage is a journey with a defined destination.

That destination is **INTIMACY**.

Intimacy is a feeling of closeness and belonging together. No barriers. No fences, Complete openness and vulnerability of husband and wife with one another.

A member of TRFMA said intimacy for her is "When both husband and wife feel comfortable being themselves, dreaming about and planning for their lives together." Her husband said intimacy for him is "When there are no secrets between spouses."

It is important for couples to be clear about and have a harmonious definition for INTIMACY.

Not having this clear and harmonious definition of INTIMACY in your marriage may be one reason why you and your spouse are unhappy with one another.

But even when you have a clear definition, you need to know the milestones that mark your journey to INTIMACY.

In the Right Fit Marriage Program, there are five milestones in the Journey to Intimacy in Marriage.

These milestones are War/Conflict, Truce, Surrender, Winning and Intimacy.

Many people pass by milestones as they journey but they pay no attention to them.

They pay no attention, because they don't know what milestones are and how to use milestones to plan their journey.

Milestones give you confidence in your progress and show you how far you have come in the journey, and inform you of how far you still have to go.

For now, have you noticed milestones as you travelled by road? Did you pay attention to them or just passed by them?

MILESTONES TO INTIMACY IN MARRIAGE

MILESTONE NO. 1 - WAR/CONFLICT

The first Milestone to Intimacy in Marriage is WAR/CONFLICT.

Given that intimacy in marriage is a feeling of closeness and belonging together (no barriers, no fences, complete openness and vulnerability of husband and wife with one another), many people fail to recognise this milestone.

When they meet this milestone on their journey to intimacy they hastily conclude that they must be either on the wrong route or facing the wrong direction.

Have you been in a bus or taxi that is taking you to a place you've not been before and are unfamiliar with?

If you have, what is your reaction when you sense that the route the driver is taking you on is not correct or unsafe? Panic and an insistence that he change direction is the most likely reaction from you.

When you hear the words, war and conflict, what comes to your mind?

A war is a period of fighting or conflict between countries or states. A husband and wife come from two different and distinct families. In Family Systems Engineering, every family is a nation, with its beliefs, culture, paradigms and practices.

At the beginning of living together in marriage, it is only natural that the beliefs, culture, paradigms and practices of a husband's nation of origin conflict with that of the wife.

This is especially so because many of us are not aware of or conscious of the patterns that drive our thinking and behaviour.

When you encounter the milestone WAR/CONFLICT, it actually confirms to you that you are on your way to building a new family, a new nation.

WAR/CONFLICT milestone shows you that you and your spouse have not discussed and agreed the the beliefs, culture, paradigms and practices of your new nation.

When you encounter this milestone, it is time for you and your spouse to ask yourselves questions.

What do I believe and why do I believe them?

What does my spouse believe and why does he/she believe them?

What are the culture, paradigms and practices that we brought from our families of origin and our life experiences and exposure prior to marriage?

What are our values?

Do we have common grounds? What are these common grounds?

Where we differ, which of the culture, paradigms and practices that we're bringing from our families of origin will serve our new family best?

The action required when you encounter this milestone is that you and your spouse answer these questions honestly and use your responses to begin to define the culture, paradigms and practices of the new family that you're starting.

When you don't know what milestones are, they are of no help to you.

When you know what they are, they are a great help to you in your journey.

Many couples are not aware of the WAR/CONFLICT milestone. When they encounter it, they don't take the action needed at that stage.

It's not surprising that they hurt each other as they get angry with themselves and insist on things being done only in their own way

Another member of The Right Fit Marriage Academy said, "...during my service year at Adamawa, milestones are things I looked out for to encourage me that my journey will be over. They are very important."

Yes, milestones are not bus stops. They are a pointer to how far we have gone in our journey. If we know what they are and what to do when we encounter them, they encourage us in our journey.

A couple that takes the right action at the first milestone will make progress to the next milestone in their journey to intimacy.

ACTION STEPS...

What do you think of this concept of Milestones to Intimacy in Marriage?

For the married, have you encountered this milestone? What was/is your experience? What did you do at that stage? Have you moved on or are you still there?

For singles, have you observed married people around you who encountered this milestone and didn't know what it was?

MILESTONES TO INTIMACY IN MARRIAGE

MILESTONE NO. 2 - TRUCE

The second Milestone to Intimacy in Marriage is TRUCE.

Yesterday, we looked War/Conflict, the first milestone in the journey to intimacy in marriage. We saw that many couples stop at this milestone and park there.

Some couples after spending a while at this first milestone awaken to the thought that their actual destination is intimacy in marriage.

Reminding themselves that intimacy is a sense of closeness and belonging together (no barriers, no fences, complete openness and vulnerability of husband and wife with one another) they choose to continue the journey to intimacy.

The choice to continue the journey brings them to TRUCE, the second milestone.

A TRUCE is an agreement to stop fighting or arguing for a period of time. At this second milestone, at least one spouse, sometimes both of them, stop attacking each other, catch their breath, and try to work out a peace deal.

Very often, it is one spouse that first reaches this milestone.

Suddenly that spouse remembers that they started out with a dream of a happy relationship. They don't want to let go of that dream. They realise that by parking at the War/Conflict milestone, they are gradually letting that dream die slowly.

When you arrive at the milestone TRUCE, you recognise that you and your spouse are different but you wish that the differences will not lead to fights and misunderstanding.

Even though you don't know yet how to achieve the harmony you so desire, you decide that you will not "add kerosene to any fire that your spouse starts".

Sometimes at the milestone TRUCE, because you are tired from the war/conflict of the earlier part of the journey, you do one of two things.

The first is to back off or give in to your spouse whenever a disagreement begins. The result is that you have kept the peace but you have also buried your own needs. You are also teaching your spouse that your opinions and needs are not important.

The second is agree to give up something that is important to you in the hope that your spouse will do the same. Disappointment sets in when your spouse doesn't reciprocate and/or demands even more from you.

Neither of these two gives you the intimacy you desire.

Rather you and your spouse remain opponents rather than becoming partners. Your relationship is damaged because misunderstanding remains rather than understanding being gained. You move further away from each other rather than get closer.

When you reach the TRUCE milestone, your focus should be to seek clarity about what is going on within your own heart and mind as well as that of your spouse.

Remember these questions?

What do I believe and why do I believe them?

What does my spouse believe and why does he/she believe them?

What are the culture, paradigms and practices that we brought from our families of origin and our life experiences and exposure prior to marriage?

What are our values?

Do we have common grounds? What are these common grounds?

Where we differ, which of the culture, paradigms and practices that we're bringing from our families of origin will serve our new family best?

You add new questions to them.

What is my dream for our marriage? What is my spouse's dream? Are our dreams different? Can I find common ground?

From your answers, you identify common ground that you share with your spouse.

Whenever war erupts, you remind yourself of your dream and the common grounds that you and your spouse share.

You have fears that your spouse may take advantage of you, but you also realise that acting on that fear will not lead to the realisation of your marriage dream.

You begin to see that the conflicts you have are actually opportunities to talk about issues and

increase the understanding that you and your spouse have of each other.

This realisation moves you on to the next Milestone, SURRENDER.

Now that you have a description for the second milestone TRUCE, have you experienced it or seen it in relationships around you?

MILESTONES TO INTIMACY IN MARRIAGE

MILESTONE NO. 3 - SURRENDER

In the journey to intimacy in marriage, there are five milestones that you will encounter.

The first is WAR/CONFLICT which shows you that you and your spouse have not discussed and agreed the the beliefs, culture, paradigms and practices of your new nation.

The second is TRUCE when you begin to see that the conflicts you have are actually opportunities to talk about issues and increase the understanding that you and your spouse have of each other.

The third Milestone is SURRENDER.

The word SURRENDER is frightening for many. On hearing it, what immediately comes to mind is that you have stopped fighting or resisting your spouse and that you have conceded defeat in the conflicts you are experiencing.

You may interpret SURRENDER to mean that you are now condemned to suffer in silence regardless of what your spouse does.

This is not quite so.

SURRENDER is unshakable faith that your relationship's potential will be realised.

On the basis of that faith, you choose your battles with wisdom. You want your marriage to succeed more than you want to be right. You ask what you can do or learn to transform your conflicts into the opprtunities that they are.

You do not imagine that you're a helpless victim who has no choice. You see yourself as a subtle leader who is defining the direction in which your relationship is going.

Your mind is constantly and proactively exploring what is my power to do and when you find an answer you action it.

You recognise when your marriage needs help and you seek the help.

You approach all that happens between you and your spouse with clarity and right perspective. Even when you are hurt by your spouse in your interaction with them, your response is guided by your honest answers to these questions:

What do I believe and why do I believe them?

What does my spouse believe and why does he/she believe them?

What are the culture, paradigms and practices that we brought from our families of origin and our life experiences and exposure prior to marriage?

What are our values?

Do we have common grounds? What are these common grounds?

Where we differ, which of the culture, paradigms and practices that we're bringing from our families of origin will serve our new family best?

What is my dream for our marriage? What is my spouse's dream? Are our dreams different?

Can I find common ground?

You don't wait for conflicts to occur before initiating proactive discussions on issues that are bothering you and which you know will impact your relationship.

Perhaps the biggest concern when you reach the SURRENDER milestone is your vulnerability to your spouse. What if your spouse takes advantage of you?

This is a valid concern.

When you encounter the milestone SURRENDER, you are confronted with a choice.

You can choose to talk honestly to your spouse about your ideas and your opinions on issues. Or choose not to do so.

When you choose not to share your ideas and opinions honestly with your spouse, your spouse is left to make assumptions about what you think, do and say and why you think, do and say them.

If their assumptions are wrong, you may find yourself back to the WAR/CONFLICT milestone which you thought you had left behind.

When you choose to to share your ideas and opinions honestly, you risk having them rejected without being considered or treated as unimportant by your spouse. When you anticipate this type of response from your spouse, you don't feel encouraged to share your ideas and opinions.

The key to building your capacity to overcome your reluctance is to remember that, your spouse rejecting your ideas and opinions is an indication that you and them have different perspectives on the issues being discussed. It is also an indication that more work needs to be done before you will reach an understanding.

It is not always an indication that they are undermining your importance or your self esteem.

Two things happen, when you consistently choose to share your ideas and opinions.

First, your spouse becomes exposed to who you really are and this encourages them to trust you.

Second, you become more confident in sharing your ideas and opinion and also inviting your spouse to do the same.

Once you develop this confidence, you move to the next milestone WINNING.

ACTION STEPS...

Married people: Have you reached the SURRENDER milestone at some point in your marriage? What was it like?

Single people: Think of the married people around you. Have you seen them get to the SURRENDER milestone? What did you observe about them at this milestone.

P. S. Are you at the WAR/CONFLICT milestone or the SURRENDER milestone? Do you need help in becoming clear about how to make progress to the WINNING milestone, send an email to modupe@rightfitmarriage.com

MILESTONES TO INTIMACY IN MARRIAGE

MILESTONE NO. 3 - SURRENDER Part 2

On their wedding day, most couples look forward with anticipation and excitement to intimacy between them.

It's a journey they have never made before.

To be honest, they make inquiries and ask others what to expect in the journey.

Like many people, they never inquire whether there is a map they can take with with them.

Have you been in a situation where you stopped and asked for direction and you were given what seemed to you to clear descriptions? Only to follow the descriptions and discover that the instructions that you were given don't lead to where you want to go?

You feel frustrations and disappointment. Perhaps discouragement too.

You wonder whether you shouldn't give up and abort the journey altogether.

There are many married people who are presently feeling this way.

Are you one of them?

You have encountered the WAR/CONFLICT milestone. Though your spirit was broken, you didn't give up.

Somehow you figured out how to get to the TRUCE milestone. At this milestone, you asked those around you who you can trust for directions.

In their own way, they pointed you to the SURRENDER milestone.

SURRENDER is unshakable faith that your relationship's potential will be realised.

What is required of you when you encounter this milestone is enormous as we saw yesterday.

Because of the frustrations, disappointments and discouragement you've experienced earlier in the journey, you are now wary.

You don't want to be hurt again. You don't want to be vulnerable.

Many people spend quite a long time at the Surrender milestone because they don't want to be vulnerable and hurt all over again.

ACTION STEPS...

What will you say to a friend who is at the Surrender milestone and who is unsure what to do next?

Married people, if you're presently at the WAR/CONFLICT, TRUCE or SURRENDER milestones, what are your concerns? What thoughts run through your mind?

MILESTONES TO INTIMACY IN MARRIAGE

MILESTONE NO. 4 - WINNING

After sometime in the comfort of the SURRENDER milestone, your heart longs for more.

Yes at the SURRENDER milestone, you and your spouse are no longer in WAR/CONFLICT.

You repeatedly ponder on the questions:

What do I believe and why do I believe them?

What does my spouse believe and why does he/she believe them?

What are the culture, paradigms and practices that we brought from our families of origin and our life experiences and exposure prior to marriage?

What are our values?

Do we have common grounds? What are these common grounds?

Where we differ, which of the culture, paradigms and practices that we're bringing from our families of origin will serve our new family best?

What is my dream for our marriage? What is my spouse's dream? Are our dreams different?

Can I find common ground?

You gradually realise that though the culture, paradigms and practices you and your spouse brought forward from your lives prior to getting married have obvious differences, they also have common ground.

You remember the common values and attitudes that you both share and which attracted you to them.

Your belief that your relationship's potential can be realised begins to overcome your fear that your spouse will take advantage of you.

You take tentative steps towards allowing yourself to be vulnerable with your spouse.

As you do this you encounter the WINNING milestone.

At the WINNING milestone, you make deliberate efforts to interact with your spouse in sensitive and thoughtful ways and achieve success in doing so. You watch out for their responses to your efforts and focus more on their positive responses than on the negative ones.

You still struggle not to retreat when they are careless or critical in responding to your efforts. Even though such responses hurt you and cause you to feel unloved and not understood, you're greatly encouraged by your recollection of their positive responses in other situations.

At the WINNING milestone you begin to get a glimpse of what you've dreamed about intimacy in marriage.

When differences of opinion or conflict situations arise between you and your spouse, the atmosphere of trust that is building up in your home causes you to seek to understand your spouse's perspective. You allow that understanding to impact your response.

At the WINNING milestone, you're making more deposits than withdrawals in your spouse's Love Bank.

At the WINNING milestone, you realise that intimacy is not just a mirage, it can be your reality. The Trust level in your relationship grows. You and your spouse begin to feel safe to talk to one another about your feelings and emotions. When you hurt one another, you don't retreat, you talk and deal with issues in a collaborative way.

As you grow in relating with yourselves in this collaborative way, you arrive at the final milestone, INTIMACY.

ACTION STEPS...

Married people, what's your story? Have you reached the WINNING milestone? Was it worth the effort and perseverance it demanded of you in the earlier stages?

Singles, you have married people around you. Do you know couples who have reached the WINNING milestone?

MILESTONES TO INTIMACY IN MARRIAGE

MILESTONE NO. 5 - INTIMACY

Every journey takes you to a destination.

In all journeys, there is a final milestone that signals to you that your destination is close by.

Regardless of which part of Nigeria you're travelling from, once you arrive at the landmark called "Redemption Camp", you smile because you know that you're close to the city of Lagos.

In the same way, in the journey to intimacy in marriage, there is a final milestone.

This milestone is INTIMACY.

Some couples encounter this milestone early in marriage. Others do not reach it until after many years of living together. Some others approach it and get close to it, and then something happens in their relationship and they find themselves back at the WAR/CONFLICT milestone.

One of my favourite teachers in marriage matters, H. Norman Wright, in his book, "After You Say I Do" said, "INTIMACY means taking the risk to be close to someone and allowing them to step inside your personal boundaries".

From his words, you see one major identifying marker for the INTIMACY milestone - open communication of your needs and your dreams, an ability to share your hopes and failures with your spouse, a willingness to share from the depth of your heart without being afraid or defensive.

Many couples approach this milestone with fear because true INTIMACY can hurt. The major concern in vulnerability. The question on your mind is, "What if my spouse takes advantage of me?" Of course, this risk is there.

What you have not considered is that when your spouse knows all there is to know about you, and they accept you as you are, then you can feel safe and accepted.

What is this INTIMACY that we strive for in marriage?

H. Norman Wright goes on to say that there are six dimensions of INTIMACY. These are:

1. Emotional Intimacy - A sense that you and your spouse are genuinely interested in each other. You both emotionally support and care for each other.

2. Social Intimacy - You have friends in common. An important part of what you and your spouse do together is spending time with these mutual friends.
3. Sexual Intimacy - You and your spouse are genuinely interested in sex. You make effort to satisfy one another sexually and when there issues you are willing and able to discuss your concerns and together find answers and solutions.
4. Intellectual Intimacy - You and your spouse are willing and able to share ideas with one another. You seek input from each other on matters that are important. You value your spouse's opinion and you share yours with them.
5. Recreational Intimacy - You and your spouse are willing and able to do activities together which are just for fun.
6. Spiritual Intimacy - There are three criteria which you can use to measure spiritual intimacy.
 - a. You and your spouse share common or similar beliefs about God.
 - b. These beliefs must be important and significant to your lives.
 - c. Both of you must be honest with one another about where you are in your spiritual journey.

When you begin to observe these dimensions of intimacy in your relationship with your spouse, you experience being "naked and unashamed" which is the dream that many married people long for.

When you encounter the INTIMACY milestone, you get the sense that your marriage dream is becoming a reality.

ACTION STEPS...

Consider the six dimensions of INTIMACY described above. Are they a good definition of the dream you have for your marriage?

MILESTONES TO INTIMACY IN MARRIAGE

CONCLUSION

There is a confidence that comes from having knowledge of

1. What to expect as you go along.
2. What you need to do when you encounter those things.

when you're going on a road trip.

Now you know that WAR/CONFLICT is just a milestone in your journey to intimacy in marriage. You don't have to wait until you get there to learn and improve your conflict resolution skills. You know that WAR/CONFLICT is not anything to apprehensive about. Rather it signals to you that it's time to examine the differences in your background and nurture, your life experiences and exposure.

You understand that, if these differences are properly handled, you will move from WAR/CONFLICT to TRUCE.

At the TRUCE milestone, you have to make a choice that the differences will not lead to fights and misunderstanding. You begin to seek clarity about what is going on within your own heart and mind as well as that of your spouse.

As you gain clarity, you move to the SURRENDER milestone. At this third milestone, you begin to have unshakable faith that your relationship's potential will be realised. This faith strengthens your resolve to choose your battles with wisdom. You want your marriage to succeed more than you want to be right.

As you overcome the fear that your spouse might take advantage of your vulnerability at the SURRENDER milestone, you move on to the next one which is WINNING. At the WINNING milestone, the trust level between you and your spouse grows and you are more collaborative in how you deal with issues in your relationship.

As you grow in relating with yourselves in this collaborative way, you arrive at the final milestone, INTIMACY.

Marriage is NOT a trap or a prison. What makes it a trap or prison is ignorance or partial knowledge of the principles that underlie successful marriage.

ACTION STEPS...

Singles, now you know what the journey to intimacy involves. How will you use this knowledge in choosing the one you'll eventually marry?

Married people, where are you in the journey to intimacy in your marriage? Do you need help to figure things out? Do you want to assess your marriage and know where you are on the journey to intimacy, complete the Marital Assessment Form on the next page.

The Right Fit Marriage Academy

Marital Assessment Form

Name:

Email address:

Phone No.:

How long have you been married?

Why did you marry your spouse?

Instruction

Read the statements below and indicate how you feel about each one in the space provided.

YES = you agree with the statement

NO = you disagree with the statement

1.	I am enjoying my marriage.	
2.	I am free to express my mind the way I like and my spouse listens to me.	
3.	I had a wonderful childhood and was very free to air my opinion.	
4.	I had wonderful teenage years and was very confident of myself.	
5.	My single life was very exciting with no experience of heartaches or any secret to hide from people.	
6.	My spouse sees our home as our home and has no problem engaging in any form of household chores.	
7.	There is an alignment between my words, thoughts and actions.	
8.	I was brought up in a happy and settled family.	
9.	I don't have any struggle with any form of addiction or secrets I am afraid to share.	

10.	My spouse and I were best of friends and have pleasant memories of our single years before marriage.	
11.	My spouse and I are still friends and are able to bare our minds to one another.	
12.	I am able to easily forgive and move on in the spirit of unity.	
13.	Our home has a clear vision and values that is both known to us and to everyone in our home.	
14.	We read virtually the same types of books and listen to the same kind of speakers and mentors.	
15.	Our sex life is fantastic and we are able to talk to one another about it and explore different styles.	
16.	My spouse and I both know our love languages and personality types and accept each other the way we are.	
17.	We are able to resolve our differences without shouting at each other and/or any form of emotional or physical abuse.	
18.	My spouse respects my thoughts and ideas and is very considerate when I am not able to meet up to his/her expectations.	
19.	I am free to be me around my spouse and free to bare my mind without any fear of assault or misconception.	
20.	My spouse is number 1 on my agenda before my children, work and religious affiliation.	
21.	We have a Marriage Coach that we both respect and listen to .	
22.	We have a family constitution that guides our conduct and which we both respect.	
23.	We respect our in-laws but ensure that they don't influence our marriage in any way outside the areas in which we have given them permission to intervene or influence us.	
24.	I am closer to my spouse and am comfortable in his company than my siblings.	
25.	I have friends I hang out with that my spouse has no problems with.	

Number of Yes _____

Number of No _____

Your Score is (Number of Yes /25) x 100

For example: Number of Yes is 12

Score is (12/25) x 100 = 48

Interpretation of Your Score

0 - 20 War

If remedial action is not taken promptly, the marriage may break down irretrievably

21 - 40 Conflict

41 - 50 Truce

51 - 65 Surrender

66 - 80 Winning

81 - 100 Intimacy

Now you know the state of your marriage. What's the next step? Email your completed assessment form to modupe@rightfitmarriage.com and request for a Marital Assessment Consultation.

A Marital Assessment Consultation is a 60 minute call on Skype or Zoom in which I help you

1. Understand what your marital assessment score means;
2. Examine the options that are available to you;
3. Determine what you should do to improve the situation in your marriage.

For more help with getting your marriage right,

1. Join our community at Facebook.com/groups/TheRightFitMarriageAcademy.
2. Sign up for our weekly newsletter at <http://tinyurl.com/TRFMA>

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

My name is Modupe Ehirim and after thirty-one years in marriage, I decided to use my experience and the lessons I learnt to guide other people in their marriage journey.

Today I'm the founder of The Right Fit Marriage Academy.

Many marriages are in crises largely due to a lack of awareness of the principles that make marriage work. I am passionate about helping married people understand these principles and applying them to their own unique situations. I am convinced that marital intimacy and harmony is closer to you than you realise.

If you are currently experiencing any level of chaos in your marriage, I can help you get back that sense of order, harmony and intimacy.

I am not just a Marriage Coach, I have practiced and lived the techniques and processes I share with my clients for over thirty-one years now in my own marriage.

I know for a fact that you have a clear dream about what your marriage should be. You want to wake up each morning with excitement and expectation that your dream will be a reality.

That's why I am committed to providing you with the tools that you can use to turn that dream into reality painlessly and effortlessly.

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