



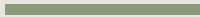
ESTI KEDEM

BIRTH & RELATIONSHIP
EXPERT | CBT CERTIFIED

A FREE GUIDE FROM THE SECURE BOND

It's Still Us

It's been about us from the beginning — and it still is. What intimacy really means before and after kids, the foundations it stands on, and how to keep the fire going through the beautiful chaos of family life.



Esti Kedem · CBT-certified relationship & life coach · thesecurebond.com

1 • What intimacy really means

Say the word "intimacy" and most people hear "sex". But sex is only one room in a much bigger house. Intimacy — *into-me-see* — is the experience of being fully seen by your partner and loved anyway: your thoughts, your fears, your body, your humor, your history.

That is why intimacy has more than one doorway:

- **Emotional intimacy** — sharing what is actually going on inside you, and being received with warmth instead of judgment.
- **Physical intimacy** — the whole spectrum of touch: a hand on a shoulder, a six-second kiss, cuddling, sex. Each one counts.
- **Intellectual & playful intimacy** — curiosity, inside jokes, real conversations, dreaming together about the future.

The foundation underneath all of them is **safety**. Desire cannot grow in a place where you feel criticized, unseen, or alone. When couples tell me "the spark is gone," we almost never start with the spark — we start with the safety.

Before kids: intimacy on easy mode

Before children, intimacy mostly takes care of itself. You have time, energy, spontaneity, and each other's full attention. Nobody teaches us to maintain intimacy on purpose — because for a while, we never had to.

"We didn't lose each other. We just never learned to find each other on purpose."

2 · After kids: what actually changes

A baby changes far more than your schedule. It changes your identity, your body, your sleep, your communication — and yes, your intimacy. If this is your season, please hear this first: **nothing is wrong with you, and nothing is wrong with your relationship.** This is the most predictable transition in couple life.

- **Exhaustion is a desire-killer.** Desire needs energy, and energy is exactly what new parents do not have. This is biology, not rejection.
- **"Touched out."** A parent who has held a baby all day can crave space, not more touch. It is about capacity — not about you.
- **From lovers to logistics managers.** Conversations become feeding times and pickup schedules. The lovers are still there — under the to-do list.
- **Bodies and identities are renegotiating.** Birth, hormones, new roles. Both partners are meeting new versions of themselves and each other.

The CBT part — catch the heavy thought:

~~"They don't want me anymore."~~ → "They are depleted. Wanting is still there — it needs rest and safety to wake up."

~~"If it doesn't happen spontaneously, it doesn't count."~~ → "Everything we protect on purpose — we chose. Choosing each other is the most romantic thing there is."

The couples who stay close after kids are not the lucky ones. They are the ones who stopped waiting for intimacy to happen — and started building it, gently and on purpose.

3 • Her body, her hormones, her heart

Intimacy after birth cannot be understood without understanding what the mother is living through. Her body just did something enormous — and everything in this chapter is **biology and love, not brokenness**.

- **Body image after birth.** The body that grew and birthed a whole person looks and feels different — softer, scarred, unfamiliar. Desire cannot flow through a body that feels like a stranger, or one that is being silently audited. It returns where the body is admired, not measured against "before".
- **Hormones are running the show.** After birth, estrogen drops to its lowest point in adult life. While breastfeeding, prolactin — the milk hormone — actively lowers libido and can cause dryness. This is nature protecting the baby. It is temporary, it is normal, and it is nobody's fault.
- **Breastfeeding means her body is never off duty.** She is touched, needed, and held onto around the clock. By evening, many mothers have simply run out of physical contact to give. "Touched out" is a capacity limit — not a message about her partner.
- **Her identity is being rebuilt.** Becoming "mother" is seismic. She is learning a new body, a new role, and a new heart that now lives outside her chest — all on no sleep.

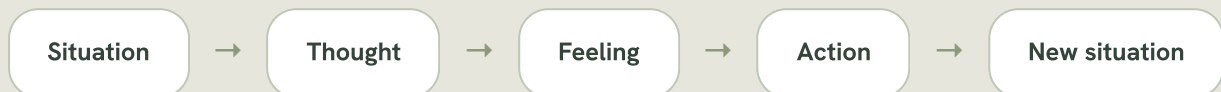
For partners — three sentences she needs to hear (and mean them):

- "You are beautiful — *now*, not 'still'."
- "Go sleep. I've got the baby." (Sleep is the most underrated foreplay in the world.)
- "No pressure, no timeline. I'm not going anywhere."

And for the mother: your only tasks here are patience and honesty. Say what your body can and cannot give right now — out loud. A partner who knows is a partner who can stay close.

4 • Your thoughts run your intimacy

Everything we do at The Secure Bond rests on CBT. Cognitive-behavioral coaching stands on one simple, powerful idea: it is rarely the situation itself that shapes how close we feel. It is the **thought** we attach to it. The thought creates a feeling, the feeling drives an action, and the action creates the next situation:



Watch the cycle in real life: an initiation is gently declined → the thought fires, *"I'm not wanted anymore"* → hurt and shame arrive → we withdraw and stop initiating → there is less closeness — which quietly "proves" the original thought. The cycle feeds itself. The way out is never to push harder on the action. It is to catch the thought.

Three thought traps that quietly drain intimacy

- **Mind reading.** "They didn't reach for me — they must not desire me." We treat a guess like a fact, and never check it out loud.
- **All-or-nothing.** "If it isn't spontaneous, it isn't real." "If we don't have sex, the evening was a failure." Intimacy lives mostly in the middle — and all-or-nothing erases the middle.
- **Catastrophizing.** "The spark is gone — and it's never coming back." A hard season gets rewritten as a permanent verdict.

The 3-step reframe — the core CBT skill:

- **Catch it.** Write the heavy thought down, word for word. A thought on paper is already smaller than a thought in your head.
- **Check it.** Is this a fact — or exhaustion and history talking? What would I say to my closest friend if they said this sentence?
- **Choose again.** Write a grounded thought that is both true and kind: *"We are in a demanding chapter — and we know how to find each other on purpose."*

5 • Five foundations of healthy intimacy

- **1. Safety first.** No criticism of bodies, performance, or desire — ever. Vulnerability only comes out where it has been received well before.
- **2. Talk about it, out loud.** Most couples have never had one honest conversation about desire, initiation, and what makes each of them feel wanted. One conversation can change years.
- **3. Small touch, no agenda.** A kiss that leads nowhere. A hug that lasts six full seconds. Holding hands on the couch. Touch without pressure is what keeps the bridge open.
- **4. Repair quickly.** A rejected initiation stings. Say it gently: *"Tonight I have nothing left — and I love you. Saturday, it's us."* A no with warmth protects both people.
- **5. Protect "us" time.** Not leftover time — chosen time. Even twenty minutes, phones away, counts as a date when you are both actually there.

Keeping the fire going — this week, pick one:

- A six-second kiss, once a day.
- One appreciation, said out loud, every evening.
- Twenty phone-free minutes together after the kids are asleep.
- One honest sentence about desire: "I feel closest to you when..."
- Plan one date — and protect it like a work meeting.

6 • The relationship comes first — we come first

It sounds almost forbidden to say out loud, so let's say it clearly: **the strongest thing you can do for your children is to love each other well.** The couple is not one more item on the family's list. The couple is the foundation the whole family stands on.

- **Children feel the bond.** Long before they understand words, kids read the temperature between their parents. A warm, secure "us" is their deepest safety.
- **You are their first lesson in love.** The way you touch, repair, laugh, and choose each other is the model they will carry into their own relationships.
- **A depleted couple cannot pour.** When "us" is running on empty, patience runs out downhill — onto the kids. Filling the couple's cup is not taken from the children; it flows back to them.

The CBT part — reframe the guilt:

~~"A babysitter so we can go out? That's selfish."~~ → "A strong us is the safest gift we give our kids."

~~"The kids need us every minute."~~ → "The kids need parents who are a team. Our closed door for one hour teaches them love is worth protecting."

What "we come first" looks like in practice

- A protected couple ritual every week — small and sacred, even 20 minutes.
- Let the kids see you hug, dance in the kitchen, hold hands.
- The bedroom keeps a "couple hour" — the day ends with the two of you, not with logistics.
- Say it in front of the kids sometimes: "Now it's Mom and Dad's time."

7 · Where are we today — and where do we want to be?

Each of you fills this in separately — circle a number for today, a number for where you'd love to be, and write one thing **you** are willing to do. Then compare, with curiosity. Gaps are not failures; they are a map.

Emotional intimacy

Sharing what's really going on inside — and feeling heard.

Today: ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

Where we'd love to be: ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

One thing I'm willing to do: _____

Everyday touch

The touch that asks for nothing — hugs, hands, closeness on the couch.

Today: ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

Where we'd love to be: ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

One thing I'm willing to do: _____

Desire & sexuality

The erotic connection between you — wanting, and feeling wanted.

Today: ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

Where we'd love to be: ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

One thing I'm willing to do: _____

Play & fun

Laughter, dates, adventures — the joy of being us.

Today: ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

Where we'd love to be: ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

One thing I'm willing to do: _____

Partnership & appreciation

Feeling like a team — seen, valued, and backed up.

Today: ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

Where we'd love to be: ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

One thing I'm willing to do: _____

A conversation for two

Find twenty quiet minutes. Answer separately, then read to each other — with curiosity, not defensiveness.

Intimacy for me, in this season, mostly feels...

I feel most wanted by you when...

One heavy thought I carry about us, said out loud:

A kinder, truer way to say that same thought:

One small thing we will protect this week:

A GENTLE LAST WORD

**The fire doesn't go out. It waits for safety,
and for the two of you to choose it.**

If this guide touched something, that is exactly where coaching begins. In a free 15-minute call we'll look at where you are — no pressure, just a conversation.



Book your free call: thesecurebond.com

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