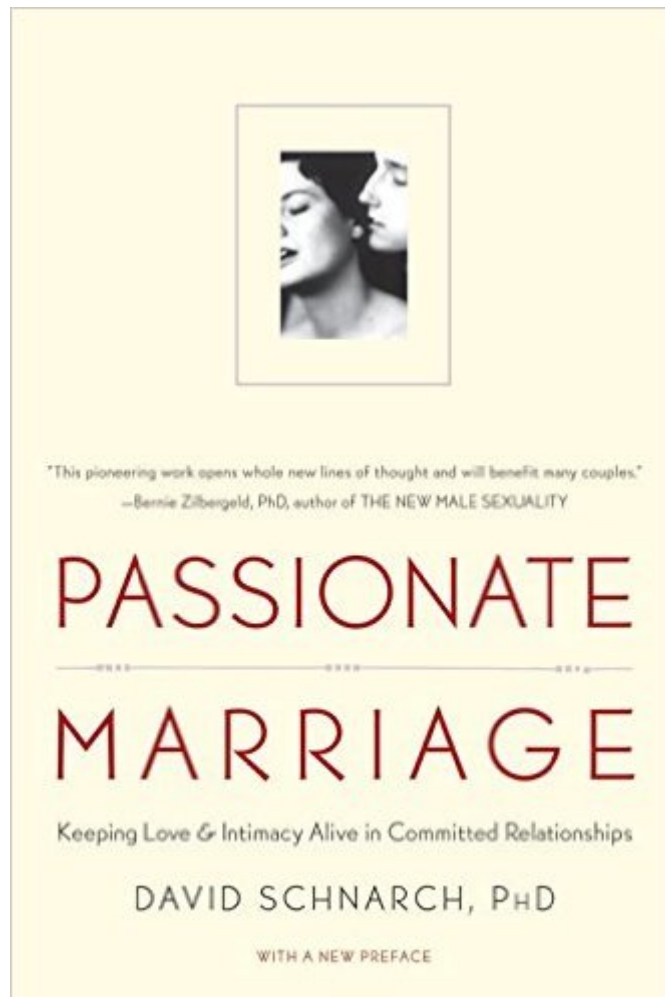


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# Passionate Marriage: Keeping Love And Intimacy Alive In Committed Relationships



## Synopsis

• William H. Masters, M.D. *Passionate Marriage* has long been recognized as the pioneering book on intimate human relationships. Now with a new preface by the author, this updated edition explores the ways we can keep passion alive and even reach the height of sexual and emotional fulfillment later in life. Acclaimed psychologist David Schnarch guides couples toward greater intimacy with proven techniques developed in his clinical practice and worldwide workshops. Chapters covering everything from understanding love relationships to helpful "tools for connections" to keeping the sparks alive years down the road provide the scaffolding for overcoming sexual and emotional problems. This inspirational book is sure to help couples invigorate their relationships and reach the fullest potential in their love lives.

## Book Information

Paperback: 448 pages

Publisher: W. W. Norton & Company; Reprint edition (April 27, 2009)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0393334279

ISBN-13: 978-0393334272

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 1.2 x 8.3 inches

Shipping Weight: 13.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars • See all reviews • (277 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #10,039 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #15 in Books > Health, Fitness & Dieting > Psychology & Counseling > Sexuality #17 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Sociology > Marriage & Family #44 in Books > Self-Help > Sex

## Customer Reviews

Couples with relationship problems that they cannot fix and do not even really understand may well find this book to be a lifeline, but they should not assume that following the *Passionate Marriage* approach will make them happy in the end. Dr. Schnarch's thesis (highly simplified) is that married couples often wind up in "emotional gridlock" because, as important differences between them (such as disparate sexual desire) arise in the marriage, they cling to the illusion that their partner can be their everything. In a doomed effort to perpetuate this illusion, they "manage" conflict by doing things that violate their own integrity (e.g. having sex they don't want to have) or by demanding that their partner do things that violate their partner's integrity (e.g. have oral sex when the partner doesn't really like it); the result, ironically, is that they wind up feeling farther apart rather

than closer together. Dr. Schnarch's solution to "emotional gridlock" is to encourage you to maintain your integrity -- i.e. to "hold on to" yourself -- without pushing your spouse away: to be who you really are, and to let your spouse see who you really are, while at the same time letting your spouse know that you love and value your spouse and the relationship. The result is that you feel authentic in the relationship and your partner is given a chance to know and love the "real" you (and vice-versa). Dr. Schnarch calls this process of "holding on to" yourself while simultaneously "holding on to" your spouse "differentiation."

No better, stronger, and truer book on the real-life, grow-or-close-down processes of marriage and long-term committed relationships than this one (and David Schnarch's more technical "Constructing the Sexual Crucible", written for therapists). When you are ready, or almost ready, to take an honest and self-confronting look at yourself and at life itself --- including those areas where you really don't think you need to look because you've got it all figured out --- when you are ready to quit blaming your partner for every heartbreak, limitation, and shortcoming your life has delivered --- when you are ready to face yourself down so that you can become the better self part of you longs to be --- than this book is your map. Almost incidentally, you may find that your marriage --- perhaps predictable, perhaps torment-filled, perhaps sexually flat --- may become full of surprises, ravenously and heated sexual, and spiritually, intellectually, emotionally fulfilling. In crisis two years ago, I searched this site for books on marriage and happened onto this one. My much-loved husband of 22 years and I were at a terrible, terrifying marital crossroads neither of us could make sense of. I read readers reviews. I ordered perhaps half a dozen books which seemed promising. This was one. I can remember the crazy deep panic, trying to find something to latch on to, something that would take me deeper, or make sense. I ordered several books that night, and tore into them eagerly.

Most books on improving a marriage focus on communication techniques or the basics/exotics of sex ed. David Schnarch has created something quite different. This book focuses on using conflict within the couple to create the growth necessary for partners to relate to each other. The book balances a well written presentation of psychological theory with anecdotal examples of how it manifests in couples. The root of marital conflict is not failure to communicate. Rather, it is accurate communication between incompletely individuated people. Individuation means the ability to connect with another, even in conflict, without losing one's own sense of self. When individuation is lacking, members of a couple must find ways to keep their distance from their partners in order not

to lose their sense of self. This distancing is the root of marital (or other committed couple) discord. Schnarch uses the forum of the couple to challenge each individual to develop a stronger, less contingent sense of self. The very institution that produces anxiety--the relationship--becomes the mechanism of repair! He postulates that couples only form between individuals who are similarly individuated. As one member of the couple develops, it challenges the other. The two partners "leapfrog" in their development, continually challenging the other. I've been married for 15 1/2 years. We spent the last three years (we're slow learners) working with a therapist who subscribes to Schnarch's ideas. After many, many wasted dollars with other therapists (we learned all the nice communication techniques, with no improvement in our couplehood), we've finally begun to develop a sense of intimacy in our relationship. This stuff WORKS!

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