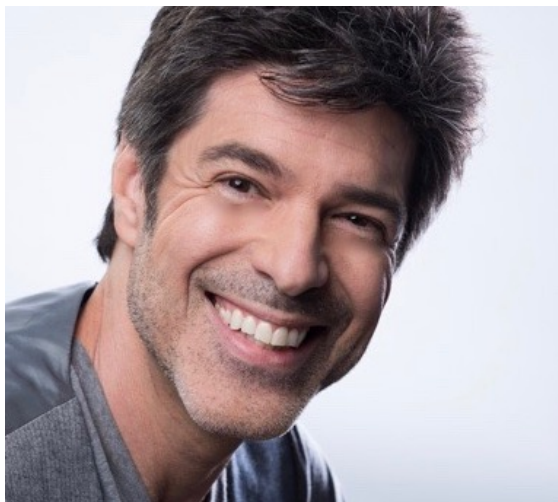


## The BEST of the 'Ask Adam' Teleseminar Series

I'm Dr. Adam Sheck and I wanted to thank you for purchasing this transcript of "The BEST of the "Ask Adam" Teleseminar Series. If you're not familiar with



me or my work, let me introduce myself briefly.

As a Clinical Psychologist, Couples Counselor and Sex Therapist, I have a private psychotherapy practice in Los Angeles and have been a psychotherapist

for over 25 years.

In addition to my private practice, I taught graduate courses in Marriage & Family Therapy and was also Directory of Psychology Training at a Los Angeles Community Mental Health Center. This has exposed me to a significantly wider population with relationship issues than only a private practice would.

The "Ask Adam" Teleseminars are an ongoing, FREE, monthly program where I answer your most important questions about Relationships, Romance, Intimacy and Sexuality. Questions are submitted each month and I answer them during the live teleseminars which can be accessed by telephone. This transcript is of what I consider "The BEST" of that series over the past year.

If you are interested in submitting a question, you may do so at:

[www.thepassiondoctor.com/contact](http://www.thepassiondoctor.com/contact)

The monthly teleseminars are one way that I try to help more people than I can through face-to-face work from my office in Los Angeles. I also do telephone coaching as well as Skype teleconferencing.

And if someone shared this transcript with you, you may also download a TON of Relationship Freebies at:

[www.thepassiondoctor.com/relationship-freebies](http://www.thepassiondoctor.com/relationship-freebies)

This transcript is taken from "Ask Adam" Teleseminars that have occurred a few years ago. It is a direct transcript so please forgive any grammatical errors spoken during the 'live' series. I have done my best to correct any out of

date URLs, websites or references, but feel free to notify me of anything in error.

Enough foreplay, let's get down to it. Without further ado, here are transcripts of the 'BEST' of the 'Ask Adam' teleseminar series! let's get on to the "BEST of"

I hope that you enjoy it and would love to hear your comments as well!

Thank you so much,

**Dr. Adam Sheck**

**First question: How do I know if my relationship is right for me? I do not want to go by trial and error.**

I don't know that you can be so clinical and scientific about this. Relationships are something of a process. That being said let me give you a little information that might help. First of all, you might benefit from understanding the psychology of how couples come together to form a relationship. Let me speak about it, as I have during previous teleseminars.

So, you know that old cliché that we marry our mother or we marry our father? Well, from a psychological perspective, there is certainly some truth in that.

Let me explain the concept of the "Imago" which is Latin for "image". Deep inside our unconscious, we hold this image of our "perfect" partner. This image has all of the sights and sounds and smells and feelings we gathered while we were growing up. And guess what, our model for that is very strongly based upon our primary caregivers, usually our parents and sometimes extended family.

But, the unconscious image we have, not only includes the good qualities we witnessed, but also the negative traits of our caregivers. As children, we're like sponges and we absorb it all. And so, when we meet someone that is close enough to this Imago, this internalized blueprint, our radar goes up. And if they have enough of those qualities or we believe that they have enough of those qualities, we fall "in love" and begin a relationship.

And we start in that first stage, the honeymoon stage, which is the romantic stage.

Everything our partner does is perfect, is cute, and is adorable. So cute the way he leaves the toilet seat up and I fall in. So adorable the way she lost my car keys and I can't go to work. We focus on the positive qualities of our partner and ignore the negative ones.

That's probably because our brain is generating these chemicals so that we can stay together long enough to perpetuate the species. Our brains drug us with neurotransmitters like PEA (phenylethylamine) and oxytocin.

PEA acts like methamphetamine, while oxytocin acts like heroin. With these love hormones and neurotransmitters surging through our bodies, we don't eat, we don't need to sleep, and we want sex all the time. Literally, we are drugged into a euphoric, elated, exhilarated state

Eventually though, we build a tolerance to the drugs flooding our system. It usually takes 3 months to 2 years (if you're really lucky), it wears down and we are left in the second stage of relationships:

### **The Power Struggle**

Now we begin to see who we're really with. And we begin to see those negative qualities in our partner that we previously ignored or didn't care about. At this point, many couples can't handle what they've gotten themselves in and they break up. Others just white-knuckle it and hope it will improve. Some seek professional help.

Those that break up, generally will find themselves attracted to someone who shares many common characteristics with their previous relationship(s).

When couples finally begin to work out some of these Power Struggle issues, they enter the third stage of relationship, which is called:

### **The Conscious Relationship**

Here, we are more at peace with ourselves and our partner. We are clear about what we want, how to ask for it, and how to be there for our partner as well as ourselves. And the passion can be even deeper, richer than the honeymoon phase.

So, to go back to the original question, how do you know if you're in the right relationship? Take a look at your history with your current partner and see what stage of relationship you are in. That will tell you a lot right there.

And if that doesn't tell you enough, I'd suggest you really take some time to sit with yourself. Maybe at the beach, or the woods or the mountains. Some quiet place that you can really reflect and open up your mind and your heart and really look inside and let the answer come to you. Am I with the right person? Can I commit to this relationship? WILL I commit to this relationship?

Hopefully that will be helpful to you. I wish you the best.

**Dr. Sheck, My boyfriend and I have been dating for about a year and he just asked me to move in with him. He loves me and says he wants to marry me. However, he was married once before and he says he just wants to “make sure” that we are really compatible first, by living together. I really love him and want our relationship to work. And yet, I’m not sure that this is the right thing for me. What should I do?**

This is a personal decision, one that you definitely need to take time to contemplate and choose the answer that is best for you. I can certainly give you some “facts” and statistics about co-habitation versus marriage. And I’m also happy to provide you with some guiding questions that might help you find the clarity you need.

My answer is not focused upon morality, value judgments, or religious beliefs. It is focused on the issue of commitment. So, the really critical question I would ask you is, what is your commitment in this relationship? The commitment of “living together” is much different than the commitment of marriage.

The commitment of “living together” is generally speaking really not that much about commitment. It’s about, “let’s see if we can get along together before we make a commitment.” Some refer to it as a “trial marriage.” It really is a much different commitment than marriage for the majority of people. Of



course, there are exceptions to this, yet I'm speaking "in general."

Marriage is about making the commitment to building a life with this person, whether you like them every day or not, whether they are in a good mood every day or not, whether they meet your needs every day or not.

It is about seeing the "big picture," about remembering why you are together for the long haul, even when the day-to-day ride is bumpy. It is about what you choose to give to the relationship, much more than about what you expect to receive. It is about working through the problems that come up, because you remember that you made a commitment.

And honestly, nothing can prepare you for the commitment of marriage, for the commitment to the long haul, to "forever," whatever forever means in this world. The concept of the "trial marriage" is statistically proven to be a poor indicator of marriage success.

The majority of cohabitators either breakup or marry within two years. The risk of divorce after living together is 40 to 85% higher than the risk of divorce after not living together. Those who live together before marriage are almost twice as likely to divorce than those who do not live together.

Why is this? There are many theories about it. Personally, I feel there are a few pieces to it. First of all, most of us are not perfect, we have some flaws, we have fears, we have parts of ourselves we hide from the world, parts we are not proud of, that cause us some amount of shame. We have varying degrees of doubt as to our self-worth, our desirability, our "love-ability." This may be

conscious or unconscious.

And often, these deeper issues don't come up in a living together situation, or if they do, not as strongly as when the commitment to marriage is made. Only then will our psyches feel safe enough to let down our guard, lower our defenses and let our "dark side" come out fully. And often, only then is our partner prepared to face and accept this side of us, without turning and running in the other direction. This is where a strong commitment is needed.

The second piece, I think is the fact that we as humans are truly creatures of habit. And when we live together with someone, we develop certain habits of relating and certain mindsets. Certain habits of communicating, certain habits of being. Often, we develop habits of "me" and "you" and "mine" and "yours." And we develop habits of "my way." And we develop mindsets of "I'm right and you're wrong" and "it's your fault." And those are really difficult to change, once we marry and commit to "forever."

Conversely (and ideally), when we make the commitment to marriage without the habits of living together, we build up habits of "us," of "the partnership," of "together forever" and we might work a little harder to sustain these habits. We might look more to ourselves and what we are doing to make our situation better or worse and take more responsibility for it. Each day is spent building this foundation, so that when challenging times come, as they will, we are prepared to meet them from strength, from partnership.

The final piece, which may speak more to the statistics, is that perhaps a percentage of the people who choose to live together, do so, because they are

not prepared or capable of making a stronger commitment like that of marriage.

So, "Indecisive," the ball is in your court. It's not good or bad to decide to live together or to decide to get married. It is an important decision though. If it becomes too difficult to reach a choice that is consistent with what you want, you might want to consider seeking support from a counselor or therapist. I wish you the best.

**Next question: Dr. Sheck, what are some ways to improve intimacy in my relationship?**

That's a great question. I think the first thing to do though, is define our terms. When some people talk about intimacy, they sometimes mean emotional intimacy and sometimes they mean sexual intimacy.

So let's start with the emotional aspect of intimacy. A long time ago, I heard a clever definition of intimacy by re-languaging it as into-me-I see. So it begins as an inner process of self-discovery, of self-knowledge.

Now, in the context of an intimate partnership, we begin to discover new parts of ourselves. Or perhaps uncover parts that are gradually revealed to us. And then, we can begin to share them, share ourselves with our partner. It can be a very exciting process.

To me, being in partnership provides the environment, the soil for me to grow, for me to discover parts of myself that I wouldn't know otherwise. This comes from the safety and the trust that builds over time that allows me to become more open, more vulnerable.

So my partner is the stimulus to me uncovering parts of myself that I would never have discovered on my own. Some of these are the so-called good parts; some are what we label the bad parts. If we take away the labels and judgments, they are all parts of me, parts that need to be revealed and illuminated, so that I can make choices about which parts I want to feed and water and nourish and which parts I want to let hibernate, and go dormant.

And in a loving, accepting partnership, I can allow those parts to come out as they are stimulated and I can share them with myself and my partner. That is true intimacy to me. Discovering parts of myself I didn't know I had and sharing them with someone. That is true growth.

Now that is how I view emotional intimacy. Sometimes we use the term "intimacy" as a polite way of speaking of sexuality and physical connection with a partner. The sexual act, and sexual connection CAN be an extremely intimate connection. It isn't necessarily, yet it CAN be. And in the context of a loving partnership, the emotional intimacy can fuel the sexual intimacy. And the sexual intimacy can fuel the emotional intimacy. And they can feed upon each other to create an expansion and growth to the relationship.

We know the old saying that women need love to connect to their sexuality and men need sex to connect to their love? While I avoid generalizations, there is some truth to this statement. Perhaps you have experienced this in some of your relationships.

I've spoken before about the two styles of connecting to sexuality: the autogenic, which is more typically masculine, which is more the direct physical connection, and the psychogenic, which is more typically feminine, which is the mental, emotional connection. For some, desire creates arousal. For some, arousal creates desire. Both are true when they are true. Both work. Both are valid.

To bring more sexual intimacy to your relationship, I think it is good to take both routes. Sometimes it is good to surrender to the physical and let the pure arousal take you over. Sometimes it is good to create desire, and build up to that arousal.

Again, sexual intimacy, like emotional intimacy is about discovering new parts of yourself and sharing them with your partner. So stretch and try on new attitudes, new ways of being together sexually.

I'm a believer in what I've called "all day foreplay." Start in the morning by telling your partner how you feel about them, and what you'd like to be doing with them when you come home from work. Perhaps leave them a little note with more of your thoughts. Maybe later, send them a text or even a picture! Sexting (sexy texting) can be a VERY effective form of foreplay. Next, maybe

an email or a sexy telephone message. Stretch yourself beyond your comfort zone here, maybe just a little bit.

And when you get home, set the stage even more, whether it's with the traditional flowers and candy or an erotic gift (or toy) or maybe another card or an original poem. Building the anticipation and tension is always so nice, especially when you know you'll be relieving that tension later on.

I write more about "all day foreplay" and other ideas in my eBook "101 Ways To Bring Back The Passion!" which is available on the [Passion Doctor website](#). Hopefully this has given you a good start though. I'll also be conducting a four week teleseries on "bringing back the passion" for couples and if you're on my mailing list, I'll be sending you information about the preview call to that teleseries. I wish you the best and hope this has been helpful.

**Next question: Dr. Sheck, I'm getting married in six months and thinking about pre-marital counseling. What is it all about and do you feel that it's valuable?**

As a couples counselor, I am a very strong believer in pre-marital counseling or what is now called "pre-commitment" counseling, as not everyone chooses to get married or is legally allowed to get married.

One of my favorite quotes is “Too many couples spend more time planning their wedding than planning their marriage!” Either I originated this quote or I heard it so many decades ago that I’ve stolen it. Either way, it’s mine now and it’s very much the truth.

I believe that this pertains to all committed relationships, whether your commitment is recognized by God, religion, the government, the IRS or you don’t even care about whether someone outside of the relationship sanctions it. My point is, to be successful you need to have a vision and a SHARED vision, one that you and your partner both have expressed with each other.

I wrote about the “shared vision” in my Passion 101 blog, so if what I say today is of interest to you, you can read about it there as well. One of the first assignments I give to couples that meet me for relationship counseling is to create a “shared relationship vision.” Let me explain why I do this and more specifically what I mean by a “shared vision.”

We all have some ideas, some preconception, some notion of what kind of committed, romantic relationship we would like to have, whether the form looks like dating, co-habitation, marriage or some other path. These ideas

have mainly been “implanted” into our unconscious by observing our primary caregivers (usually our parents), our extended family, our neighbors, our community, and of course, television and movies.

For “better or worse” we have this internalized vision, which is very related to what I’ve called in other articles and videos, the “Imago” which is Latin for “image.” The issue though, is that our intimate partner ALSO has an internalized vision of how they would like to live out their idealized relationship and the two visions might not be entirely compatible!

Unfortunately, most couples do not share very much of their individual vision prior to making a commitment and only find out over time that there are some bumps in the road. That’s usually when they come to see me or another psychologist or couples counselor.

One of my first tasks then, is to have them create the previously mentioned “shared relationship vision” which will merge both of their ideas for how they would like to share their lives together in order to build a deep, lasting partnership.



It gives couples a kind of roadmap to help them assess whether they are “on course” in their relationship, so that they can put in the necessary correction. This is important, as we don’t really have a good internalized GPS system to help us course correct and get us where we want to be.

So until there is “an app for that” we have to do it the old-fashioned way.

While the process is straightforward, it takes a little bit of time and effort (and often a third party, such as myself) to organize and create the shared vision.

That being said, if you’d like to try it on your own, the basic steps are as follows:

**1. Each of you makes a separate list detailing YOUR vision of the relationship. Write it:**

- In the present tense.
- In positive terms (what you want, not what you don’t want).
- Be specific!
- Use “We” statements

Examples might be:

“We go out one night each week without the children and enjoy a romantic dinner.”

“We resolve arguments by communicating clearly using the tools Dr. Sheck taught us.”

**2. Write your list in all of the areas of relationship. This might include:**

- Romance & Sexuality
- Financial/Spending/Budgets
- Family/Parenting/Children
- Emotional/Communication/Conflict resolution
- Spiritual/Religious

**3. Verbally share your vision with your partner and then combine the lists into one master list, one “shared vision.”**

The third step is often the most challenging, as it may very well involve a great deal of negotiation. This is where a trained professional may be of great service.

Once the list is completed, you have the roadmap and can monitor how well you are creating the vision you desire. And, the vision may change over time, it is a living, breathing document that will grow with you.

The bottom line is that if you don't consciously create your relationship together, you leave it to chance or worse, to your unconscious, unresolved issues. You can't control everything, but you can plan a roadmap and make conscious choices to head towards your destination together.

So, I strongly urge you to seek pre-commitment counseling, it will definitely be worth it for a long-lasting relationship.

**Next question, Dr. Sheck what can I do about my spouse, who is an alcoholic? It's pretty bad."**

I worked for four years in a residential drug and alcohol treatment facility, so I know a little bit about this subject. In my experience, it's difficult, if not impossible for someone abusing drugs and/or alcohol to work on their relationship. The person's is "married" to their drug of choice, there's not room for both.

So, I don't recommend couples counseling for a couple where drugs or alcohol are a present and active factor. I do recommend that the therapist and the non-addicted partner work actively to get the addicted person the support they need, most often beginning with Alcoholics Anonymous or some other 12-step program. And I recommend that the partner attend Al-Anon meetings or some other support program for the partner of the addict/alcoholic.

The relationship is heading downhill and will destruct if nothing is done to deal with this issue. After the partner has achieved sobriety for a period of time, usually a minimum of 60-90 days, I am open to the possibility of couples counseling. It's tricky though, as the process of therapy can be stressful and raise triggers to wanting to use the drug of choice. This is a dangerous, life-threatening situation, yet it can be dealt with.

**Final question: Dr. Sheck, what is your philosophy of couples counseling?**

Great question. My philosophy is one of trusting the process. The psyche of the individuals and the collective psyche of the couple know what is best for them. It would be quite presumptuous, extremely grandiose of me to think that I know what is best for a couple, that I know more than they do about what is right for them.

So, I'm not there to judge or decide what kind of relationship they have or could have. I'm there to put people into process. I'm there to engage the couple in their own process together, to help them remove what is in the way of clarity and truth, so that they can deal with what needs to be dealt with and decide what needs to be decided.

**What I believe is that Couples are seeking connection.** They want to feel that connection with each other, that aliveness, that excitement, that sense of well being. It is an emotional, physical and spiritual connection.

**So even though it sounds a little strange, I believe that conflict is the motivating force for healing and growth in relationships.** I believe the

conflict couples experience after the “honeymoon period” of their relationship is actually necessary. Conflict points out where we don’t get our needs met. Unmet needs create a breakdown in connection, destroying the passion and intimacy.

And here is the challenge, as many couples don’t navigate this “power struggle” phase well and eventually break up or settle for a less than satisfying relationship.

**To get back to connection they need Safety and Passion.** They want the emotional safety to be themselves, to be open and honest, to feel accepted and understood. With this safety, comes deep connection. From this nurturing environment, passion can arise and be sustained. I mean sexual passion, of course, and also, emotional passion. The freedom to be spontaneous, to express they we are, to be intimate and excited by their lives.

That would be my philosophy of couples counseling.

So that's it for the "The BEST of the "Ask Adam" Teleseminar Series

Transcript. I hope that you've enjoyed it AND learned some useful approaches to making your relationship better and more passionate.

And if you'd like to join the Passion Doctor Community and receive a plethora of Relationship Freebies, you may do so at:

[www.thepassiondoctor.com/relationship-freebies](http://www.thepassiondoctor.com/relationship-freebies)

Thank you again and I wish you the best!

**Dr. Adam Sheck**