

NJ Therapist Terri DiMatteo, LPC Introduces The Intimacy Bond™ — A Co-Equal Two-Strand Framework That Protects Love

Co-equal desire and safety. Both engaged. One protective bond — durable, resilient, and built to last through the inevitable ebbs and flows of love.

PRINCETON , NJ, UNITED STATES, June 30, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Terri DiMatteo, LPC, a New Jersey Licensed Professional Counselor and founder of [Open Door Therapy](#) in Princeton, NJ, announces the formal introduction of [The Intimacy Bond™](#) — a proprietary clinical framework developed through more than fourteen years of direct clinical work with couples. The framework redefines romantic love as a mutual protective bond built from two co-equal strands: emotional intimacy and sexual intimacy — each essential, neither subordinate to the other.



The Intimacy Bond™

A Clinical Framework for Romantic Relationships

Terri DiMatteo, LPC | Open Door Therapy

New Jersey Licensed Professional Counselor Terri DiMatteo, creator of The Intimacy Bond™ — a clinical framework defining romantic love as a mutual protective bond built on two co-equal strands of emotional and sexual intimacy.

What Is The Intimacy Bond™?



Love is not a feeling. It is a bond. And bonds protect. But only when both strands are fully engaged does the Protective Shield hold."

Terri DiMatteo, LPC

The Intimacy Bond™ defines romantic love as the adult continuation of the earliest human bond — the maternal-infant attachment — established through skin contact, mutual gaze, and bodily warmth before language existed. That original bond had one primary function: protection. The Intimacy Bond™ holds that the adult romantic bond serves the same essential function. When both strands are fully engaged, the bond creates a Protective Shield — a

resilient structure that absorbs stress, survives rupture, and guards the relationship against drift and erosion. Protection is not the starting point. It is the result of both strands working together

as equals.

The Intimacy Bond™ is composed of two strands that must operate as co-equals:

Emotional Intimacy — Being deeply known, felt, understood, and responded to with care. This strand creates safety.

Sexual Intimacy — Being deeply desired, physically wanted, and erotically chosen. This strand creates passion.

When both strands are actively engaged, the bond becomes durable — capable of withstanding the inevitable ebbs and flows of a shared life. When one is chronically neglected, the shield weakens and the bond becomes vulnerable to the very forces it was designed to withstand.

A Clinical Distinction

Attachment-based models — including Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT), developed by Dr. Sue Johnson — have made landmark contributions to couples therapy by establishing that emotional accessibility and responsiveness are foundational to adult bonding. EFT arrives at protection primarily through emotional safety, with sexual intimacy understood as an outcome of restored emotional connection.

The Intimacy Bond™ extends this foundation while departing from its sequence.

"Dr. Johnson's work fundamentally changed how we understand adult attachment, and that contribution is real and significant," said DiMatteo. "Where The Intimacy Bond™ diverges is in the architecture. This framework holds that sexual intimacy is not an outcome of emotional repair — it is a co-equal driver of it. For many partners, the body is the primary pathway into emotional connection, not the reverse. When sexual intimacy is treated as secondary, one strand of the bond remains unaddressed. The Protective Shield cannot fully form on one strand alone."

Either strand can initiate repair in the other. Restoring the full protective function of the bond requires both strands engaged simultaneously — not sequentially.

Clinical Applications

DiMatteo applies The Intimacy Bond™ to the issues most commonly brought to couples therapy in New Jersey: infidelity and affair recovery, desire discrepancy, emotional withdrawal, chronic conflict, and long-term relationship drift. In each case, the framework examines which strand has been compromised and what restoring full protective function requires.

The framework also clarifies when protection can be restored — and when it cannot.

"Empathy is essential to the bond's protective function," DiMatteo explains. "Without the genuine capacity to feel another's experience, mutual protection cannot form — which is why this framework also identifies why certain relationships, particularly those involving narcissistic abuse, cannot be repaired, and why individuals in those situations require a different kind of support."

About Terri DiMatteo, LPC

Terri DiMatteo is a New Jersey Licensed Professional Counselor (License #37PC00460600) and founder of Open Door Therapy LLC, Princeton, New Jersey. She specializes in couples counseling, infidelity and affair recovery, narcissistic abuse recovery, desire discrepancy, and personal consulting. She is the creator of The Intimacy Bond™ framework and author of the [LoveBonds blog](#).

Her work has been featured in Vogue, The Today Show, Newsweek, AskMen, Katie Couric Media, Psych Central, and Bustle.

About Open Door Therapy

Open Door Therapy LLC provides individual therapy, couples counseling, and personal consulting via secure telehealth to residents across all 21 New Jersey counties. Evening and weekend appointments are available.

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