

Stages of relationship development

Mark L. Knapp has created a ten-stage model of relationship development. It includes 5 stages of coming together and 5 stages of coming apart.

5 stages of coming together comprises of –

- Initiating
- Experimenting
- Intensifying
- Integrating
- Bonding

5 stages of coming apart are –

- Differentiating
- Circumscribing
- Stagnating
- Avoiding
- Terminating

Initiating

It is the stage where brief verbal exchanges such as “Hi, I am Harsh,” “How you doing?” or other such one-liners are used. At this stage, if the outcomes of the scanning suggests that a person is unattractive and unappealing, then the verbal interaction may never take place. The basic decision made in this stage is whether to initiate verbal communication with the other person.

To do

List the various “verbal exchanges” you have heard others use, or that you have used when trying to get to know another person.

Experimenting stage

When one person tries to discover the similarities that he or she has in common with the other person, and vice versa. In this phase, people are attempting to find similarity so that communication is more easier. Interests, similar backgrounds, attitudes and experiences must be discovered.

Intensifying

At this stage, each person reveals confidential, secret feelings, information to the other person. At this stage people feel comfortable referring to the other person as a close friend or partner. Non verbal communication is very important at this stage.

Integrating

At this stage relationship develops and attain maturity. In this stage, the partners do almost everything together and go almost everywhere together. It is the stage where all is perfect and oneness is emphasized.

Bonding

It is the ultimate stage in coming together. Bonding is different from integrating and gets the recognition of society. Bonding is institutionalized too in the form of marriages and other such contracts.

Coming apart

Differentiating

In this stage, the individuals focus on their differences and disagreements. Usually, the partners uses "I", "You", "Me" instead of using "We" and "Ours". This is the first sign that a relationship is shifting from a highly intimate status to a nonimmediate status.

Circumscribing

It is the stage where interaction frequency and duration begin to decrease. At this stage, both the quantity and quality of communication decreases.

Stagnating

At this stage, much of the communication is nonverbal and negative. Each partner thinks that saying anything or talking with the other person is a waste of time because they know what will be said. The communication is rigid, difficult, narrow and artificial.

Avoiding

It is the fourth stage of coming apart. It involves an attempt to increase physical distance and space.

Terminating

It is the last stage. It occurs at any time for any reason. One person may decide the relationship is over even though the other person does not think so.