**The Stages of Couple Relationships Showing the Essential Developmental Processes in Each Stage**

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| **Stage of Development** | **Essential Developmental Processes in Intimate Relationships** | **Experiences for Completing the Essential Developmental Processes** |
| **Codependent (Harmony)** | Bonding with each other  Establishing primal trust in the relationship  Establishing an identity as a couple | Establish friendship as a valued quality of the relationship.  Recognize and acknowledge each other's spiritual essence.  Exchange nurturing touch and talk.  Respect and validate each other's needs and feelings.  Give and receive unconditional love.  Explore common interests, values, beliefs, and goals. |
| **Counter-dependent**  **(Conflict)** | Supporting your partner’s development  Learning to cooperate  Resolving internal conflicts between needs of self and needs of other | Explore interests outside of the relationship.  Separate nurturing touch from sexual touch.  Establish individual goals, values, and beliefs within the couple relationship.  Establish and receive respect for individual boundaries.  Identify self-needs vs. other-needs.  Negotiating directly to get needs met |
| **Independent**  **(Resolution)** | Creating a well-differentiated and clearly defined sense of self  Supporting your partner’s development  Listening empathically and nondefensively  Communicating feelings directly and responsibly  Taking responsibility for the influence of past trauma on present behavior  Mastering financial, psychological, and professional self-sufficiency within the relationship  Moving beyond an idealized, romanticized approach to love and intimacy  Establishing shared, equal power within the relationship  Achieving object constancy as a couple | Achieve financial, professional, educational, and spiritual equality in the relationship.  Achieve a balance between individual and couple needs and interests.  Identify individual goals, values, and beliefs within the couple relationship and operate from them as both individuals and as a couple.  Experience object constancy with each other in spite of conflicting needs and/or wants. |
| Interdependent **(Partnership)** | Creating a well-differentiated and clearly defined sense of self  Experiencing the deepest human connection possible with each other  Cooperating to help each other heal developmental traumas  Set limits on children, selves, and extrafamily involvements to preserve the couple relationship  Developing an experience of synergy in the relationship  Utilizing couple synergy in service to the community or world | Using transformative methods of resolving conflict  Building and sustaining a spiritual dimension in the primary relationship  Utilizing the relationship as a tool for individuation and mutual spiritual evolution  Mutually affirming each other’s spiritual values and goals and acting from them  Identifying situations where couple devotion can be extended to others outside the  relationship |