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

**Barry. K. Weinhold, PhD**

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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 otherEstablishing primal trust in the relationshipEstablishing 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 developmentLearning to cooperateResolving 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 selfSupporting your partner’s developmentListening empathically and nondefensivelyCommunicating feelings directly and responsiblyTaking responsibility for the influence of past trauma on present behaviorMastering financial, psychological, and professional self-sufficiency within the relationshipMoving beyond an idealized, romanticized approach to love and intimacyEstablishing shared, equal power within the relationshipAchieving 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 selfExperiencing the deepest human connection possible with each otherCooperating to help each other heal developmental traumasSet limits on children, selves, and extrafamily involvements to preserve the couple relationshipDeveloping an experience of synergy in the relationshipUtilizing couple synergy in service to the community or world  | Using transformative methods of resolving conflict Building and sustaining a spiritual dimension in the primary relationshipUtilizing the relationship as a tool for individuation and mutual spiritual evolutionMutually affirming each other’s spiritual values and goals and acting from themIdentifying situations where couple devotion can be extended to others outside therelationship |