

THE DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES OF PARTNER RELATIONSHIPS WHEN ANGER IS AN ISSUE

There are some clearly-identifiable stages that are possible when anger is or has been an issue in your relationship. During the power struggle phase, when you start to realize that you are, in fact, two separate and different individuals, there are several directions you can choose to go. You can become “stuck” in ongoing conflict or in leading parallel lives (or you can go back and forth between these two states), you may actually decide to end your relationship, or you can heal from the past, change, grow, and actively move toward becoming a healthy relationship. The choice is up to the two of you depending on how you both respond to where you find yourselves. Look through the stages listed below and start to think about where you have been, where you are now, and where you want to go with your partner. No matter where you are in the process that follows, this website and what you are reading and learning can help you move toward creating a healthy, respectful, and nurturing relationship with your partner if you decide to do the very real work that needs to be done to make this happen.

THE INFATUATION PHASE

Falling “head over heels” in love; being completely preoccupied and obsessed with each other (i.e. thinking about the other person “all the time”); living the “honeymoon;” feeling intensity, euphoria, and passion with your new partner; experiencing “chemistry” and “romance” with little or no effort; seeing the other as a “soulmate” that you have always been looking for; overlooking or “making invisible” the other person’s differences, flaws, character defects, and shortcomings; viewing the other as the “ideal partner” for you; becoming completely “fused” and with one another; feeling “whole” and “complete” as a result of knowing this person, especially when you are spending time with them

THE POWER STRUGGLE PHASE

Exaggeration of the differences between the two of you and of the flaws and shortcomings of the other person; rigid and unrealistic expectations that the other person is supposed to change what we think they should change in order to make us feel better about them and our relationship; experiencing hurt, disappointment, frustration, resentment, overt anger, and other emotional turmoil which can lead to stubborn disagreement, attempts to control the other person, disillusionment, ongoing conflict, and, eventually, alienation

LEADING PARALLEL LIVES

Disconnection from each other, emotional distance and estrangement, living a separate existence, and eventually resignation and stagnation in the relationship due to:

- 1) Ongoing judgment, disagreement, and conflict that leads to “hidden” or covert hostility, frustration, and resentment which does not get addressed or resolved and leads to a lack of trust and safety and emotional withdrawal and distance with your partner; and/or
- 2) The development of a “business relationship” with one another that is geared to accomplishing the tasks necessary to raise a family, handle other major life responsibilities, and live life as you think it “should” be lived, but with little or no real emotional connection or intimacy with one another

CHRONIC, PAINFUL, AND DESTRUCTIVE CONFLICT

Ongoing judging, arguing, and disagreement that leads to overt negativity, cynicism, hostility, bitterness, resentment, and controlling and abusive behavior which erodes and destroys safety, trust, and emotional connection in the relationship

TERMINATING THE RELATIONSHIP

Loss of the relationship, separation, divorce

DEVELOPING AND ACTUALLY LIVING A TRULY HEALTHY AND INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP

Feeling joy, sorrow, hurt, fear, anger and all the emotions that are truly part of being human; being assertive and communicating openly with one another; disagreeing respectfully and resolving conflict (or “agreeing to disagree”) when it does arise; becoming more accepting and tolerant of the other person’s differences, idiosyncrasies, shortcomings, and flaws; being emotionally connected with one another in a genuine and intimate way