

## **STAGES OF A RELATIONSHIP**

Just like families and life, relationships too, progress and move back and forth between stages.

As a general rule, most couples will be in the same relationship stage at the same time; but sometimes one person will reach a stage before the other, causing confusion or conflict. By gaining awareness of the stages of a relationship, it normalises any emotional confusion, enabling the individual or couple, to accept inevitable changes; to stop overanalysing and work towards rebuilding, maintaining or developing a more successful relationship

### **Stage 1 Romance (Also known as Wooing Stage, Infatuation or Honeymoon Period)**

All couples begin with this stage of romance, happiness and excitement. It is the most popular and simplest of stages. Comparable to Hollywood love, it is effortless, absorbing, passionate and blissful. The couple fall in love and want to spend every second together. Stage one is charged with hopes and dreams of the future.

Details are glossed over as logic is replaced with fantasy, boundless energy and invincibility. The couple focus and maximise the similarities they share whilst differences are minimised or denied altogether. Conflict is unimaginable.



Lasting up to 2 years, this is a slightly enmeshed stage in which there is a desire to do everything together and to please each other at the cost of individuality. Each person believes they are half of a whole and so together make one.

#### **Example:**

Candace and Zian meet and there is an instant attraction. They begin dating and spend every spare moment together or on the phone. Candace feels accepted, desired and loved by Zian. He is attentive and wholly present for her and vice versa. They talk frequently to their friends about all the things they share in common that make them so compatible. They make each other happy and meet each other's needs. Candace has a constant smile on her face and thinks about Zian all the time. She writes in her diary how perfect he is. Candace and Zian are a team made of two enmeshed persons.

We often only see the positive qualities of a person when we are falling in love and overlook unpleasant or destructive behaviour. Likewise, we try to present ourselves in the best possible light. We choose our words and actions carefully in order to maintain our desirability and try to only show aspects that our partner also has. But it takes a lot of effort to live up to this 'half' person and eventually one or both will tire of the pretence and begin to show their true self.

Some people never progress beyond stage one because they constantly move from partner to partner as soon as the honeymoon phase is over.

It is now that the honeymoon phase begins to subside and unpleasant or dissimilar characteristics begin to become more prominent. We may be left wondering 'Is this the right person?' or 'Why has he/she changed?' This is when one or both will try to change the other which leads to the next stage – Reality.