

Stages of a Relationship (Dr. Susan Campbell)

Adapted from the work of Dr. Susan Campbell¹

Dr. Susan Campbell identified five stages that every relationship goes through.

1. The romance stage is when we fall in love. We do not see our partner's flaws, but rather focus on the similarities.
2. The power struggle stage occurs when your partner's flaws become apparent, and the focus turns to trying to change your partner, punish them for not being what you think they once were, or both. This is the stage that most couples get stuck in because they do not have the skills or tools needed to find a balance.
3. If a couple is about to accept each other's differences, share power, acknowledge that there will be struggles in the relationship, and surrender to the who you are and what you have a couple, you've reached the stability stage.
4. In the commitment stage, you have learned that you and your partner have chosen to be with each other, despite the good, the bad and the ugly. There is a power balance of love, belonging, fun, and freedom.
5. The last stage is the bliss stage, and is characterized by the realization that you and your partner are a team, and can bring great things to both the relationship and the world.

It is possible to move back and forth throughout the stages, to go forward and back, and to relapse into the power struggle.

¹ <http://cdn1.loveatfirstfight.com/wp-content/uploads/5-stages-of-relationships->

Personal Growth

Everything in life is either in a state of growth or decay.

Throughout the group process, we will be encouraging each other to use the information provided in each module to become more self-reflective, understanding and aware. The idea is that, we can work together to begin the process of creating the kind of life that you want and to support each other in our journey of self-improvement. By taking in the materials, reflecting on them and identifying areas of our lives that we would like to change, we can take action to make the changes, practice them and later refine our goals. This is at the heart of group work. We only get back what we put in. At the end of the day, it is up to each of us to live the life we want. If we want better relationships, experiences and supports in life, then we as individuals need to be the ones to make that happen. After all, as Jim Rohn said, "Your life does not get better by chance. It gets better by change."

7 Ways Self-Reflection and Introspection Will Give You a Happier Life
Adapted from Uzer.

- 1) It allows you to notice negative patterns in our life.
- 2) It keeps you focused on the bigger picture.
- 3) It prevents you from worrying about things out of your control.
- 4) It helps you to face your fears.
- 5) It allows you to clearly define happiness on your own terms.
- 6) It allows you to make decisions based on your conscience.
- 7) You finally get different results.

Beliefs and Values:

Thoughts

Feelings

Behaviours

When we talk about self-reflection, we are talking about the attention that we need to pay to our own thoughts, feelings, and behaviours, and the beliefs that drive them.

Below is a sample of a sheet that we will be using throughout the course to reflect on ourselves:

As you can see in the diagram, our beliefs and values influence our thoughts, feelings and behaviours. We must stop and recognize all of these aspects of our thinking, so that we can effectively make changes in our lives. One goal that people often set for themselves and their partner is getting through the power struggle stage of a relationship that is mentioned above, and continuing on in a happy and healthy relationship. By evaluating our thoughts, feelings, and behaviours, as well as our beliefs, we can work on the way that we approach conflict, communication, and listening. We must stop and ask ourselves questions, such as “Why is it that when this happens, my automatic reaction is...”

Effective Goal Setting - The S.M.A.R.T. Rule 3

3 Adapted from Mindtools.com.

When it comes to setting goals for one's self, it is important to keep in mind the

S.M.A.R.T. system:

- **Specific:** Identify the behaviour, the thought, or the feeling you want to change.
- **Measurable:** Find a way to keep track of your change.
- **Attainable:** Be willing to accept that only you control you, and that you only control you; this means the change and growth you plan goals for must be related to YOU.
- **Realistic:** Make sure that your goals are things that you can actually change.
- **Time-frame:** Give yourself enough time to complete the goal, but not more time than you need.

For example, instead of having "to sail around the world" as a goal, it's more powerful to use the SMART goal "To have completed my trip around the world by December 31, 2015." Obviously, this will only be attainable if a lot of preparation has been completed beforehand!

Further Tips for Setting Your Goals

The following broad guidelines will help you to set effective, achievable goals:

- . State each goal as a positive statement: Express your goals positively. "Execute this technique well" is a much better goal than "Don't make this stupid mistake."

- . Be precise: Set precise goals, putting in dates, times and amounts so that you can measure achievement. If you do this, you'll know exactly when you have achieved the goal, and can take complete satisfaction from having achieved it.

- . Set priorities: When you have several goals, give each a priority. This helps you to avoid feeling overwhelmed by having too many goals, and helps to direct your attention to the most important ones.

- . Write goals down: This crystallizes them and gives them more force.

- . Keep operational goals small: Keep the low-level goals that you're working towards small and achievable. If a goal is too large, then it can seem that you are not making progress towards it. Keeping goals small and incremental gives more opportunities for reward.

- . Set performance goals, not outcome goals: You should take care to set goals over which you have as much control as possible. It can be quite dispiriting to fail to achieve a personal goal for reasons beyond your control!

In business, these reasons could be bad business environments or unexpected effects of government policy. In sport, they could include poor judging, bad weather, injury, or just plain bad luck.

If you base your goals on personal performance, then you can keep control over the achievement of your goals, and draw satisfaction from them.

- . Set realistic goals: It's important to set goals that you can achieve. All sorts of people (for example, employers, parents, media, or society) can set unrealistic goals for you. They will often do this in ignorance of your own desires and ambitions.

It's also possible to set goals that are too difficult because you might not appreciate either the obstacles in the way, or understand quite how much skill you need to develop to achieve a particular level of performance.

Achieving Goals

When you've achieved a goal, take the time to enjoy the satisfaction of having done so.

Absorb the implications of the goal achievement, and observe the progress that you've made towards other goals.

If the goal was a significant one, reward yourself appropriately. All of this helps you build the self-confidence you deserve.

With the experience of having achieved this goal, review the rest of your goal plans:

- . If you achieved the goal too easily, make your next goal harder.
- . If the goal took a dispiriting length of time to achieve, make the next goal a little easier.
- . If you learned something that would lead you to change other goals, do so.
- . If you noticed a deficit in your skills despite achieving the goal, decide whether to set goals to fix this.

The Opportunities for Change Program is designed to assist you in your journey of Self-Reflection and Discovery. As we engage in the group work, we will encourage and support you in your efforts to create the kind of life you truly would like to have.

References

Campbell, S. (1980). The couple's journey. Retrieved from:
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