

Mastering the Five Essential Stages of Love

"Love's journey is like a spiral, in which we can find ourselves back in earlier stages even after a long relationship."







- Experience enormous sexual desire.
- Feel obsessed with this new & wonderful person.
 - · Unconditionally accept your partner.
 - Sex is "out of this world."
 - You see only the best in your partner.
 - You feel that you're soulmates who are "meant to be."
 - You believe you've found your "other half."
 - You lose all self-consciousness.
 - You feel very open and vulnerable.
- You minimize or romanticize the differences between you—or don't notice them at all.



The Struggle



- · Traits you once admired begin to irritate you.
 - A power struggle begins.
 - Anxiety and stress increase.
- You become more conditional in your affection.
 - You begin to have repetitive arguments.
 - · Sex feels "normal" rather than amazing.
 - · You feel less vulnerable.
- · You experience distress over your differences.



Disillusionment

The Frozen Wall



- The repetitive arguments turn into
 "infinity loops", ongoing arguments which seem to go on forever.
- You see only the worst in your partner.
- $\bullet \ \, \text{Sex disappears--or at best, is perfunctory}.$
- You become emotionally closed & self-protective.
 - You argue frequently over differences.
- You're either preoccupied with your relationship trouble or indifferent to it.

Depression, anxiety and stress increase.



Decision

Four Possibilites



- · Do nothing.
- Take a temporary break (a "marriage sabbatical").
 - · Move into parallel lives.
 - Separate.
- Learn the skills that allow you to practice
 Wholehearted Love. (Note: one partner can do this without the other's cooperation.)



The Promise Realized



- · Understand your part in the trouble between you
 - · Nourish yourself in all ways.
 - Use effective communication skills.
 - Behave less defensively.
 - Become more resilient and empathetic.
 - · Are able to forgive.
 - · Employ humor.
 - Practice radical acceptance—of yourself and your partner.
- Are differentiated from each other (at once independent and connected).
 - Feel and express good will.
- · Are committed to each other & to your relationship.
 - · Co-create your relationship.
 - Co-create lifestyle, adventure & vital sexual relationship.