

5 Stages of a Thriving Relationship

Over the course of a relationship, nearly every couple will go through a predictable series of stages. You are probably quite familiar with the first two, and many couples actually never get past stage #2: the **Power Struggle**. Knowing about the next three stages can make all the difference, and, in a thriving relationship, it is essential that you do. We assure you, when you move beyond your **Power Struggle** and into **Commitment**, **Growth**, and **Thriving**, life starts getting amazing!

 Romance	 Power Struggle	 Commitment	 Growth	 Thriving
Attraction Bonding Hopefulness Ecstasy Bliss Acting and being your best Seeing your partner's best Giving freely without keeping score Passion Vitality	Reacting negatively and habitually Disillusionment Anger, annoyance, disappointment, confusion, and frustration Conflict Secrets Disconnect Settling Lack of desire Blame and criticism Uninspiring Stuck in repetitive cycles (withdraw/pursue) Less back rubs, love notes, and lovemaking	Make a powerful commitment to do whatever is required to bring your relationship to thriving and experience the best version of your love. Begin to get curious about these two questions: <i>"What does this relationship need from me to thrive?"</i> <i>"How have I been contributing to what hasn't been working, and how do I need to change and grow?"</i>	Gaining awareness of what's been going on <i>underneath</i> your challenges Learning how to breakthrough gridlocked issues Applying new tools daily Becoming more intentional Greater ease Understanding New possibilities Deepening connection Renewed hope Returning joy in the journey	Sharing an inspiring vision Safety and trust Spirit of teamwork and togetherness Aliveness Making dreams come true Healthy, open, and positive communication Feeling seen, heard, and valued Daily appreciation Responding to challenges with wisdom Fulfillment Passion and romance Connection and true love

(#1) Romance Stage: Falling in love is easy and can be *really* fun. There is a rush of chemicals flowing through your body and brain that lead to overlooking some things about your partner and to bonding, hope, and excitement. Couples usually stay in this stage for anywhere from 2 months to 2 years. The Romance Stage can actually feel intoxicating and, in some ways, it truly is. In fact, some people never get to experience the incomparable joy of lasting love because they become addicted to the Romance Stage and move from one relationship to the next as soon as things get hard.

(#2) Power Struggle Stage: Whenever two humans come together in an intimate relationship, it's inevitable they'll enter a Power Struggle. Unfortunately, so many couples get to this stage and think they're doomed, they're with the wrong person, it shouldn't be this much work, and it's time to call the relationship quits. Other couples spend their entire lives stuck in one long drawn-out power struggle. These couples lower their expectations, assume their dysfunction is normal, and look around at other couples who don't appear much happier. Another common experience in this stage is suddenly becoming frustrated with some of the very things in which you initially fell in love. For example, you may have fallen in love with someone being really organized, dependable, and successful and then discover, on the flipside of these strengths, they can also be controlling. You could fall in love with someone's easy-going and relaxed spirit and then become frustrated with his or her laziness. The Power Struggle often includes stuck, painful, repetitive cycles, but you don't have to stay here.

(#3) Commitment Stage: Many people don't realize conflict is *supposed* to happen and is the most natural thing in the world. It is what allows for growth and healing in just the ways we need, *if we allow it to*. Conflict can be *the* catalyst that opens the opportunity to create a deeper and more conscious and fulfilling connection. Just on the other side of the Power Struggle is where conscious love begins. This stage is where both of you make a powerful commitment to experience the best version of your partnership and to transform everything that stands in the way of the fullest potential of your love.

(#4) Growth Stage: This stage is transformational, and you finally begin to understand what hasn't been working and why. To help with this, many couples receive outside support -- through books, videos, couples retreats, and/or counseling. You become more intentional about how you communicate and interact. You apply daily relationship tools. There is greater ease between you. You gain new insights about yourself and each other. Possibilities open up that didn't exist before. There is a deepening of your love and connection. You share and accept your authentic selves. You feel a sense of hope and renewal. There is joy in the journey of growth.

(#5) Thriving Stage: This is the kind of love of which you've been dreaming. This stage has the best elements of the Romance Stage, but it's combined with loving and seeing the *whole* person, not just the shiny parts on the outside. There is passion and romance *and* safety and trust. You are best friends, allies, teammates, and lovers. You make your dreams come true together. Your communication is healthy, positive, and productive. You feel deeply heard and appreciated. You respond to your challenges with wisdom and awareness. Your differences are a source of strength. You feel fulfilled and connected. You get to experience TRUE and thriving love.

Once you get to thriving, it doesn't mean you will stay here forever. In fact, we repeat these stages throughout the lifetime of a relationship. However, it gets easier to shift quickly out of a power struggle, recommit to growth and connection, and spend most of your moments experiencing the best version of who you can be together. The good news: if you're struggling right now, it doesn't simply mean you are with the wrong partner. In fact, you are like nearly every other couple on the planet, and you have an incredible opportunity for breakthroughs and growth. If two people are fully committed and willing, relationships can be the most profound pathway to our greatest healing, transformation, self-awareness, and experiencing our fullest potential as human beings!

