



### EAP Notes

## The 7 Stages of Marriage

In relationships and marriage, people can often find themselves in patterns of behavior or stages of growth and development. In the book “The 7 Stages of Marriage”, co-author and marriage expert Dr. Rita DeMaria, explains the evolution of marriage and ways to improve relationships at any stage. Find out what stage you are in, and review the dynamics of marriage over the years.

#### Stage 1: Passion

- ✓ You see yourselves as newlyweds and feel madly in love
- ✓ You crave your partner when you're apart, and when you're together, you live in your own private romantic world
- ✓ Your relationship is all about passion, excitement, sex, and intimacy
- ✓ You've been married for two years or less (though some couples report the honeymoon phase lasting five years or longer!)

#### Stage 2: Realization

- ✓ The initial romance and passion of your marriage are waning and you have asked yourself recently if you made the right choice in a mate
- ✓ You are frequently explaining things about yourself to your partner
- ✓ You spend lots of time establishing rules for how you'll function as partners and find yourselves negotiating things you never worried about before
- ✓ For the first time, you find your spouse irritating, annoying, even boring and they suddenly seem less than perfect
- ✓ You've been married for at least six months

#### Stage 3: Rebellion

- ✓ You and your spouse are having regular power struggles
- ✓ You or your spouse has had an affair or is close to having one
- ✓ One or both of you feel a consistent desire for freedom and independence to pursue individual interests
- ✓ You find yourself backing away from your spouse and your marriage
- ✓ You've been married for at least two years -- although the Rebellion stage can start early in a marriage (especially if you lived together first or dated for a long time before your marriage)

#### Stage 4: Cooperation

- ✓ You have children living at home
- ✓ You have bought a house or condominium in the past five years
- ✓ Both you and your spouse have dynamic professional careers
- ✓ Money management is a big issue due to lots of money either coming into or going out of your accounts
- ✓ Your to-do list on any given day is so long it could never be completed in 24 hours
- ✓ You've been happily married for more than five years

#### Stage 5: Reunion

- ✓ Your children have left home or are independent
- ✓ Your careers are running smoothly
- ✓ You have more time for yourselves
- ✓ Your finances are at least somewhat secure
- ✓ The two of you can start and finish a conversation without frequent interruptions
- ✓ You perceive your spouse more as a business partner than as a soul mate
- ✓ You've been married 15 to 25 years

#### Stage 6: Explosion

- ✓ You or your spouse has just experienced a major career, health, or parenting crisis
- ✓ Catastrophe has struck your home or family
- ✓ A major positive experience has just happened, like winning a lottery or getting a promotion that dramatically changes your role at work and at home

#### Stage 7: Completion

- ✓ The "building" stages of your marriage -- kids, career, saving for the future are over
- ✓ Health and happiness are more important issues today than career and child-raising
- ✓ Fighting between you and your spouse has declined substantially in recent years
- ✓ You've been married more than 25 years

For more information about this article, visit Reader's Digest at:

<http://www.rd.com/love/7-stages-of-marriage>.

Test yourself on the different stages of marriage with their quizzes and marriage building exercises.

If you would like more information on building a successful relationship, call **Best Care** at **402-354-8000** or **800-666-8606** to visit with a professional counselor near you.

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