

12-STEPS TO INTIMACY

Bonding is most likely to develop among those who have moved systematically and slowly through these twelve steps during their courtship and early marriage. These stages, described below, represent a progression of physical intimacy from which a permanent commitment often evolves.

- 1. Eye to body.** A glance reveals a person - sex, size, shape, age, personality and status. The importance people place on these criteria determines whether or not they will be attracted to each other.
- 2. Eye to eye.** When the man and woman who are strangers exchange glances, their most natural reaction is to look away, usually with embarrassment. If their eyes meet again, they may smile, which signals that they might like to become better acquainted.
- 3. Voice to voice.** Their initial conversations are trivial, and include questions like 'What is your name?' or 'What do you do for a living?' During this long stage the two people learn much about each other's opinions, pastimes, activities, habits, hobbies, likes and dislikes. If they're compatible, they become friends.
- 4. Hand to hand.** The first instance of physical contact between the couple is usually on non-romantic occasions such as when the man helps the woman descend a high step or aids her across an obstacle. At this point either of the individuals can withdraw from the relationship without rejecting the other. However, if continued, hand-to-hand contact will eventually become an evidence of the couple's romantic attachment to each other.
- 5. Hand to shoulder.** This affectionate embrace is still non-committal. It is a 'friend'-type position in which the man and woman are side by side. They are more concerned with the world in front of them than they are with each other. The hand-to-shoulder contact reveals a relationship that is more than a close friendship, but probably not real love.
- 6. Hand to waist.** Because this is something two people of the same sex would not ordinarily do, it is clearly romantic. They are close enough to be sharing secrets or intimate language with each other. Yet, as they walk side by side with hand to waist they are still facing forwards.
- 7. Face to face.** This level of contact involves gazing into one another's eyes, hugging, and kissing. If none of the previous steps were omitted, the man and woman will have developed a special code from experience that enables them to engage in deep communication with very few words. At this point sexual desire becomes an important factor in the relationship.
- 8. Hand to head.** This is an extension of the previous stage. The man and woman tend to cradle or stroke each other's head while kissing or talking. Rarely do individuals in our culture touch the head of another person unless they are either romantically involved or unless they are family members. It is a designation of emotional closeness.
- 9 - 12. The final steps.** The last four levels of involvement are distinctly sexual and private. They are (9) **hand to body**, (10a) **mouth to breast**, (11) **touching below the waist**, and (12) **intercourse**. Obviously, the final acts of physical contact should be reserved for the marital relationship, since they are progressively sexual and intensely personal.

INTIMACY MUST PROCESS SLOWLY IF A MALE-FEMALE RELSTIONSHIP IS TO ACHIEVE ITS FULL POTENTIAL.