

## Tasks of Couples' Developmental Stages

### **Bonding: "We are a couple"**

- Enjoying time together
- Forming a strong couples bond
- Finding shared values and areas of compatibility

### **Differentiation: "We are different"**

(Essential foundation for all the later stages)

- Expressing individual desires
- Understanding how partner is truly different from you
- Developing ways to successfully manage differences and to resolve conflicts
- Increasing tolerance for ambiguity and managing anxiety

### **Practicing: "I like my independence"**

- Developing a strong personal identity apart from the relationship
- Enjoying career, hobbies, volunteering, community involvement
- Having separate friendships
- Consolidating self esteem

### **Rapprochement: "Moving close, moving away"**

- Solidifying the ability to move close and move apart
- Spending more time together again
- Deepening sexual connection
- Developing security in allowing partner to make decisions for you
- Giving to the partner even when it is inconvenient
- Shifting back to the relationship for more intimacy and emotional sustenance

### **Synergy: "One plus one is greater than two"**

- Integrating intimacy into ongoing life and sexuality
- Committing to joint projects/work
- Leaving a legacy