Relationship Dynamics adapted from the Bader and Pearson Human Development Model

Enmeshment occurs during the first year of life. It connotes the baby as completely dependant upon the mother, to the point of life and death. Enmeshment is a spring of emotional connection and strong feelings toward one another. Later in relationship this phase is essentially what is known in common language as the "honeymoon phase" of a relationship.

Differentiation is the next phase of individuation. This occurs around eighteen months. The baby begins to see that they are indeed separate from mom. The child begins to realize that they have influence in their mom's world. When mom leaves the room the child may stay a little longer in the room by themselves before finding mom. In relationship later in life this is when the all of the intense feelings start to go away and one partner or the other begins to do things that no longer include in the influence of the other. Such as going to a movie without the other person and without "asking" the other's thoughts.

Rapprochement begins to occur from two to three years of age. This is the well-known "mine" phase of development. The child begins to start controlling their world. Rather than simply knowing that they are different than mom, they see the toys as their toys and will play with them in other rooms and exercise their own volition regarding what they consider their world. In later relationships the girlfriend may say resolutely to the boyfriend, "I am going to the movies." This statement could be debated but to no avail. The boyfriend may then think, "she doesn't care what I think."

Practicing then enters development around four years of age. The child begins to play and pretend that they are an adult and will mimic mom or dad. They will see themselves as in charge and feel that they no longer need any help for things. Later in life this is when boyfriend and girlfriend no longer talk about much of anything. They have much of their own life set up and do not desire the opinion of the other most of the time. They merely keep each other abreast of the daily activity. It is often the time that they may feel that they are living as roommates.

Interdependence is the final stage. This occurs around seven or eight years of age. This is when the child begins to reevaluate his connection with his parents. The child begins to see the parents as needed but realizes his own self worth at the same time. The child may now ask for help in doing things and offer help at other times. Later in life this is when the boyfriend may be reinvigorated to see his girlfriend and uniquely valuable and begin to more purposefully choose to interact with her without any need for affirmation from her in order to maintain his personhood.

Separation and/or "Breakup's"

There is a felt nudge or push in ones self to move from enmeshment to differentiation or differentiation to rapprochement and so on. This nudge could feel like tension or anxiety. In later unresolved cases it could feel more like depression. Let it be understood however, that this is not the "diagnosable" form of depression or anxiety but more the low or nervous feeling. Often times however the tension to develop does lay the groundwork for diagnoses.

Here are some examples of things people might say to each other in order to move through development from one place to another. It must be said that often times these are the components of ending a relationship.

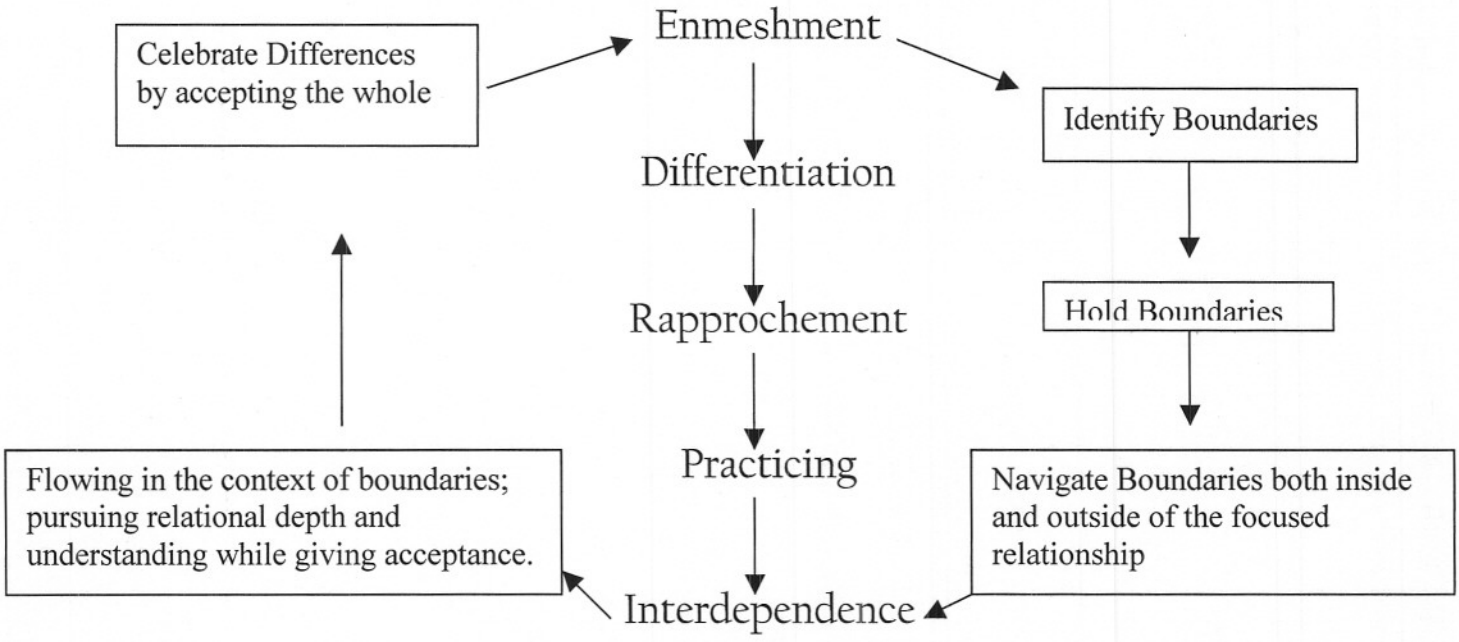
Enmeshment to Differentiation: "I'm not sure if I love you anymore and I feel like you don't love me!"
Differentiation to Rapprochement: "We are just too different. We don't see eye to eye."
Rapprochement to Practicing: "We're not seeing eye to eye and I'm realizing that your opinion is not wrong. However, I just don't agree with it and never will."
Practicing to Interdependence: "Hey let's be honest we don't agree on much and are basically living as roommates."
Interdependence to (any): "I'm feeling that this relationship is no longer important to you?!?!"

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Handout
2008

Relationship Flow Chart

(Adapted from the work of Bader and Pearson)



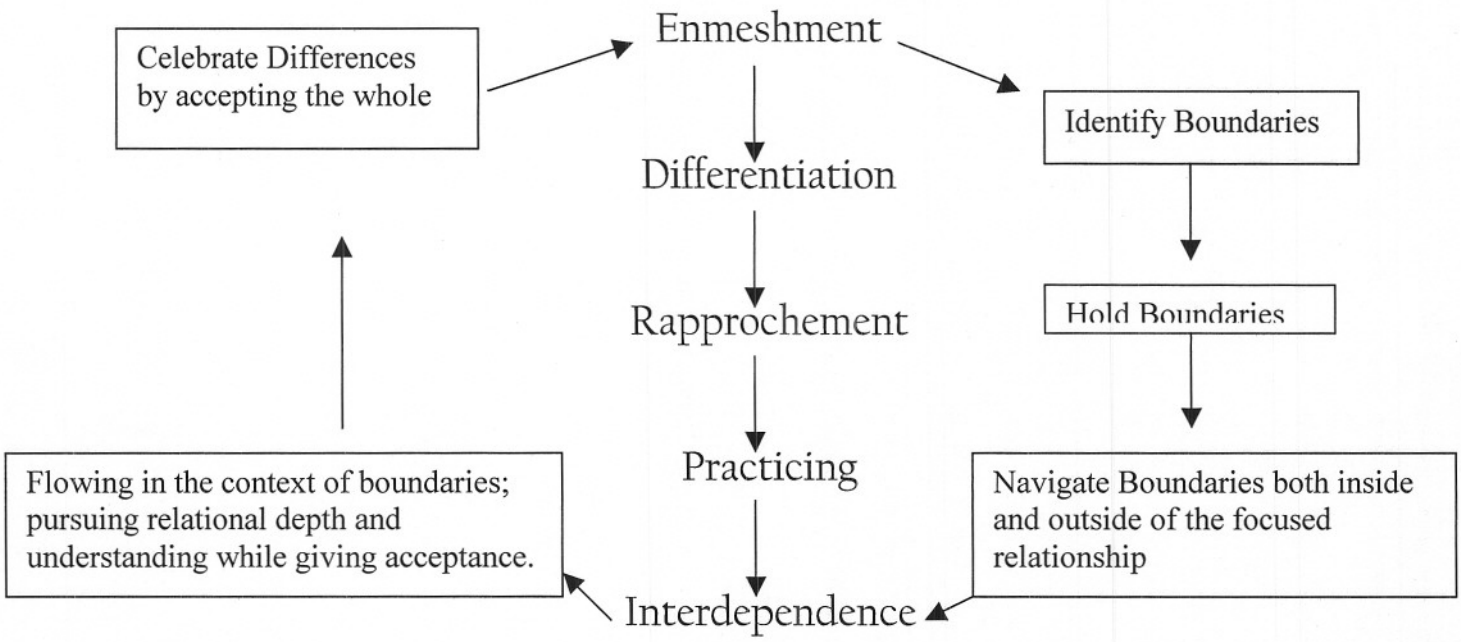
This process is the well-spring of relationship. It is the way in which we become who we are. Furthermore, it is the way in which we are capable of being who we are while at the same time being in relationship.

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Relationship Flow Chart

(Adapted from the work of Bader and Pearson)

SPIRITUAL INTEGRATION



The process of developing in relationship by agreeing with "who" God say's you are. You do this in a truthful context through honoring the other person as an image bearer of Him. Col. 3:18-25

This process is the well-spring of relationship. It is the way in which we become who we are. Furthermore, it is the way in which we are capable of being who we are while at the same time being in relationship. We find that it is in this way that we are loved according first to the design of God. Matt. 22:37

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