

Week 4 Assignment – Developmental Stages in Marriage

Inspired by the developmental work of Ellyn Bader, PhD, and Peter Pearson, PhD

Purpose

This assignment is designed to help you slow down panic and correctly interpret what you are experiencing in your marriage. Many people make life-altering decisions at this stage because they misunderstand what is happening. This work helps you stay grounded and oriented.

PART 1 – Locate Yourself in the Stages

Review the stages discussed in the video. Without judging or analyzing, answer the following:

Which stage feels most like where my marriage is right now?

What specifically makes this stage feel unsettling or confusing?

PART 2 – Name the Panic Story

When distance or quiet shows up, most people tell themselves a story very quickly.

Finish these sentences honestly:

When I feel distance, the story I tell myself is:

What I am most afraid this means is:

PART 3 – Separate Stage from Danger

Now slow down and separate discomfort from danger.

Finish these sentences:

The evidence that something is developing (not failing) is:

The part of me that wants to rush or fix is reacting to:

PART 4 – What This Stage Asks of Me

Each stage requires a different inner response.

Finish these sentences:

What this stage asks me to practice is:

What I am tempted to do that would short-circuit development is:

PART 5 – One Stabilizing Choice This Week

Choose one small, stabilizing response you can practice this week when panic shows up.

Instead of rushing to decide, fix, or withdraw, I will:

PART 6 – Reflection

After one week, reflect briefly:

What changed in my sense of urgency when I did not label distance as failure?

With gratitude for the developmental insights of Ellyn Bader and Peter Pearson

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