



The psychologist Paul Tournier said, “I’ve been married six times – all to the same woman.” Tournier explained that he never got divorced, but rather his marriage transitioned from one stage to another.

All healthy marriages experience change and transition. That’s what keeps them alive and growing. Some of the stages of growth are predictable, others are not.

We provide an Overview of the Stages of Marriage. Then, for simplicity, we’ve divided marriage into the chronological time frames of:

- Newly Married (0 – 5 years)
- Middle Years (6 – 25 years), which usually coincides with the active parenting stage
- Later Years (26+ years), also known as the “empty nest” years

Not all marriages fit neatly into these categories. Those in second marriages may find times shortened; however, certain developmental tasks generally take place during each stage.

Another way of looking at transitions in marriage is through cycles of growth.

Most relationships move through cycles that include:

- Romance
- Disillusionment
- Mature Love

In this framework, the stages emerge more quickly, with disillusionment often coming soon after the honeymoon. Mature love evolves-hopefully-after several years of marriage.

In *The 7 Stages of Marriage* (2007), Harrar and DeMaria identify the stages as:

- Passion
- Realization
- Rebellion
- Cooperation
- Reunion

- Explosion
- Completion

However you describe it, the essential point is that a marriage is a process. It evolves. It helps to know what to expect at the various stages. Otherwise, normal transitions may be misinterpreted as loss of love or reasons to divorce.