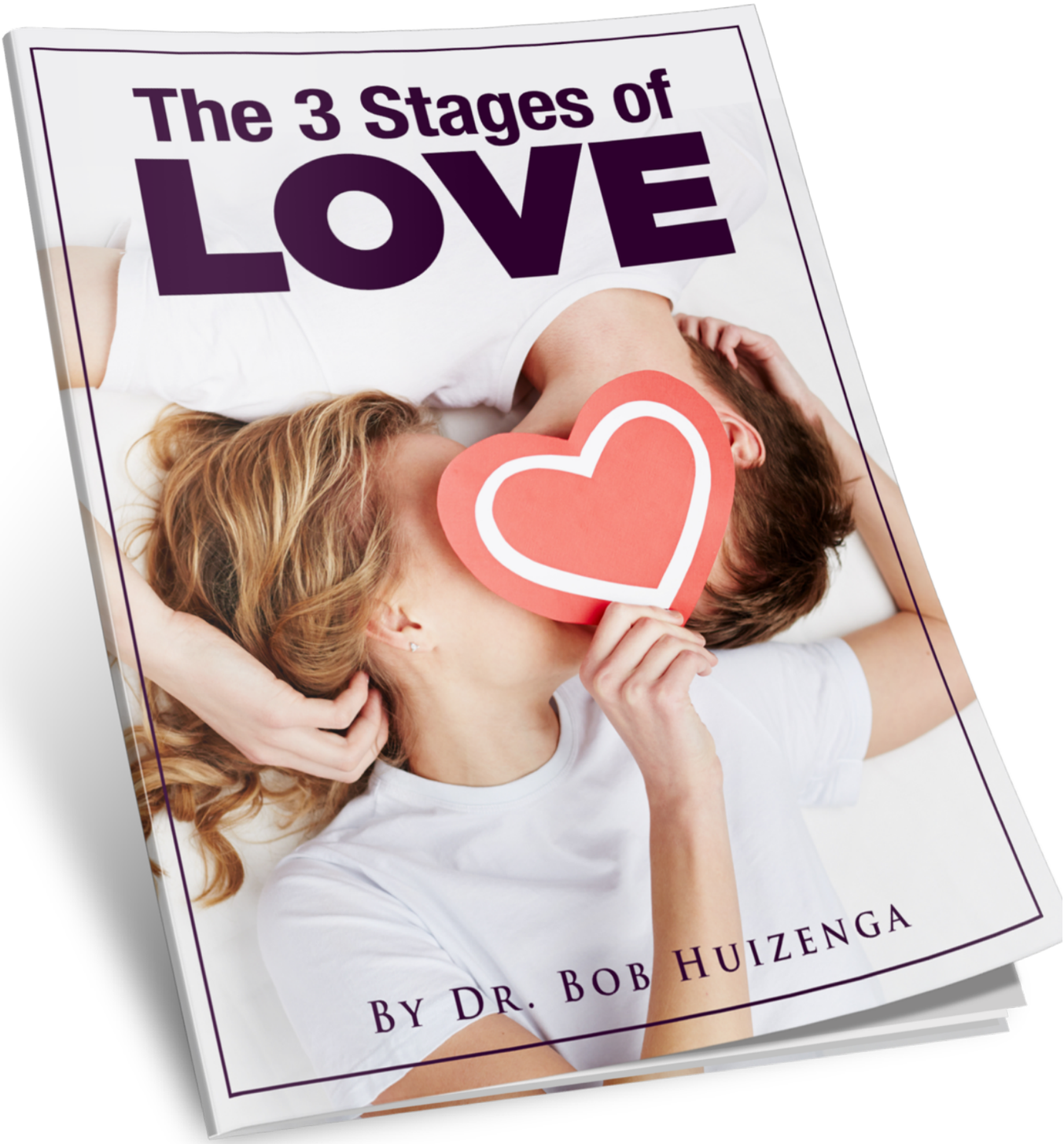

The 3 Stages of
LOVE
BY DR. BOB HUIZENGA

The 3 Stages of Love

Dr. Huizenga here…

If like most, you are here because you suffer in one of these arenas:

- **Your marriage is in crisis.**

Infidelity, divorce, or a recent secret that became a painful reality now haunts you and your marriage.

- **Your marriage is dying.**

Maybe it has been for a long time. The warmth, the tenderness, the acceptance is gone.

It's emotionally dead and you NOW refuse to live in a dying marriage of quiet desperation.

And, you are afraid.

- Afraid you will lose everything, your lifestyle, your partner, your safety net and maybe the devotion and access to your children.
- Afraid you will never trust again; will NEVER give yourself and be vulnerable to love and intimacy.
- Afraid you are unloveable or perhaps something is wrong with you that you are not able to maintain the love in the marriage.

- Afraid you may spend the rest of your life miserably alone; cynical, jaded and angry.

Fear becomes your content companion.

Fear Resides in EVERY Marriage

Although you may be in crisis or at decision crunch time, please know that fear and the seeds of fear are found in ALL marriages or relationships of emotional investment.

And you say, “Wait a minute! I know this perfect couple who always acts and seems so loving to each other.”

And I say, “Many hours of the 25 thousand I logged as a therapist over the years were with “perfect” couples. Many moaned, “Everyone thinks we are the perfect couple. If they only knew!”

And you say, “What about the alpha male who seems fearless and is always in control and successful?”

And I say, “Many hours of the 25 thousand I logged as a therapist were with an alpha male, who when he discovered his wife was cheating, sat on my couch, crying almost uncontrollably, unable to make any decision or take action, scared stiff of what would happen next.”

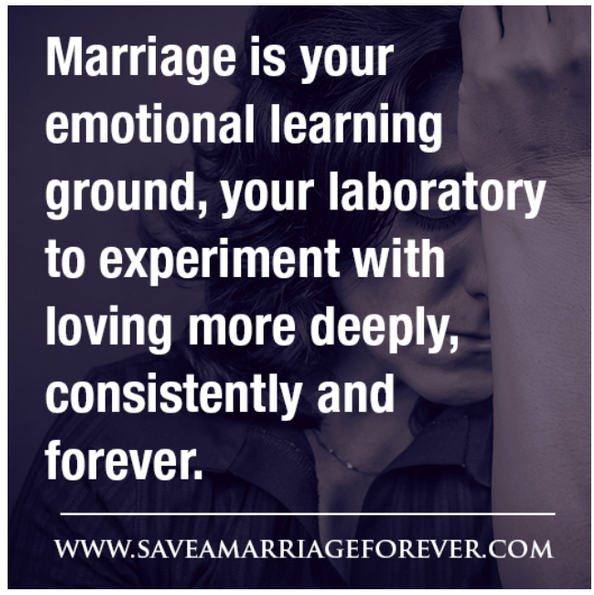
You are Taught to Fear

Fear becomes a major component of your emotional wiring.

- You fear loss of love, of your marriage, of your family and your lifestyle.
- You fear being inadequate and unworthy.
- You fear being impotent, helpless and a victim.

Marriage is the Place Where Your Deepest Fears are Triggered

Marriage is your **emotional learning ground, your laboratory** to experiment with loving more deeply, consistently and forever.



When confronted with the true humanity of another you are given the opportunity to face your own fears, the fears of your spouse or partner and overcome those fears, allowing a richer love to emerge.

Where Did the Love Go?

So, what happened?

Where did that initial love you felt and enjoyed so deeply go to?

Where is it now?

How do you get it again?

Your Love Did Not Go Away

Your **love is buried** and ignored beneath your fear.

You can't go back to that first love, nor do you want to.

Love Evolves and Develops

To truly love deeply, often and with power, you must understand the development of love in a marriage.

Love is not static.

Love moves through stages and phases.

Here's an infographic that depicts the 3 Stages of Love

The 3 Stages of Love

Romantic Love

(Each reflects back to each other what each believes the other wants to hear and experience.)

1. Romantic Love is the "falling in love," romantic, "you complete me" experience of Love.
2. A conscious effort is make to meet the needs of the other.
3. Each are on their best and most appealing behavior.
4. Sexual attraction is paramount.
5. Unconscious factors such as "chemistry", archetypes, family injunctions, the law of resonance, etc. are at play but not discussed.

Fear-Based Love

(Romantic Love fades and emerges as Fear-Based Love. The fears/anger from past patterns and perceived deficiencies can no longer be contained. Fear of losing the attention of the other and being inadequate generate tension and emotional distance.)

1. What was once a attraction becomes a trigger for anger and fear: spontaneity becomes chaos, power becomes control, humor becomes deflection, etc.
2. Major fears, overshadowed in the Romantic Love, become prominent:
   1. I'm afraid I'm losing who I thought you were.
   2. I'm afraid I'm unloveable and it's becoming apparent.
   3. I'm helpless; there's nothing I can do to manage the fear and tension.
3. The Fear-Based Love brings up fear/anger/tension which recycles and become more pervasive, more frequent and more disturbing, which leads to:
   1. A crisis (infidelity, illness, failures on a multitude of levels, children problems, etc.) Yes, Mid-life Crisis is real!
   2. Or, there is an implicit agreement to live together in quiet desperation and maintain the status quo - a slow emotional death.

EASY Love

(The crisis or a personal decision on the part of one or both can transition the marriage or relationship to EASY Love - creating a space of Love, free of fear/anger/tension and marked by a naturally emerging joy, peace and ease with one another.)

1. One (or both) begin to express "This is who I am."
2. One, and then both, begin to let go of the fear-based goals (generally: "I need them to love me." "I need to know I'm lovable." and "I can just be me - no performance needed."
3. Once the fear-based goals are let go, a vacuum is created and that vacuum is filled with a natural, healing, restorative Love that was previously occupied by the fear/anger/tension.

The Return to Romantic Love

When fear spews forth its venom, you are **taught, modeled and/or implored to return to Romantic Love**.

- Go back and recapture that love is implied or spoken directly by therapists, self help gurus and pop psychology.
- Book a romantic getaway.
- Send flowers and chocolate.
- Set up a date night.
- Meet each others' needs.
- Solve your financial, children and vocational problems so you can love again.
- Learn communication skills, ways to stimulate his brain and become more sexy, attentive, listening so that romantic love returns.
- Get yourself together. Get therapy. Get over YOUR problems so you are more attractive and love is rekindled.
- Or, trade in models. Get a divorce. Find someone else.
- Or, Find someone else (as in infidelity) to "fall in love" with.

The Return to Romantic Love Doesn't Work

The strain to recapture Romantic Love may result in temporary relief of the tension generated by the fear.

However, **the attempt to recapture love, NEVER touches on the core issues of fear that generated the distance, conflict and avoidance in the first place**.

You may find someone else and "fall in love" AGAIN, but you are merely starting over, going back to square one, are guaranteed to AGAIN encounter Fear-Based Love and then, down the road, find yourself AGAIN in pain and dread. Only this time more is at stake and the doubts and fears are MORE pronounced. (90% of those who married their affair partner regret the decision.)

The Move From Fear-Based Love to EASY Love

You are taught illusions and myths about marriage, love and relationships that perpetuate the recycling from Romantic Love to Fear-Based Love, back to Romantic Love, then again to Fear-Based Love and on and on.

Love becomes a chore.

Love becomes a goal.

Love become something you must “Work on.”

Love is Natural

But really, isn’t love supposed to be natural?

Love just is!

And, do you truly trust the power and lasting power of a love that you must “work on?”

Marriage or a relationship of emotional investment is given to you to move from Romantic Love to Fear-Based Love to EASY Love.

This is Nature’s Way!

Marriage is a Gift

Marriage is a gift for you to come together and eventually love that which at times seems so unlovable.

The process of moving from Romantic Love to Fear-Based Love to EASY Love is your contribution to your spouse, yourself, your children and significant others around you.

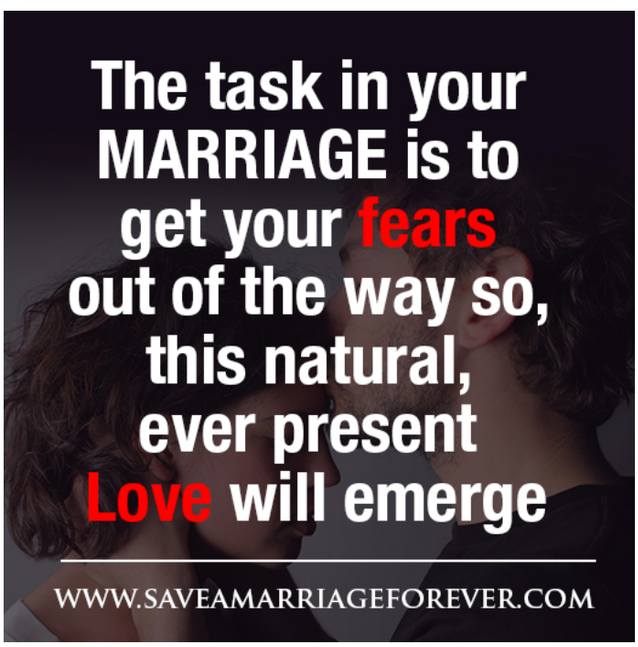
Key Points of Moving Through the 3 Stages (and Not Regressing to Romantic Love)

1 Your love never did go away. Your love was merely covered and overwhelmed by your fears. The task in your marriage is to get your fears out of the way so, this natural, ever present, desire to bring together Love will emerge.

It's there.

Get out of the way so it can do its power.

2 Fear is THE underlying feeling.



I've written much about fear in this post. What about the other feelings?

I believe their are two basic feelings: fear and anger. All other feelings are children to these parents. And, anger has its roots in fear. You are anger because you are afraid of something.

Once you get at your fears, you are at the bottom of the barrel.

3 Label your fear and it subsides.

A politician was once right: The only thing to fear is fear.

I've observed that most reluctantly enter therapy or are hesitant to face their marriage issues or stubbornly resist talking about themselves for fear that they will bump into some dark, ugly almost evil part.

And that part is often their fear… of being alone, of not being unlovable or not measuring up.

It takes energy and power to ignore these fears.

And, almost miraculously; once faced, you feel better, much better!

4 Three basic fears keep you from EASY LOVE.

I outline and put flesh on these fears in the Beginners Module of my Marriage Building Online Course. (But, I've hinted at them in this post!)

5 To manage your fears, you typically set goals that attempt to either overcome your fears or move you away from your fears.

These are what I call, "Fear-Based" goals.

These goals keep the fears active and limit you from finding and living in EASY LOVE.

6 You can "let go" of these Fear-Based goals.

Once you let go and give up attaining these goals, you will find a vacuum created in your marriage and life and into that vacuum naturally emerges EASY LOVE.

A couple removes their fearful selves and they find what they've always longed for.

About Dr. Huizenga

Dr. Bob Huizenga is an author, researcher and coach specializing in relationships of emotional investment. He began his practice as a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist in 1981 working since then with thousands of individuals and couples wanting better relationships. In 2002 he wrote one of the first and best selling ebooks on infidelity, “Break Free From the Affair.” In addition, Dr. Huizenga recently finished two online courses, The Infidelity Recovery Center and the Marriage Building Online Course, reflecting his research and marital clinical experience over the past 30 years. http://infidelity-recovery-center.com/member-sp-7-17/ and http://www.saveamarriageforever.com/member-sp-a/