

When Relationships End

Using the Tuckman model analogy for individual relationships, you can surmise that the level of distress individuals may experience at the end of a relationship depends on the developmental stage the relationship is in. If a relationship never got past the forming stage, it would be easy to assume those involved would not experience an intense sense of loss or find it difficult to end the relationship.

The storming stage shouldn't be construed as relationship volatility. Even intimate and strong relationships are sometimes intertwined with much arguing and heated disagreements. The storming stage is more of an attempt to adapt to each other's differences. A relationship coming to an end at this stage is mainly due to the inability of those involved to adapt to each other's attitudes, needs, or wants.

Relationships are not constant; changes occur. In case of significant changes occurring within a relationship, it may revert to the storming stage. Some of the main factors causing this change to occur include economic changes (job loss or change), health status (chronic illness), or competing relationships (infidelity). If the change is stronger than the strength of the relationship, the relationship may end.

What happens when your relationship does not work out? Regardless of the type of relationship, there will still be a sense of loss. Some of the main factors influencing the intensity of sense of loss (grief) at the end of the relationship are the type of relationship shared, how long the relationship existed, and how long it took to end the relationship. For example, two people who meet at the annual company picnic, have a one-night intimate encounter and a couple of follow-up dates over the next few weeks will probably experience much less grief than a couple married for 23 years who divorced because of infidelity.

© 2016 South University