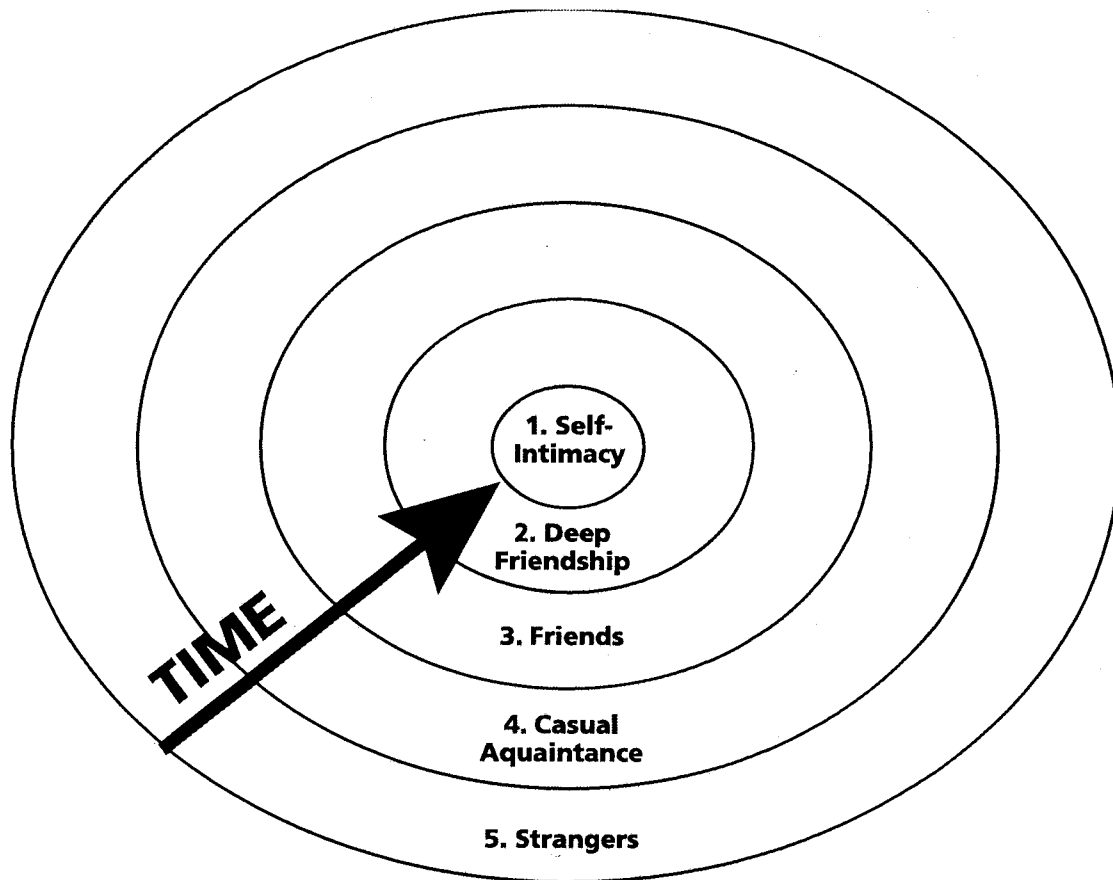




## Handout VIII-2: Stages of Friendships



**Circle 5 = Strangers.** You begin to share information on a superficial level revealing no personal or private information. If you both respond positively, you may advance to the next circle.

**Circle 4 = Casual Acquaintances.** You still don't know each other well enough to share personal information. You share feelings and thoughts but only positive ones about non-controversial topics. You're there to have fun or to work or do a task, and you keep it light. If you both appreciate and reciprocate the other's interest, you may progress to the next circle.

**Circle 3 = Friends.** As you move into this circle, you begin to trust one another more. You feel secure enough to tease and be more spontaneous. It's OK to discuss negative topics as long as you spend more time talking about positive ones and leave on an upbeat, emotionally supportive note.

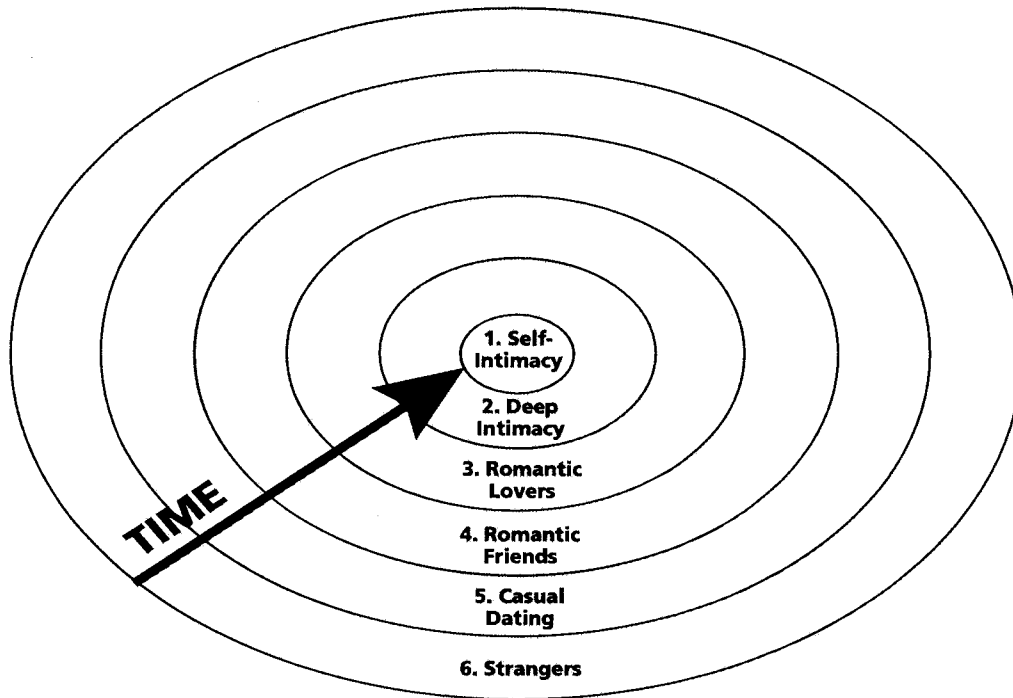
**Circle 2 = Deep Friendship.** It takes much longer to reach this stage. You have experienced each other closely for so long that you trust each other deeply. You're best friends and intimate friends. Your relationship has been tested, and you have seen each other at your worst and survived.

**Circle 1 = Self-Intimacy.** This innermost circle consists of you and only you. It's healthy to keep some thoughts, ideas, and feelings totally to yourself. On the other hand, staying too much in this circle can prevent others from getting close to you.

A healthy friendship gradually moves up the circles. It is not healthy to jump from circle 5 to circle 3 on a first meeting. You're skipping too many boundaries all at the same time.



## Handout VIII-3: Stages of Romantic Relationships



**Circle 6 = Strangers.** You begin to share information on a superficial level revealing no personal or private information. If you are attracted to each other, you might flirt a bit. If you both respond positively, you may advance to the next circle.

**Circle 5 = Casual Dating.** You still don't know each other well enough to share personal information. You share feelings and thoughts but only positive ones about non-controversial topics. You're there to have fun, and you keep it light. If you both appreciate and reciprocate the other's interest, you may progress to the next circle.

**Circle 4 = Romantic Friends.** As you move into this circle, you begin to trust one another more. You feel secure enough to tease and be more spontaneous. It's OK to discuss negative topics as long as you spend more time talking about positive ones and leave the date on an upbeat, emotionally supportive note. You feel more affectionate toward one another, you hold hands, put your arms around each other, and kiss.

**Circle 3 = Romantic Lovers.** At this point you're having sex. You are now sharing an extremely personal physical experience that you don't share with anyone else. That increases your emotional intimacy; you enjoy giving and receiving love and emotional support.

**Circle 2 = Deep Intimacy.** It takes much longer to reach this stage. You have experienced each other closely for so long that you trust each other deeply. You're best friends and exclusive, intimate partners. Your relationship has been tested, and you have seen each other at your worst and survived. This is as close as you can get with another human being.

**Circle 1 = Self-Intimacy.** This innermost circle consists of you and only you. It's healthy to keep some thoughts, ideas, and feelings totally to yourself. On the other hand, staying too much in this circle can prevent others from getting close to you.

A healthy relationship gradually moves up the circles. It is not healthy to jump from circle 5 to circle 3 on a first date. You're skipping too many boundaries all at the same time.

Stages adapted from Wachs (2002b, pp. 89-91).



## **Handout VIII-10: How Do I Move to the Next Stage?**

<b>If your next step is:</b>	<b>You can</b>
Strangers (need to meet more new people)	Attend activities and events, clubs, gyms, volunteer work (see the information about best places to meet people from the Dating World lesson (Lesson VII)).
Casual Acquaintances/Casual Dating	<p>Attend some of the above activities on a regular basis, take risks and begin to initiate interactions with people there. If you need to improve your communication skills, find someone who can help you work on this (like a therapist).</p> <p>Computer chat rooms, Internet dating, speed dating, personal ads: are best for people who are ready for a long-term relationship (i.e., have at least a couple of friendships and have experience with casual dating; see information about preparing to date from the Dating lesson). These methods make it difficult to know if the person is genuine – this method works best if you have good judgment about people.</p>
Friends	Spend some face-to-face time with the person regularly (at least once every 2 weeks). Be willing to share personal information and support his/her needs.
Romantic Friends	As above, but also need to be willing and able to give and receive physical affection (e.g., hold hands, hug).
Romantic Lovers	Ensure that you have discussed sex with your romantic friend and that it is a choice both of you want to make.
Deep Friendship/Deep Intimacy	Moving to this stage takes time but also a commitment from both people to continue working on the relationship. If you are struggling with this stage, you may want to read some books that explain more about maintaining relationships (you can find these in the self-help section of bookstores). In addition, it might be helpful to work with a therapist or couple's counselor.



## Handout VIII-4: Timeline

**How much time does it take?**

**No specific times but general guideline is:**

