**Interpersonal Communications**

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**Relationship Essay**

 There is a saying that goes, “If you want to know a man, look at who he keeps as company.” Relationships make people who they are. The external influences of other people effect us in more ways than most people care to recognize. We have, knowingly or not, built a relationship with every person we have ever talked with or bumped into throughout our life. The effects of knowing that many people can present themselves to us years down the long road of life.

 There are many theories about how humans interact and build relationships with each other, one of which is the Six-Stage Model of Relationships. In this model, all relationships follow a “map” of sorts, predicting how the relationship itself will grow and develop, or dissolve and cease to exist. Not all relationships follow this map exactly, as there are always exceptions, but it is an excellent tool to help understand and predict how people progress in relationships. I personally have a great example of this model at work.

 When I was in high school, dating was something to be done often with many different girls in order to make friends and get to know each other better. During my senior year, my math teacher requested my assistance in an after-school tutoring program. I gladly accepted, not only to help other students, but to also get better at teaching; I’m looking into secondary education. Upon entering the room my first day, there were only two people in the room, both of which I recognized by sight but didn’t actually know. By the end of the class, I found out that one of the girls was actually in three or four of my classes and that she was the best friend of my best friend’s girlfriend.

 Since that first encounter, we began to spend more time with each other, in class and out of class, and started to get to know each other fairly well. As it turned out, she knew a fair amount about me from my friend’s girlfriend. After a while the decision was made to go to prom together. A couple of weeks before prom, we started dating. Our personal lives began to intertwine and connect as our relationship grew and flourished, each of us learning more about the other.

 Over the next couple of months, we began to date regularly. Parents were introduced, movies were watched, and hands were held. We enjoyed each other’s company very much, and eventually our relationship was taken to a more personal level of intimacy. Fights were non-existent in our relationship because of how well we got along with each other, even if we disagreed on something. By the time we shared our first kiss we knew each other as well as if we had know each other for years rather than a few short months.

 During my senior year of high school I joined the Army National Guard and was scheduled to ship out to Basic Training two days after graduation. Directly after my successful completion of Basic I was to go to Advanced Individual Training (AIT) and finish my training. The total process was going to take over four months. I had joined before I had started dating this girl, and she knew full and well that it was coming. But even so, the day that I had to go to training came upon us faster than we expected.

 Whilst I was at training, letters were written frequently back and forth. But, as is usually the case, she began to lose interest in someone who was on the other side of the country from her. She continued to write regularly for a couple months, but by the end of AIT, letters no longer arrived each week. Then, with one week of AIT left, she decided over the phone that it would be best for us to stop dating. So we did.

 After my return home, things between us became awkward and uncomfortable, and we went without talking to each other for weeks at a time, leaving no trace of the relationship that existed before. There was no animosity between us, just a wall. After about six months though, the wall between us was lowered and we were able to enjoy each other’s company again, but not quite to the same degree as before.

 Then, about a year after I left for the Army, she contacted me and informed me that she wanted to join the Guard as I had. I gladly pointed her in the right direction, guiding her through the steps so she wouldn’t have any of the problems that I had to deal with. She went through with it, and shipped off to Basic. During her training she wrote to me frequently, and I returned the favor. Near the end of her training cycle, she asked me to attend her graduation from Basic, a great privilege\*. When I arrived at her ceremony and we were dismissed for the day to spend time together, she told me how she had felt while I was gone and apologized for handling my absence the way she did. She is now at AIT, and no trace of the wall that was erected between us is left. We aren’t dating or even considering it at this time, but the friendship is just as strong, if not stronger, than it was before.

 This personal relationship is an excellent example of the Six-Stage Model, with first contact being the tutoring sessions, the involvement increasing as we spent time with each other, before we began dating as the intimacy grew deeper. Then the relationship began to deteriorate with the separation during my training, but was repaired afterward as her understanding of the situation grew. Now the relationship is full and fun again, waiting for another situation to push us along the map of the Six-Stage Model.

(\*)Note: Graduation Day during Basic Training is a soldier’s first chance in over ten weeks to see their family and friends in person. To be invited to a ceremony like that is a huge honor, and shows how much a person really appreciates your relationship. To be asked that from her in the current situation was a big step for her.