

The Ladder of Love (Love Stages)

Love is a process that begins at birth. It develops into various stages as a child grows. The basic stages are listed and defined below:

1. **SELF LOVE:** The first person you loved was yourself. Until you loved yourself, you were incapable of truly loving another person.
2. **LOVE FOR PRIMARY CAREGIVER:** Love grew beyond yourself to include your primary caregiver (traditionally your mother) as you began to associate your feeling of satisfaction with him/her as your needs were met (clothing, diapering, feeding and loving). They did the tasks for you that you could not do for yourself.
3. **LOVE FOR SECONDARY CAREGIVER:** Soon you began to stretch your love for the secondary caregiver in your life (traditionally your father). This person also met your needs and cared for you.
4. **LOVE FOR OTHER RELATIVES:** The love of grandparents, aunts and uncles and other relatives brought a special sense of security, understanding, and perspective. The attention they gave to you and the fun that they brought to you helped you learn to love them, also.
5. **FIRST LOVE OUTSIDE THE FAMILY:** This is the first love outside of the family and was probably your first best friend. It might have been someone of the same sex, or it may have been a person of the opposite sex. You had fun with the person and learned to love him/her for the enjoyment you shared together.
6. **LOVE FOR SAME SEX FRIEND:** This person was a close buddy or pal of the same age and sex. This is someone that you could begin to confide in and depend upon. As your relationship grew, you learned to love him/her in return.
7. **LOVE FOR SOMEONE THE SAME SEX, BUT OLDER:** This type of love is sometimes called “hero worship.” This person was your role model and exemplified what you wanted to be someday.
8. **LOVE FOR THE OPPOSITE SEX:** This love begins with general interest in the other sex and continues through dating, going steady, becoming engaged, and getting married. This love will continue throughout the rest of your life. It provided the setting for a home and family. Your capacity to love grows

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immensely as you encounter joy, sorrow, happiness, and frustrations and work through them as a couple.

9. **LOVE FOR CHILDREN:** With marriage and the feeling of being in a permanent love relationship, comes a nurturing, protecting kind of love for children. This is an unselfish love that provides the ability to give love without expecting anything in return.

10. **MATURE LOVE FOR OTHERS:** This love affects those you love dearly, but also includes many people you meet and encounter. Many people do not reach this stage. Perhaps they never truly learned to love themselves and are not capable of loving other people. This is a love for humankind in general. It is a very unselfish type of love.