

Loving Limits

The 12 Steps of Physical Intimacy

There are 12 body language steps to sexual intimacy. God created these steps to lead naturally and progressive to one another. In a marriage relationship this is a wonderful thing. But teens and singles need to know where to draw the line in order for sexual intimacy not to occur outside of marriage. If you are unaware of these steps and fail to draw a proper boundary beyond which you will not go, then you will irresistibly end up at step 12.

1. EYE TO BODY

A glance reveals much about a person's sex, size, shape, age, personality and status. The importance people place on these criteria determines whether or not they *will* be attracted to each other.

2. EYE TO EYE

When the man and woman exchange glances their most natural reaction is to look away, usually with embarrassment. If their eyes meet again, they may smile, which signals that they might like to become better acquainted.

3. VOICE TO VOICE

Their initial conversations are trivial, and include questions like "What is your name?" or "What do you do for a living?" etc. During this long stage the two people learn much about each other's opinions, pastimes, activities, habits, hobbies, likes and dislikes. If they're compatible, they become friends.

4. HAND TO HAND

The first instance of physical contact between the couple is usually on non-romantic occasions such as when the man helps the woman descend a high step or aids her across an obstacle. At this point either of the individuals can withdraw from the relationship without rejecting the other. However, if continued, hand to hand contact will eventually become an evidence of the couple's romantic attachment to each other.

5. HAND TO SHOULDER

This affectionate embrace is still noncommittal. It is a "buddy" type position in which the man and woman are side-by-side. They are more concerned with the world in front of them than they are with each other. The hand to shoulder contact reveals a relationship that is more than a close friendship, but probably not real love.

6. HAND TO WAIST

Because this is something two normal people of the same sex would not do, it is clearly romantic. They are close enough to be sharing secrets or intimate language with each other. Yet, as they walk side-by-side with hand to waist they are still facing forward.

7. FACE TO FACE

This level of contact involves gazing into one another's eyes, hugging and kissing. If none of the previous steps were skipped, the man and woman will have developed a special code from experience that enables them to engage in deep communication with very few words. At this point the sexual desire becomes an important factor in the relationship.

8. HAND TO HEAD

This is an extension of the previous stage. The man and woman tend to cradle or stroke each other's head while kissing or talking.

9. ? 12. THE FINAL STEPS

The last four levels of involvement are distinctly sexual and private. They are 9.) Hand to Body, 10.) Mouth to Breast, 11.) Touching Below the Waist and 12.) Intercourse.

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Obviously, the last four steps of physical contact should be reserved for the marital relationship, particularly since they are immensely personal and emotional. But it is impossible for a couple to try to remain pure by drawing the line at the last four

steps.

Sexual emotions are the most powerful natural emotion that God has given us to experience. A person will be unable to remain pure by drawing a boundary at "petting," for example. It simply does not work. God did not create us to touch personal parts of another person's body and then STOP ? any more than we were created to place chocolate in our mouth and not swallow! Each of these 12 steps is progressively enticing and gains power as you move further down the list. If a couple wants to resist temptation and remain pure until marriage, they will need to draw their boundaries well before step 9.

Some questions to help you apply these steps of physical intimacy:

- At what point does sexual desire become an important factor in the relationship?
- Where do you think God wants you to draw the line in your relationship?
- Where do you think your partner wants to draw the line?
- If your partner's boundary is different than yours or God's, how will you decide what standard to live by?
- If you are a parent, what steps of intimacy do you believe are appropriate for your son or your daughter?
- Parent, what displays of intimacy will you allow in your presence?
What do you hope for out of your presence?
- Parent, how will you help your son or daughter make a commitment to not go beyond a certain step of intimacy?