



Handout VIII-1: Student Objectives & Agenda

Lesson VIII: Stages of Relationships and Maintaining Relationships



Student Objectives:

By the end of this lesson, students should be able to:

1. Locate and share salient information on dating from a website resource.
 2. Understand the stages of both friendships and romantic relationships.
 3. Assess their personal relationships in terms of these stages.
 4. Identify the next step for moving their relationships forward.
 5. Carry out (for homework) the first step towards developing relationships.
 6. Recognize that maintaining long-term relationships takes work and begin to understand the complexity of this work.
 7. Acquire a list of resources for seeking more information about maintaining relationships.
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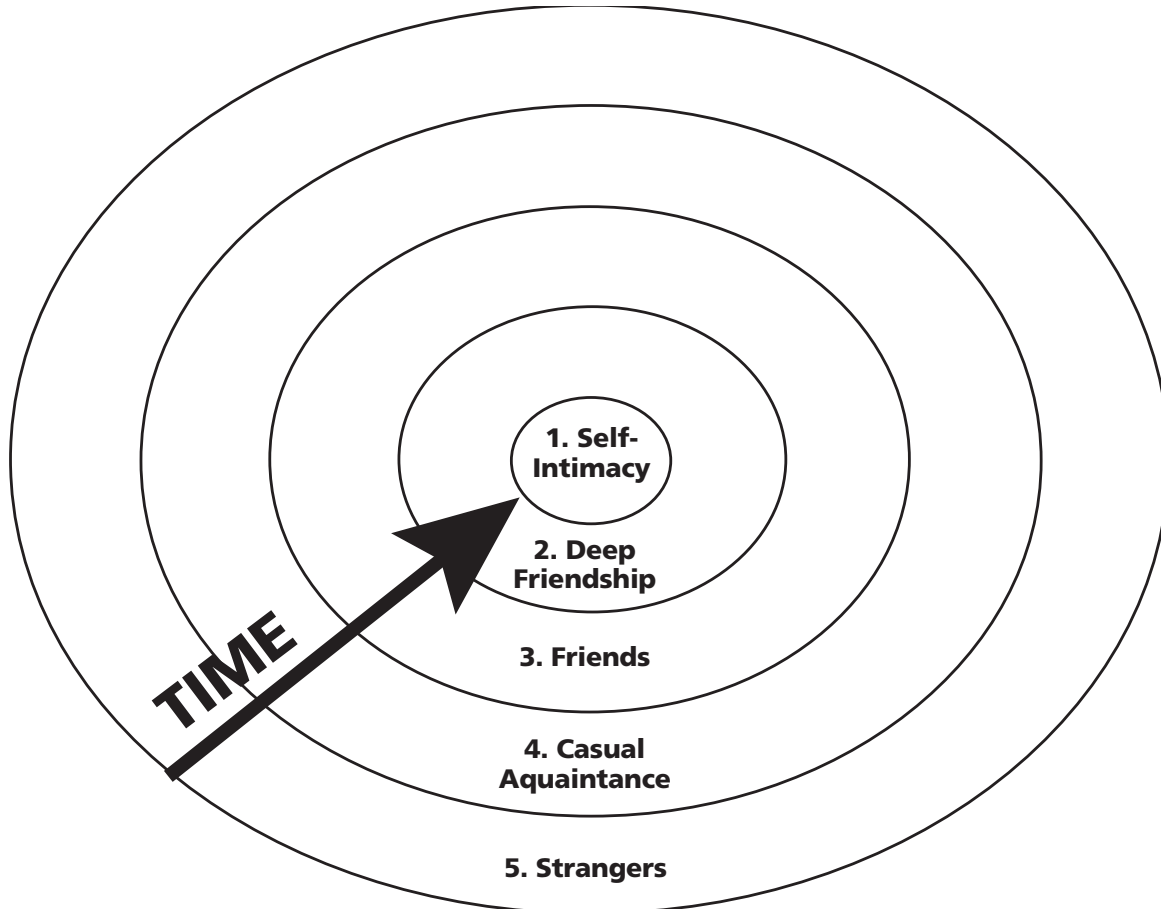
Agenda (a 10-minute break will be included):

- ___ Discuss last assignment
- ___ Outline of the different stages of friendships and romantic relationships
- ___ Group Activity – *When Are These Things Appropriate?*
- ___ Discussion and analysis of diagrams exploring how long it takes to develop a relationship
- ___ Activity – drawing timeline for one of your relationships
- ___ Activity – assigning stages to your relationships
- ___ Activity – planning a strategy for moving to the next stage
- ___ Overview of factors to consider for deep friendships or romantic relationships
- ___ Outline of this lesson’s assignment
- ___ File handouts in binder

Available break activities today are:



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.

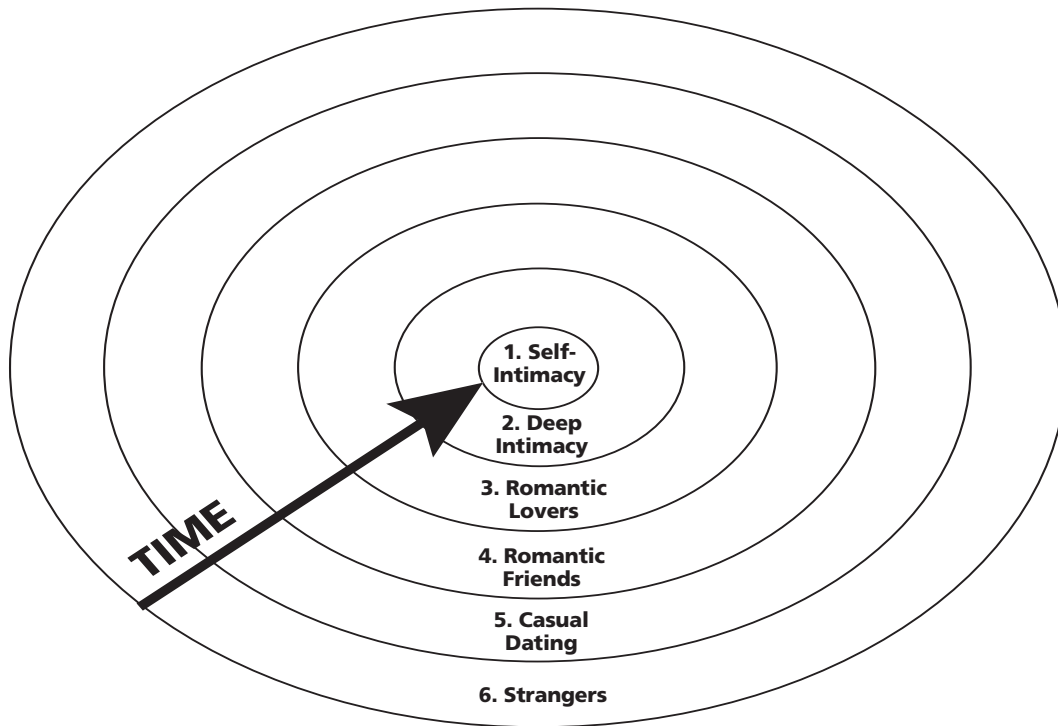
Circle 2 = Deep Friendship. It takes much longer to reach this stage. You have experienced each other closely for so long that you trust each other deeply. You're best friends and intimate friends. Your relationship has been tested, and you have seen each other at your worst and survived.

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.

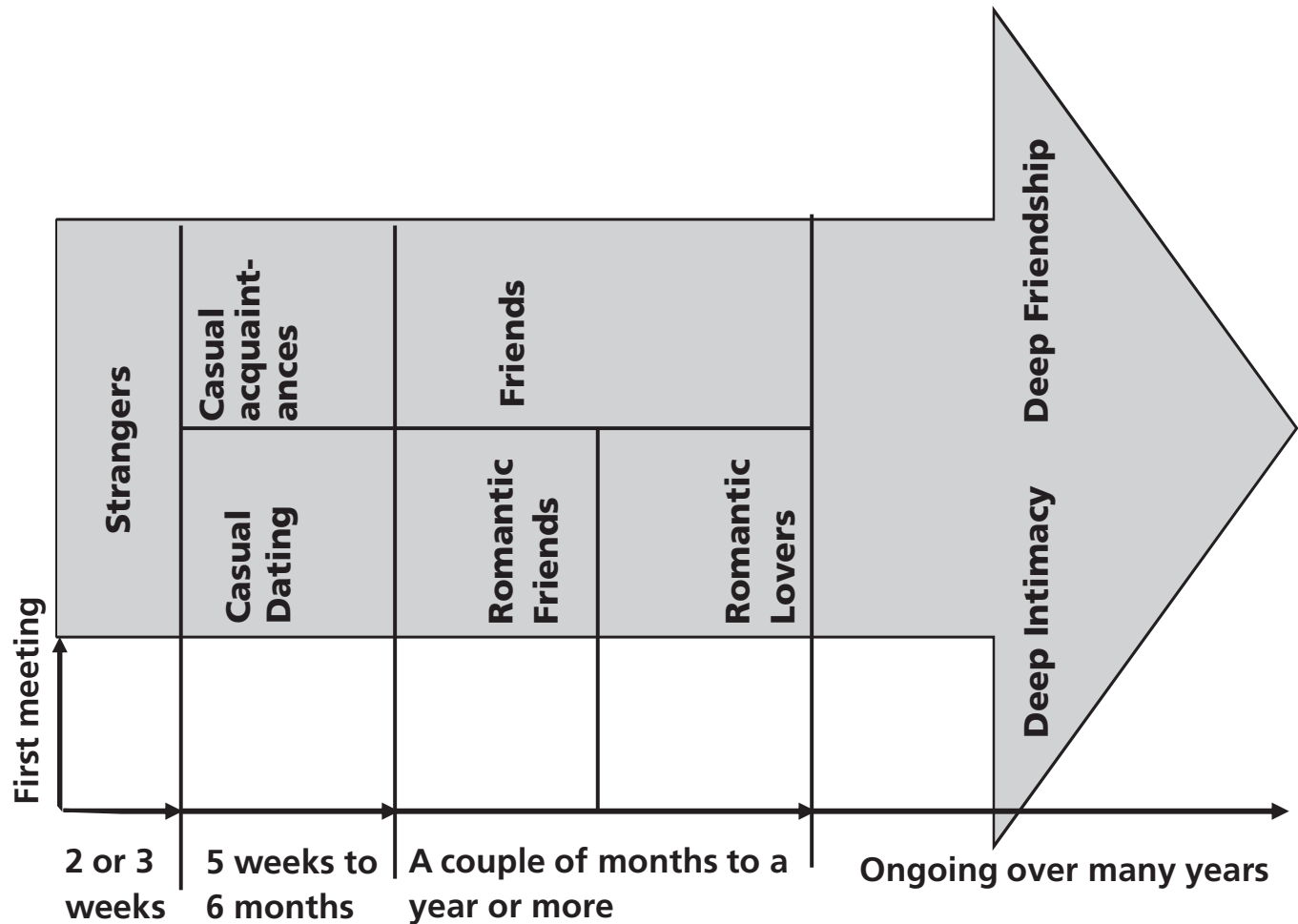
Stages adapted from Wachs (2002b, pp. 89-91).



Handout VIII-4: Timeline

How much time does it take?

No specific times but general guideline is:

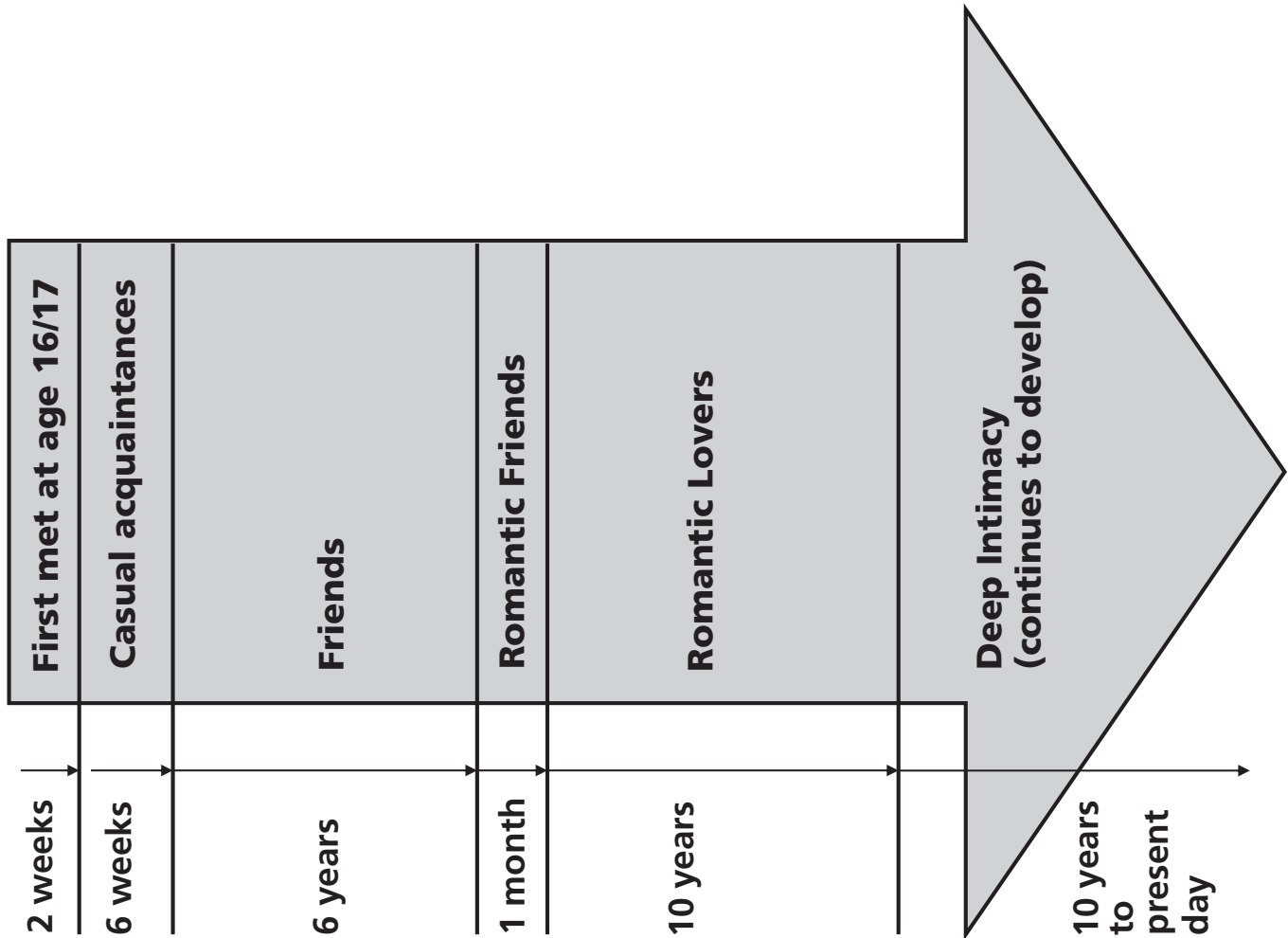




Handout VIII-5: Timeline Example 1

Real-Life Examples

John and Susanna

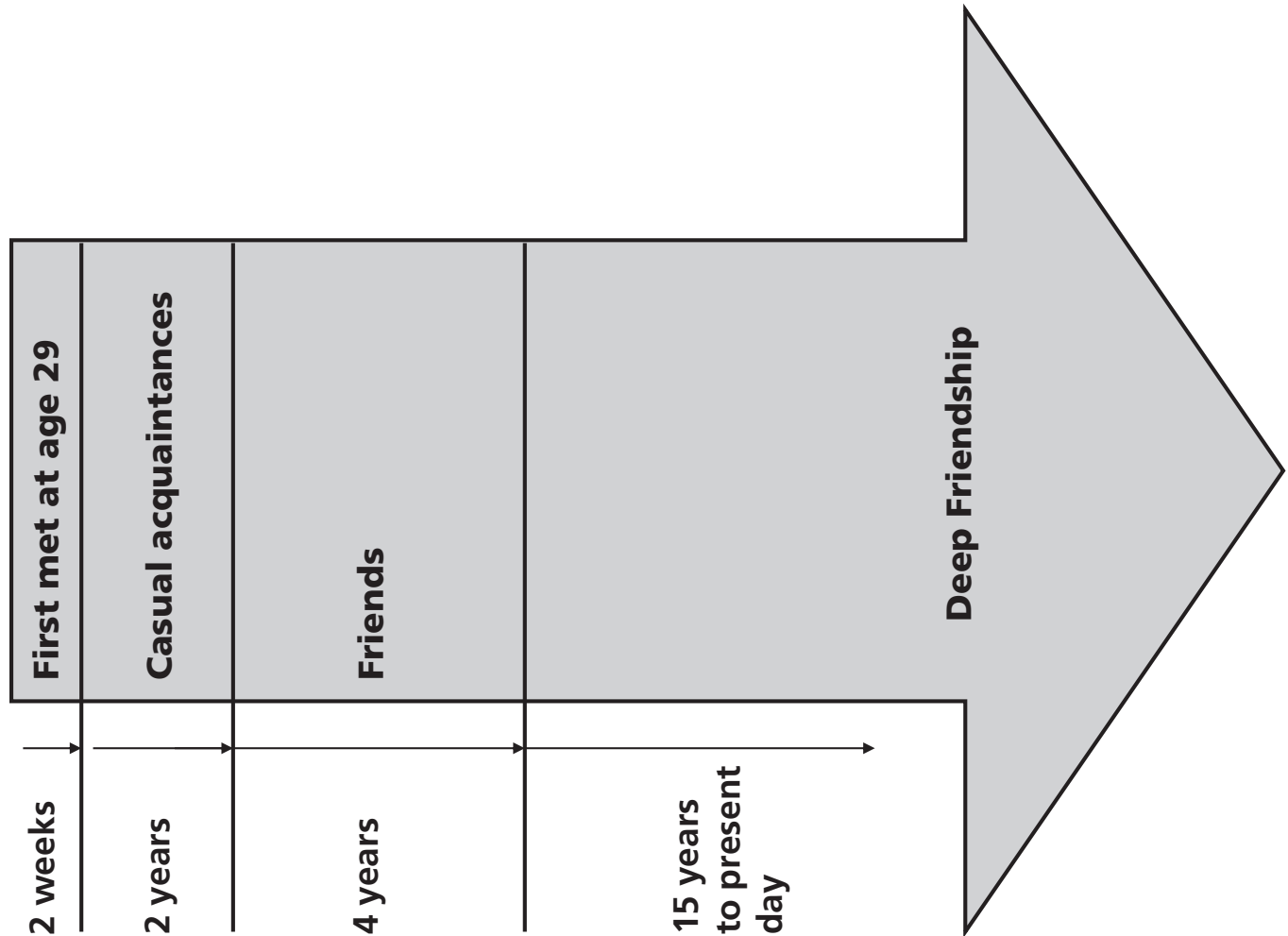




Handout VIII-6: Timeline Example 2

Real-Life Examples

Wendy and Mary

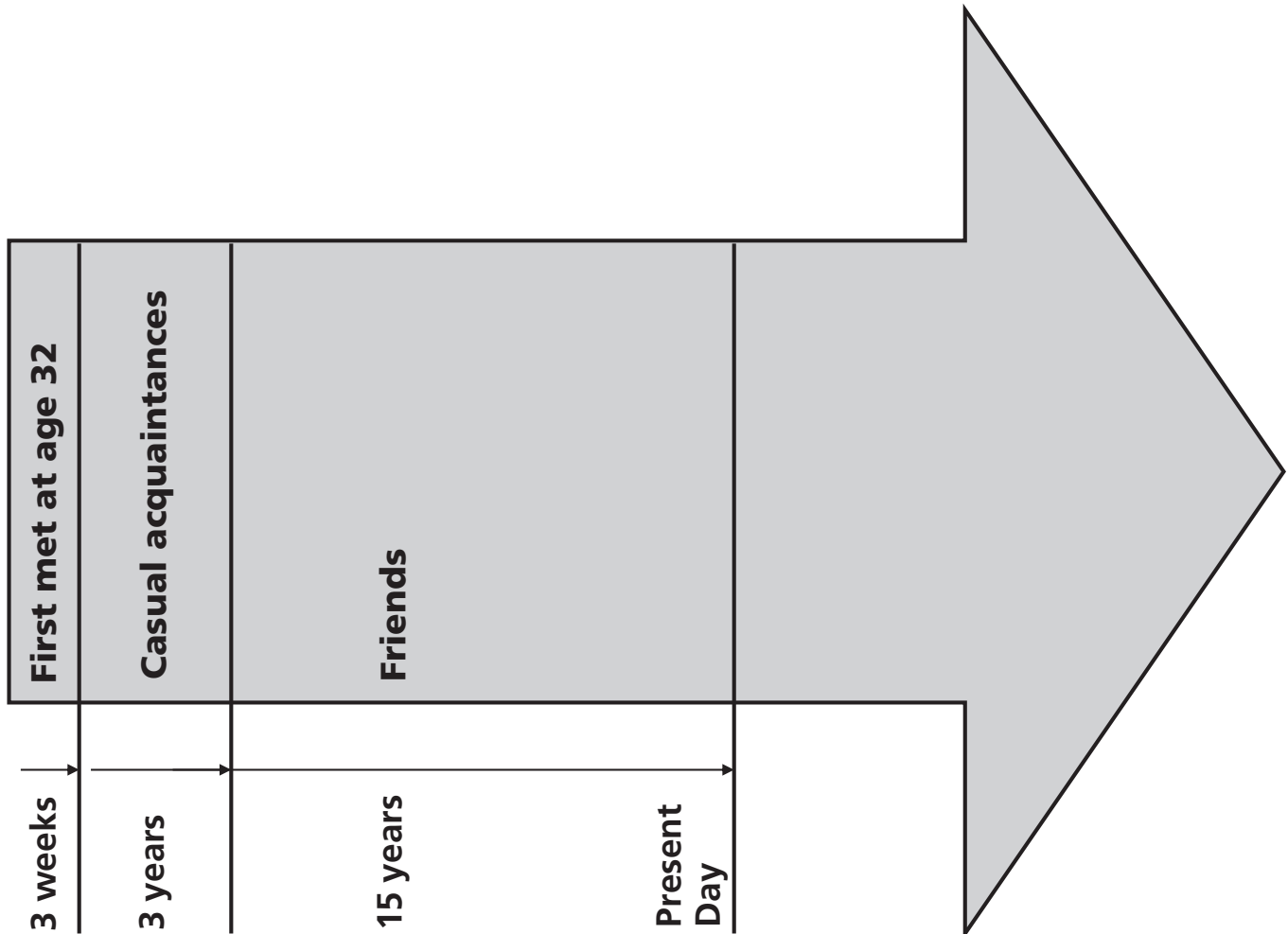




Handout VIII-7: Timeline Example 3

Real-Life Examples

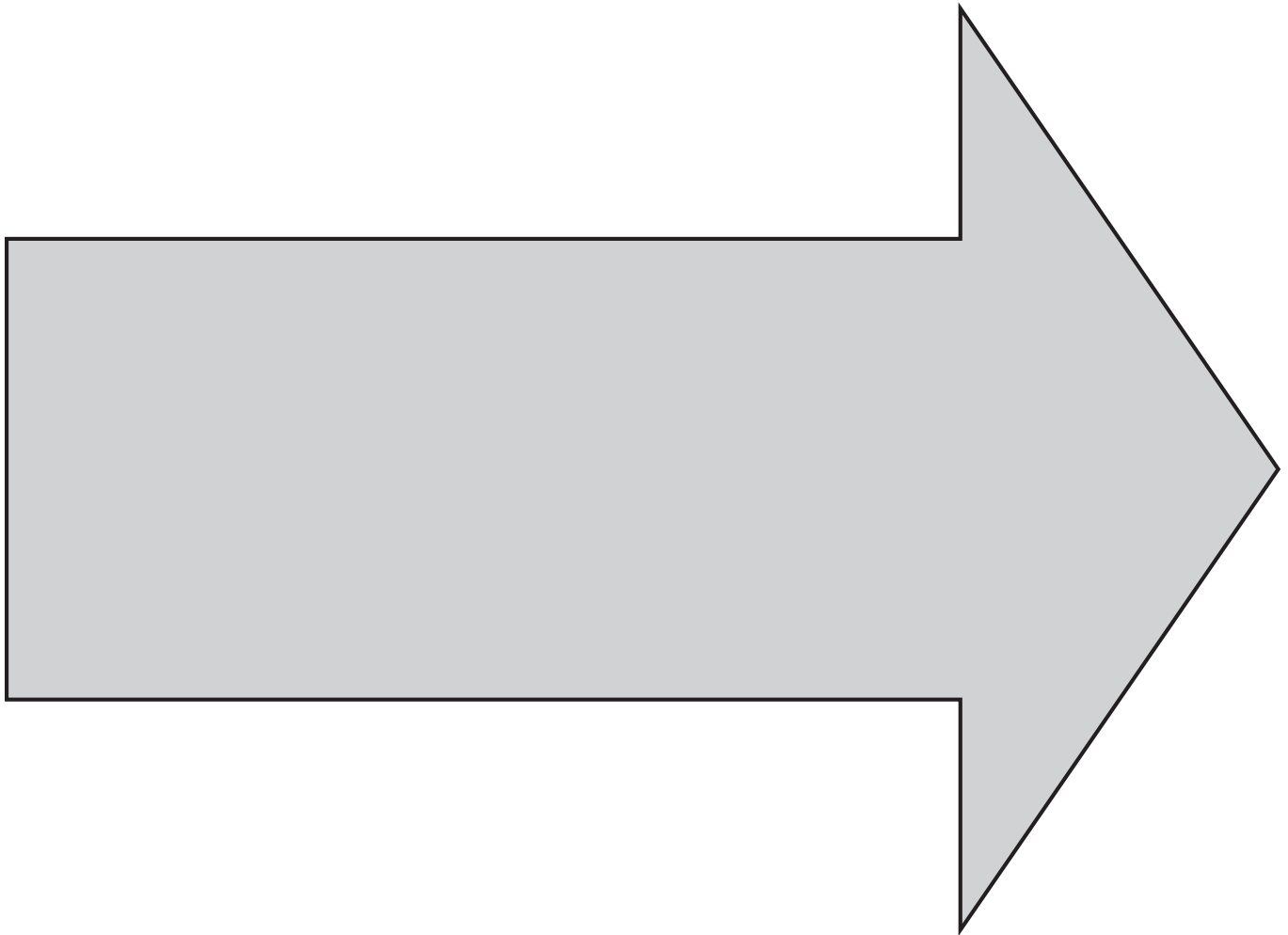
Martin and Jenny





Handout VIII-8: Your Timeline

What is your timeline?





Handout VIII-9: My Relationships

Circle which stage you are currently in (if you have more than one relationship you want to include, you can use different colors.)

My friendships	My romantic relationships
Circle 5 = Strangers Circle 4 = Casual Acquaintances Circle 3 = Friends Circle 2 = Deep Friendship	Circle 6 = Strangers Circle 5 = Casual Dating Circle 4 = Romantic Friends Circle 3 = Romantic Lovers Circle 2 = Deep Intimacy



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

<i>If your next step is:</i>	<i>You can</i>
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-11: Plan for Next Step

Relationship stage I want to focus on:	
Things I need to think about doing to move more to this stage:	
One thing I plan to do this week related to moving to the next step of relationships:	



Handout VIII-12: Factors to Consider When in a Deep Friendship or Deep Romantic Relationship

- Deep relationships need “nourishing” to be maintained. This requires that both people involved put in time and effort in many areas, but especially in terms of:
 - Communication, including:
 - ▶ Setting aside time each day to communicate with your partner
 - ▶ Knowing when to stop talking
 - ▶ Knowing when to ask questions
 - ▶ Knowing when to listen
 - ▶ Knowing when to offer suggestions
 - ▶ Being able to tell your partner about your emotional and physical/sexual needs
 - Compromise
 - ▶ Acknowledging that each person has different interests, needs, and desires
 - ▶ Coming to a mutual agreement about how each of you is going to spend your time, communicate your feelings, conduct your sexual relationship, and act in certain situations
 - Empathy
 - ▶ Talking to your partner about how he/she shows feelings and looking for signs of this (it can be difficult to know what your partner is feeling; you may need some agreed-upon ways of sharing this)
 - ▶ Knowing how to react when your partner is feeling a certain way and carrying this out (e.g., some people prefer to be left alone if they are upset whereas others prefer you to hold their hand and listen to what they are saying)
 - Displaying affection/showing you care such as:
 - ▶ Listening to your partner’s concerns, even if you aren’t interested
 - ▶ Understanding that physical intimacy is often closely linked to emotional intimacy (e.g., if a person feels like you have been emotionally distant that day he/she may not want to be physically intimate with you)
 - Support
 - ▶ Knowing when and how to give and receive this support
 - ▶ Knowing when to approach someone outside the relationship for support (most people can be overwhelmed by a partner who expects them to be the only person that fulfills all their social and emotional needs)
- All the above ways of interacting are very complex and often require a lot of thinking about and working on. For individuals with ASD, they can be even more intense. A couple’s counselor or therapist can help with this process, if necessary.

- You can find a lot of information in books, such as books written about long-term relationships in general. Here are some examples:
 - *Relationships for Dummies* by Kate Wachs (2002a)
 - *The Art of Relationships: How to Create Togetherness That Works* by Jan Fritsen (2005)
- You can also find information in books on specific issues related to ASD that may not apply to neurotypical individuals, including:
 - *Love, Sex, and Long-Term Relationships. What People With Asperger Syndrome Really, Really Want* By Sarah Hendrickx (2008)
 - *The Asperger Couple's Workbook: Practical Advice and Activities for Couples and Counsellors* by Maxine Ashton (2009)
 - *Asperger Syndrome and Long-Term Relationships* by Ashley Stanford (2002)
 - *Life and Love: Positive Strategies for Autistic Adults* by Zosia Zaks (2006)
- There are also many websites that offer tips for maintaining relationships such as:
 - *10 Ways to Maintain a Healthy Relationship* by Roberts (2010) (<http://www.livestrong.com/article/82437-maintain-relationship/>)
 - *How to Keep a Relationship Alive While You're at Different Colleges.* (n.d.). (http://www.ehow.com/how_4929146_relationship-alive-youre-different-colleges.html, ehow Community Member [n.d.])
 - *How to Tell if Someone Wants to Be Your Friend.* (n.d.). (http://www.ehow.com/how_5186643_tell-someone-wants-friend.html ehow Community Member [n.d.])
- Also consider podcasts focusing on relationship issues (e.g., how to evaluate your relationship) such as the *Dr. Joy Browne Show* (<http://www.wor710.com/weekday-personalities/The-Dr-Joy-Browne-Show/3600223>)



Handout VIII-13: Assignment

Name: _____ Due Date _____

You are required to complete both Part 1 and Part 2.

Part 1: Personal Plan

Look at the plan you made in this class (Handout VIII-11). Carry out the first step of the plan ("One thing I plan to do this week") before the next class. It may be helpful for you to talk to a trusted person such as a therapist, parent, or friend about the details of your plan.

1. Write here one or two lines about what you did:

2. Write here what you plan to do in the future as a next step:

Part 2: Differing Perspectives

Watch the 55-minute video (Peters, 1985) from PBS/Frontline titled *A Class Divided* from <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/video/flv/generic.html?s=frol02p66&continuous=1>

A Class Divided is a documentary on third-grade teacher Jane Elliott's "blue eyes/brown eyes" exercise, originally conducted in the days following the assassination of Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968. The film teaches about racism, prejudice, and stereotyping in the United States.

Write down your answers to the following questions:

a. What comments in the film were offensive to you?

b. Did you want to be in the blue or brown eye group? Why?

c. Were you surprised how quickly the students began to treat others badly once they were told that they were inferior? Why or why not?

d. Give examples of racism used in the video?

e. What kinds of prejudices between the children or later with the adults were shown in the film?

f. What kind of stereotypes did the children portray towards one another?

g. When the children returned as adults and went through the same exercise, how did their age change their racism, prejudices, and stereotyping behavior? Name two of their behaviors.

Bring this sheet to class for discussion at the next lesson.