Social Penetration Theory.

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Intimacy and Self-Disclosure

- Social penetration refers to the process of relationship bonding whereby individuals move from superficial communication to more intimate communication.

- Trajectory.
Intimacy

- Intimacy exists at many levels beyond physical intimacy.
- These levels include dimensions such as intellectual, emotional, and shared activities.
Self-disclosure

1. Self-disclosure refers to the process of revealing information about oneself to others.

2. Nonintimate relationships typically progress to an intimate level because of self-disclosure.

3. Self-disclosure can be either strategic (planned) or nonstrategic (spontaneous).
Reciprocity

*Reciprocity* refers to the process whereby one person's openness leads to another's openness.
The “onion”

- **The outer layer** of the onion represents an individual's **public image**, or those characteristics about a person that are visible to others (e.g., gender, race, height).
- **The central layers** of the onion represent those aspects of the self that are revealed through self-disclosure. (beliefs, faith)
- **The inner core** are values, self-concept, and deeply held emotions.
Breadth and Depth

- Breadth refers to the number of topics discussed in a relationship.
- Depth refers to the degree of intimacy that guides topic discussions.
Dynamic relationship

- Vulnerable in the relationship.
- Trust

If too much private information is revealed early in the relationship, it may make the other partner uncomfortable and motivate him or her to end the relationship.
Four stages

- Orientation stage – public, superficial
- Exploratory affective - casual, friendly
- Affective exchange stage - close friends and intimate partners
- Stable exchange stage
Stable exchange stage

- Communication is characterized by open expression of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, which results in a high degree of spontaneity.
- Partners are highly intimate and synchronized, with the ability to predict one another's behavior.
- Few misinterpretations in meanings at this stage because the partners are so familiar with one another.
- "Dyadic uniqueness," or distinctive relationship qualities such as humor and sarcasm, emerge.
- Few relationships ever reach this stage.
Cross Cultural Differences

- Gudykunst et al. (1996 p. 702) found cultural differences:
  - individualist cultures disclose more than collectivistic
  - collectivistic cultures disclose more about group membership than about personal information.