



Definitions and Concepts for AQA Psychology A-level

Option 1: Relationships

Absorption-addiction model: A model suggesting that people may become absorbed in a parasocial relationship as a way of escaping dissatisfaction with their real life. This absorption can become increasingly intense and addictive, leading the person to devote more time and emotional energy to the parasocial relationship.

Absence of gating: The removal of physical and social obstacles (gates) - such as physical attractiveness, speech impediments, or social anxiety - in virtual relationships, allowing individuals to form intimate connections faster than in face-to-face encounters.

Attachment theory explanation (of parasocial relationships): The idea that insecure attachment types, particularly insecure-resistant individuals, are more likely to form parasocial relationships because they seek intimacy without the fear of rejection or breakup associated with real-life relationships.

Breadth: The number of different topics discussed during self-disclosure.

Complementarity: The idea that people are attracted to others whose characteristics or behaviours complement their own.

Comparison level: The standard a person uses to judge whether the rewards and costs of a relationship are satisfactory, based on previous experiences and expectations.

Comparison level for alternatives: The standard a person uses to judge whether they would be better off in an alternative relationship or without their current relationship.

Depth: The level of personal or intimate information revealed during self-disclosure.

Duck's phase model of relationship breakdown: A theory suggesting that relationship breakdown develops over distinct stages: the intrapsychic phase, the dyadic phase, the social phase, and the grave-dressing phase. **Duck and Rollie (2006)** later added a fifth stage, the resurrection phase, where individuals move beyond distress and reflect on lessons learned to prepare for future relationships.

Equity: The perception that the ratio of rewards to costs is fair for both partners, so that neither partner feels overbenefited or underbenefited.





Equity theory: The theory that relationship satisfaction is greatest when both partners perceive the ratio of their rewards to costs as fair.

Extrinsic investment: Resources that are not directly part of the relationship but would be lost if the relationship ended, such as shared possessions, social networks or financial arrangements.

Filter theory: The theory that people narrow down potential partners using a series of filters, such as social demography, similarity in attitudes and complementarity.

Gates: Characteristics such as physical appearance, social skills or other personal factors that may prevent or discourage a person from forming a relationship.

Halo effect: The tendency for a person's physical attractiveness to influence how they are perceived in other areas, with physically attractive people often being judged more positively in terms of their personality and abilities.

Investment size: The amount of resources a person has put into a relationship that would be lost if the relationship ended.

Intrinsic investment: Resources that are directly put into a relationship, such as time, effort and emotional commitment.

Levels of parasocial relationships: A three-stage hierarchy proposed by McCutcheon et al. describing the depth of parasocial attachment: entertainment-social (casual fan interaction), intense-personal (deep emotional investment), and borderline-pathological (uncontrollable fantasies and extreme behaviors).

Matching hypothesis: The proposal that people are more likely to form romantic relationships with partners who possess a similar level of physical attractiveness to their own, balancing the desire for an attractive partner against the risk of rejection.

Minimax principle: The idea that people seek to maximise rewards and minimise costs when forming and maintaining relationships.

Neotenous: Having physical characteristics associated with youthfulness, which can influence perceptions of attractiveness.

Parasocial relationship: A one-sided relationship in which one person develops feelings of connection towards a media figure or celebrity who is unaware of or unable to reciprocate the relationship.

Reciprocal: Involving mutual exchange, where both people respond to and disclose information to one another.

Rewards: The positive outcomes or benefits gained from a relationship, such as companionship, support and affection.





Rusbult's investment model of commitment: A model suggesting that commitment to a relationship is influenced by satisfaction, the quality of alternatives and the size of investments made in the relationship.

Self-disclosure: The process of revealing personal information about oneself to another person, which can help develop intimacy and trust.

Social demography: The first filter in filter theory, referring to characteristics such as social background, geographical proximity and other demographic factors that influence who people are likely to meet and form relationships with.

Social exchange theory: The theory that people evaluate relationships in terms of their rewards and costs and are more likely to maintain relationships when the perceived rewards outweigh the costs.

Social Penetration Theory: The theory that relationships develop through gradual and reciprocal self-disclosure, with increasing breadth and depth of personal information being shared.

