

Six Key Life Competencies

To be truly able to handle life and relationships we need some key personal skills. These are essential for handling the challenges of being involved in a relationship. These skills allow us to handle the inherent tension of being intimate and close on the one hand whilst also being sufficiently self composed and self directed on the other. We form a union because we want to, not because we have to. We give and grow, we don't need and demand.

1. Having feelings without acting unconsciously from feelings

We need to be able to recognize our feelings and listen to them but not be led by them. This means we can know our feelings without reacting from them. We have the capacity to choose our actions wisely. We can't do this if there is no 'filter' between our feelings and our actions. *We need to have capacities of patience and the ability to tolerate things we don't like and wait for things we do want.*

2. Being guided by inner principles

Knowing what is right and wrong (for us) is essential and comes from the development of an 'internal road map' of what is moral for us. By taking responsibility for ourselves, we can see the pointlessness of blaming others.

3. Knowing and accepting that others might have a different view or perspective on things

This does not threaten us. We can stay emotionally connected to them even if they have a different view.

4. Taking responsibility for change and managing our concerns

We need to respect the free choice of ourselves and our partner and appreciate that the relationship itself is a matter of free choice. Although we are all free to choose, none of us is free of the consequences of our choices.

5. Being secure within ourselves and having established principles for self guidance we become protected from the opinions of others

We can be interested in and open to the opinions of others however remain firmly in control of our own 'ship' and decide which way to steer it. Others' views are weighed carefully for the value they may have to us. We don't do things simply to conform or please others.

6. Having a capacity to appreciate the perspective of others without being threatened by the difference

For example we see the particular perspective of children and how their view is so much different from our own. Understanding how we all live in different worlds gives a great freedom of appreciating the differences. It allows us to expand our ability to empathize and connect with others. ***Acceptance of difference is a key virtue in managing relationships.***

More information can be found in the book "Growing Yourself up" by Jenny Brown

This work is ground in the solid background of Bowen Family Systems theory and covers some classical relationship difficulties such as the dance of conflict and distance, relationship triangles, over-functioning and under functioning.