



## **10 Abilities of Happy Couples**

By Debbie Carsten, LCSW

### The ability to avoid a judgmental attitude.

Beneath both criticism and contempt lies an assumption that if you are upset then somebody must have done something wrong! In healthy relationships the partners avoid the trap of blaming the other person for their present negative internal state.

### The ability to stand up for yourself without putting your partner down.

Successful people believe that their own opinion and expectations are of equal importance as those of their partner. They express their opinion freely and clearly, but they also actively listen to what the partner is saying.

The ability to find the understandable part. Even in conflicts, healthy couples find something reasonable about what their partner is saying or wanting. They work to understand where the other person is coming from. They try to see things from both perspectives.

The ability to give equal regard. Successful partners give equal regard to their partner's opinion, regardless of whether they agree or not. They realize most differences are about preferences rather than right or wrong.

The ability to offer assurances. Healthy couples are sensitive to the fact that their opinion may have offended their partner. "I get that you felt criticized by me, but I don't really think there's anything wrong with what you did. It is just different from what I wanted."

The ability to look for what is at stake. Partners who are happier learn to assume that if they have the same argument over and over, there is something important at stake for each of them that is going unrecognized. They then take the time to get to the root of what they are truly arguing about and take concrete steps to fix the problem.

The ability to be curious about their partner's world. People who succeed in their relationships make it their business to keep learning about their partner's world. This helps them feel more connected and sensitive to the struggles their partner is facing.





The ability to keep sight of the positive. Healthy partners focus more on the positive things about their partner and relationship and acknowledge them more often.

The ability to pursue shared meaning. Couples who enjoy their relationship share a sense of purpose, a common mission. They feel connected to something bigger than themselves.

The ability to initiate and respond to bids for connection. Successful couples are aware of attempts made by their spouse to connect with them. They also respond appropriately to these attempts and reach out when they desire connection.

