

The Relational Checklist

Is your relationship working for you?

Not sure what you want in a partner?

Thought about what you bring to the party?

A key issue these days in both life and relationships is “what do we want”. We frequently think we know what that is but after the gloss and novelty of relationships subside in favour of “deeper” issues, just what is it we are looking for in a relationship?

We should always accept a partner as they are, not seeking to “change” a person. Not to do this would say that we are not happy with what they offer and begs the question, “why did I go for this person in the first place”? We all too often meet “surface level” needs.

For example:

- The need to show the world we are attractive
- The need to fit in with social norms;
- The need for company;
- The need for experience and
- The need sexual expression.

All of these are important, but after these are met there is invariably another “layer” of experience that time with a partner offers. It is when this layer is not as we had hoped that we begin to find relationships wanting, perhaps disappointing, boring or even worse, painful and devaluing.

We may think we know what we want in a relationship, but how do we clarify that? As with so many plans we assume there are too many variables to assess and may consider that we are lucky just to be with someone! So why try?

All too often dissatisfaction emerges after people commit significant amounts of their life and resources to a relationship in the hope it will meet their needs.

We tend to have very loose criteria for assessing people we are entering into relationships with. Partially because those “surface level” needs are so powerful, partially because we generally do not develop an approach to assess and evaluate just what we want to gain from a relationship. Equally, whilst we would never advocate changing someone, relationships can foster personal growth and development, as well as being energising and uplifting. Does that happen just by accident? As with all good life goals and objectives, knowing what you want and being clear about it is a critical component.

We can apply well formed outcomes (see site downloads) to begin to develop this. This can achieve much. However, relationships are a little bit more complex in nature than many of the more linear goals in life, spanning as they do decades, and in some cases, entire adult lifetimes. Equally, they encompass many variables including: values; attitudes; gender behaviours; evolutionary processes; and cultural perspectives. Therefore a more sophisticated approach is needed.

To start the process, our basic checklist is overleaf. These questions are designed to achieve one thing, to get you thinking at a deeper level than before about current, past or potential relationships.

The Relational Checklist

What do I offer a partner?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

What do I seek in a relationship?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

In what ways is my current relationship working/ meeting my needs?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

How do I know this?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

In what ways is my current relationship not working/ not meeting my needs?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

How do I know this?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

How do I enhance my relationship?

How much time a week do I spend with my partner, is it important?

No of hours. _____

Rate that importance on a scale of 1-10:

1=not important / 10 = vital

What level of honesty do I feel I can have with my partner about my feelings?

Rate this on a scale of 1-10

1= can't be honest at all / 10 = can be totally

If 9 or below, what interferes with your being honest and open

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What have I learned from past relationship that may be helpful in my current or future relationships?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Ask yourself the simple question:

"Having answered the above do I know more about myself and what I need from my partners?"

Want to go further? At Gedanken we can offer support to individuals and couples seeking to explore their relationship further.