

PSYCHOLOGICAL COMPETENCE!!  
WHAT FOR?  
Thriving In A Culture of Democracy ©\*

By

Jan B. Roosa, Ph.D.

In our culture, we value many personal qualities for success. Success at work, play, learning, or love, requires many personal abilities, like good judgment, or getting along with others. Without them, it is nearly impossible to experience what we want in work, play, learning, or love.

Important as they may be, we frequently treat these personal qualities as something we are supposed to naturally possess or acquire. We don't usually realize they are abilities built on many fundamental skills, such as Focus, Empathy, and Decision-making. Without fundamentals, we cannot develop our personal qualities adequately. And we cannot learn these fundamentals without, in one way or another, being taught.

In our culture's non-existent "Handbook For Surviving & Thriving In A Culture of Democracy," we have failed to include a section on, "The Basic Skills For Surviving And Thriving In A Culture Of Democracy." In addition, we need a section on, "The Art And Methods Of Teaching The Skills, Know-how, And Lore To Thrive In Our Culture Of Democracy." A fourth missing section in our non-existent handbook is "Who Are The Teachers Of Our Culture's Skills, Know-how, And Lore?" "Making Sure That All Children And Adults Are Taught Our Culture's Staples Of Skills, Know-how, And Lore," is also missing.

What are the personal qualities we hold in high esteem? To name a few --- initiative, financial adequacy, work ethic, honesty, integrity, courage, law-abiding, persevering, learning, compassion, judgment, cooperation, decisive, thoughtful and considerate, determination, positive attitude, hope, sense of humor, personal warmth, dedication, commitment, creativity, and craftsmanship in whatever the endeavor.

These are valuable qualities that contribute not only to personal success, but to the wellbeing of others. A culture wholly populated with people possessing all of these qualities would be Eden, right here on earth. Well, maybe 100% is a little dreamy, but I do believe our culture, made up of us, we the people, could teach us these qualities. Don't you agree? Not yet?

---

\* ©2004 Jan B. Roosa, Ph.D.

Just as I believe we can teach verbal fluency and mathematical fluency to at least 99% of our population---done in the right ways---I believe we can teach ourselves psychological and social fluency. We can teach us the basics leading up to the very desirable personal and social qualities I have mentioned.

With these fundamentals we can live with much greater safety, comfort, ease, harmony, love, and enjoyment. Stress will be way down, so that we can live healthier and longer lives with far fewer medical expenses. Fear will ease as we could trust each other so much more. We will reciprocate our friendships so there is less isolation among us. And so it would go.

However, our culture has not undertaken the responsibility to use relevant methods to teach verbal and mathematical fluency to 99% of us, for adequate cultural participation. Thus, it is no wonder the fundamentals for competent personal and cultural participation have been neglected, nay, not even given a thought. This is one of the reasons we have a high tech society generated by a few, and a major reason we do not have a culture of democracy generated and maintained by the many.

The end result is we have a fragmented culture, with all too many fragmented people that create tension, worrying, conflict, abuse, alienation, exploitation, and crime.

The psychological skills I am presenting here, when learned to the point of fluency, make it possible for us to build and participate in a culture that teaches, uses, and rewards Caring, Cooperation, Competence, Creativity, and Choice.

The fundamental skills portrayed here fill in some of the glaring gaps in our cultural education for attaining gratifying personal and social experiences, for quietly energizing your brain, and for contributing to a Culture of Democracy.

So how do we understand, and learn these fundamentals that lead to developing the personal qualities we esteem? We want to possess skills that help us survive and thrive in our culture as it is, and in the Culture of Democracy we need in our nation. Keeping in mind we learn in different ways---yes, we have learning diversity, too---I have thrown in a few ways, and hopefully, you will find a fit. If not, either contact me and I'll try to help you find your ways, or you do it alone, and go. Either way, go!

By reading, over and over, about the fundamental skills in the different segments, and practicing them, you give yourself an opportunity to back up in your life, and fill in the skill-gaps that we all have so as to contribute to yourself and others in more satisfying ways.

The key is practice. Harvey Penick, the famous golf teacher of "The Little Red Book" fame, reminded us that the value of lessons is to make practice more effective, which in turn leads to more satisfying performance. Use these segments of information and description of the skills as your lessons. Use your imagination to visualize the many instances you could use the skills. Use the methods for learning that are presented throughout. Some of the methods used with one skill will often work with another. Practice seeing yourself using the skills in a variety of situations. Recruit family and friends to work with you. Some of you might even corral skill-learning groups where you practice with each other.

In a perfect world, these skills would all be demonstrated on cd, video, dvd, and on interactive computerized learning systems. That would provide more brain compatible learning options. We will get that together later, if there is enough demand.

In the meantime, do what is here now, have fun, and I believe you will feel all the more satisfaction and confidence for your effort.