

## FIVE CORE SELF-SKILLS *Terrence Real*

(adapted from Pia Mellody's *Facing Co-Dependency*)

### 1. Self-Esteem

Holding self in warm regard despite imperfections and limitations

### Dysfunction

Shame  
Grandiosity

### 2. Self-Awareness

Knowing one's own experience (thoughts/emotions/sensations) and sharing them politically

### Dysfunction

Disassociation  
Perfectionism

### 3. Boundaries

Ability to protect and contain oneself while remaining connected to others

### Dysfunction

Too porous (reactive)  
Walled off (disengaged)

### 4. Interdependence

Identifying one's wants and needs; caring for self/letting others care for one appropriately

### Dysfunction

Overdependence  
Antidependent; Needless/wantless

### 5. Moderation

Experiencing and expressing oneself moderately

### Dysfunction

Immature (too "loose")  
"Supermature" (too "tight")

1. A child should be held in warm regard despite his imperfections. This is the first birthright. The parents' ability to cherish the child becomes internalized as the adult's capacity to cherish herself; this first core skill is self-esteem.

2. A child's feelings must be validated and put into a realistic perspective. The parents' ability to welcome a child's thoughts and feelings, without being perfectionistic or denigrating, becomes internalized as the adult's capacity to inhabit her own feelings and share them appropriately; this is owning your reality.

3. A child should be protected and contained without being overburdened or cut off. The parents' ability to set appropriate boundaries with the child, being neither fused nor disengaged, becomes internalized as the adult's capacity to connect without being overly porous or excessively walled off; this is having healthy boundaries.

4. A child should be taught how to do what she can for herself, and also to lean on others appropriately. The parents' ability to offer care without excess or neglect becomes internalized as the capacity to be independent when needed and yet also to ask others for help when one should; this is interdependence.

5. A child requires help feeling and behaving age appropriately. The parents' ability to have fitting expectations, without either unduly

indulging immaturity or demanding unsuitable levels of pseudo-maturity, becomes internalized as the adult's capacity to experience and express herself in a balanced way; this is moderation.

Healthy self-esteem, owning one's reality, good boundaries, interdependence, and moderation—these five abilities are hallmarks of a well-adjusted, well-functioning person. Immaturity is an imbalance in any of these five abilities; there is either "too much or too little."

Unhealthy self-esteem can be shame, feeling less-than, or grandiosity, feeling better-than.

When we own our reality we are in touch with our feelings, thoughts, sensations. We are able to share them appropriately, and view our experience in a realistic, human, way—without perceiving ourselves to be gods or monsters. Damage concerning one's reality can be expressed as doubts about one's experience, disassociation, or as judging oneself against a distorted standard—seeing oneself as either bad or defective, or as good and perfect.

Unhealthy boundaries can be either too porous or not open enough.

Unhealthy dependency is a state in which one is either overly dependent, or antidependent, needless and wantless.

Immoderateness can express itself as being either superimmature, a "big baby," too loose, or supermature, rigidly "adult," too tight.