

## Life Skill Education Development in India

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### ABSTRACT

Adolescence, a vital stage of growth and development, marks the period of transition from childhood to adulthood. It is characterized by rapid physiological changes and psychosocial maturation. Adolescence is also the stage when young people extend their relationships beyond parents and family and are intensely influenced by their peers and the outside world in general.

As adolescents mature cognitively, their mental process becomes more analytical. They are now capable of abstract thinking, better articulation and of developing an independent ideology. These are truly the years of creativity, idealism, buoyancy and a spirit of adventure. But these are also the years of experimentation and risk-taking, of giving in to negative peer pressure, of taking uninformed decisions on crucial issues, especially relating to their bodies and their sexuality. Adolescence is thus a turning point in one's life, a period of increased potential but also one of greater vulnerability.

**Key Words:** Adolescents, Childhood, Physiological, Creativity, Vulnerability

### Introduction

Life skills include psychosocial competencies and interpersonal skills that help people make informed decisions, solve problems, think critically and creatively, communicate effectively, build healthy relationships, empathize with others, and cope with managing their lives in a healthy and productive manner. Essentially, there are two kinds of skills - those related to thinking termed as "thinking skills"; and skills related to dealing with others termed as "social skills". While thinking skills relate to reflection at a personal level, social skills include interpersonal skills and do not necessarily depend on logical thinking. It is the combination of these two types of skills that are needed for achieving assertive behaviour and negotiating effectively. "Emotional" can be perceived as a skill not only in making rational decisions but also in being able to make others agree to one's point of view. To do that, coming to terms first with oneself is important. Thus, self management is an important skill including managing/coping with feelings, emotions, stress and resisting peer and family pressure. Young people as advocates need both thinking and social skills for consensus building and advocacy on issues of concern.

### Understanding Life Skills – A Teacher's prospective

Life skills have been defined as "the abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life" (WHO). 'Adaptive' means that a person is flexible in approach and is able to adjust in different circumstances. 'Positive behaviour' implies that a person is forward looking and even in difficult situations, can find a ray of hope and opportunities to find solutions. The terms 'Livelihood skills' or occupational/vocational skills refer to capabilities, resources and opportunities to pursue individual and household economic goals and relate to income generation. Thus, Life skills are distinct from livelihood skills.

### The Ten core Life Skills Education development :

1. Self-awareness
2. Empathy
3. Critical thinking

4. Creative thinking
5. Decision making
6. Problem Solving
7. Effective communication
8. Interpersonal relationship
9. Coping with stress
10. Coping with emotion

1. **Self-awareness:** includes recognition of ‘self’, our character, our strengths and weaknesses, desires and dislikes. Developing self-awareness can help us to recognize when we are stressed or feel under pressure. It is often a prerequisite to effective communication and interpersonal relations, as well as for developing empathy with others.



2. **Empathy:** To have a successful relationship with our loved ones and society at large, we need to understand and care about other peoples’ needs, desires and feelings. Empathy is the ability to imagine what life is like for another person. Without empathy, our communication with others will amount to one-way traffic. Worst, we will be acting and behaving according to our self-interest and are bound to run into problems. No man is an island, no woman either! We grow up in relationships with many people – parents, brothers and sisters, cousins, uncles and aunts, classmates, friends and neighbours.



When we understand ourselves as well as others, we are better prepared to communicate our needs and desires. We will be more equipped to say what we want people to know, present our thoughts and ideas and tackle delicate issues without offending other people. At the same time, we will be able to elicit support from others, and win their understanding.

Empathy can help us to accept others, who may be very different from ourselves. This can improve social interactions, especially, in situations of ethnic or cultural diversity. Empathy can also help to encourage nurturing behaviour towards people in need of care and assistance, or tolerance, as is the case with AIDS sufferers, or people with mental disorders, who may be stigmatized and ostracized by the very people they depend upon for support.



3. **Critical thinking:** Is an ability to analyze information and experiences in an objective manner. Critical thinking can contribute to health by helping us to recognize and assess the factors that influence attitudes and behaviour, such as values, peer pressure and the media.

4. **Creative thinking:** Is a novel way of seeing or doing things that is characteristic of four components – fluency (generating new ideas), flexibility (shifting perspective easily), originality (conceiving of something new), and elaboration (building on other ideas).

5. **Decision making:** Helps us to deal constructively with decisions about our lives. This can have consequences for health. It can teach people



how to actively make decisions about their actions in relation to healthy assessment of different options and, what effects these different decisions are likely to have.

6. **Problem solving:** Helps us to deal constructively with problems in our lives. Significant problems that are left unresolved can cause mental stress and give rise to accompanying physical strain.

7. **Interpersonal:** Relationship skills help us to relate in positive ways with the people we interact with. This may mean being able to make and keep friendly relationships, which can be of great importance to our mental and social well-being. It may mean keeping, good relations with family members, which are an important source of social support. It may also mean being able to end relationships constructively.



8. **Effective:** Communication means that we are able to express ourselves, both verbally and non-verbally, in ways that are appropriate to our cultures and situations. This means being able to express opinions and desires, and also needs and fears. And it may mean being able to ask for advice and help in a time of need.

9. **Coping with stress:** Means recognizing the sources of stress in our lives, recognizing how this affects us, and acting in ways that help us control our levels of stress, by changing our environment or lifestyle and learning how to relax.



10. **Coping with emotions:** Means involving recognizing emotions within us and others, being aware of how emotions influence behaviour and being able to respond to emotions appropriately. Intense emotions like anger or sadness can have negative effects on our health if we do not respond appropriately.



Life skills are essentially those abilities that help promote overall wellbeing and competence in young people as they face the realities of life. Life skills are the beginning of wisdom which focuses on behaviour change or developmental approach designed to address a balance of three areas- knowledge, attitude and skills. Life skills enable individuals to translate knowledge, attitude and values into actual abilities. e. what to do and how to do it, given the scope and opportunity to do so. Life skills however are not a panacea of “how to do abilities” as they are not the only factors that affect behaviour. There are many factors such as social support, culture and environment that affect motivation and ability to behave in positive ways. Effective acquisition and application of Life Skills can influence the way one feels about others, ourselves and will equally influence the way we are perceived by others. It contributes to perception of self confidence and self esteem.

Life skills for psychosocial competence needs to be distinguished from other important skills that young people will acquire as they grow up such as reading, numbers, technical and livelihood skills. Life skills education involves a

dynamic teaching process. The methods used to facilitate this active involvement includes working in small groups and pairs, brainstorming, role plays, games and debates. “We are guilty of many errors and many faults, but our worst crime is abandoning the children, neglecting the foundation of life. Many of the things we need, can wait. The children cannot. Right now is the time his bones are being formed, his blood is being made and his senses are being developed to him we cannot answer “Tomorrow”. His name is “Today”. Gabriela Mistral, 1948

**Conclusion:**

We all use Life Skills in different situations such as: a) To negotiate effectively at home, school or work place, we need to have thinking skills as well as social skills b) When faced with difficult situations we tend to think critically , to analyze all the pros and cons of the situation to think out of box to find a solution to seemingly difficult problems. Many life skills are required to manage a particular situation effectively. In a way, various Life Skills work best in conjunction. In fact, the appropriate combination of Life Skills in a given moment is an art.

Children learn their Life Skills from parents, teachers and significant others who act as their role model. They gradually learn to use a particular skill effectively in diverse situation to cope with challenges of life.

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