

# LIFE SKILLS.

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To succeed in life and maintain good character and discipline, Life skills are important.

## What are life skills?

Consider the following scenarios;

- a) A form two boy turned to drugs when he started failing in Mathematics and science subjects.
- b) An 18-year old girl committed suicide when she discovered she was pregnant.
- c) A 19-year old boy lost interest in life because his father forced him into studying medicine when he wanted to be a computer scientist.
- d) A second year university student's dream to become a teacher burst like a bubble when her parents asked her to quit school and marry a stranger a few months later.

Could some of these tragedies have been prevented if these teenagers were equipped with the ability to deal with the problems and demands of their daily lives?

Had that boy been able to cope with his pain of failing in Mathematics and Sciences, and learn how to improve, perhaps he would not have taken to drugs?

If that girl had persuaded her boyfriend the need not to have sex before marriage, perhaps she would not have lost her life?

The boy was aware of the harmful effects of drugs, and although he knew he should not take them, he did not have the will to say "No" when he was struck with grief and a friend offered them to him. The girl too, unwilling to have sex before marriage, was too afraid of offending her boyfriend. She did not know what to do when the boy made advances...

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That boy and girl both had the right knowledge and attitude. However, their behaviour did not follow their minds. Haven't we all had the "I know....but I can't help it!" experiences? Right information and good attitude do not necessarily lead to responsible behaviour.

What they missed are life skills, the ability to act.

Life skills enable us to translate knowledge, attitude and values into actual abilities – i.e. "What to do and how to do it." Life skills are a set of core abilities sometimes described as emotional intelligence.

Life Skills are abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life. (WHO)

UNICEF defines Life Skills as "a behaviour change or behaviour development approach designed to address a balance of three areas: knowledge, attitude and skills".

Life Skills are essentially those abilities that help to promote physical, mental and emotional wellbeing and competence to face the realities of life.

## Why we need life skills;

- To develop a dynamic self-image, self-confidence and great self-esteem.
- To improve the communication skills.
- To make relationships better and handle interpersonal problems.
- To boost our decision making ability and make informed decisions.
- To help us to deal with the challenges of everyday life.
- To become a well-adjusted individual.

## There are ten generic life skills;

- 1) Self-awareness,

- 2) Empathy,
- 3) Effective communication,
- 4) Interpersonal relationships,
- 5) Critical thinking,
- 6) Creative thinking,
- 7) Decision-making,
- 8) Problem- solving,
- 9) Coping with emotions,
- 10)Coping with stress.

## Self-Awareness;

- The ability to introspect, analyze and accept one's thoughts actions and feelings; recognizing and acknowledging one's needs and desires.
- Ability to know our self: Our Character, desires, likes dislikes and our strengths and weaknesses.
- Developing self-awareness can help us to recognize when we are stressed or feel under pressure. It is also often essential for effective communication and interpersonal relations, as well as for developing empathy for others.
- Self-awareness is the foundation for all the other life-skills we need to develop and essential to managing stress and emotions.
- To cope with emotional changes, we need to be aware of our emotional reactions and how they affect our behaviour.
- Awareness provides us with choices on how to react, rather than allowing them to govern our behaviour, which may lead to unpleasant consequences.
- Likewise, we have to be aware of how stress can affect our lives. We need to know what sort of harmful effects it can have on our mental and physical health. To do so we must discover the sources of stress, before we can take action to mitigate its impact on us.

## Empathy;

- Empathy is the ability to accept and understand others who are different from you.
- Empathy encourages a positive behaviour towards people in need of care and assistance.
- This skill works wonders when we apply it to our relationships with our loved ones, classmates, parents, friends, cousins and colleagues
- Finally it helps you to move closer to finding solutions, to resolve conflicts and enhance quality of life.

## Effective communication;

- Effective communication means that we are able to express ourselves, both verbally and nonverbally, in ways that are appropriate to our cultures and situations.
- It also involves effective listening, to understand every word or sign.
- It also involves Assertiveness, which is firmness of decisions and communicating your feelings without fear.

## Interpersonal relationships;

- Initiate and maintain positive relationships and de-link unconstructive relationships.
- Interpersonal relationship skills help us to relate in positive ways with the people we interact with.

## Critical thinking;

- Ability to analyze information, experiences, situations and circumstances, etc. in an objective manner and rationally.
- Recognizing and assessing factors influencing our attitude and behaviour.
- It is not merely criticizing.
- Making objective judgments about choices and risks.
- 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.

## Creative thinking;

- Ability to;
  - Think differently and out of the box
  - Look beyond our direct experience
  - Respond adaptively
  - Having flexibility to situations in daily life
  - Achieving the objectives in daily life situations
- By thinking creatively we can find the solutions when it seems that there is no way out.
- Critical thinking promotes creativity. Just generating new ideas does not work. One needs to generate new ideas which are useful and relevant.
- Creative thinking helps us in improving ourselves after self-reflection.
- Creative thinking contributes to both decision making and problem solving.
- It helps us to look beyond our direct experience, and even if no problem is identified, or no decision is to be made, we learn from the experience

- Can help us to respond adaptively and with flexibility to the situations of our daily lives.

## Decision Making;

Ability to;

- Choose the best amongst the various alternatives or options in many life situations.
- Weigh the pros and cons of alternatives.
- Accepting responsibility for consequences of the decision with confidence.

Decision making helps us to deal constructively with decisions about our lives.

## Problem Solving;

- Problem solving enables 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.

## Steps in Problem Solving;

- Clearly identifying the problem
- Explore the available alternatives
- Weigh the consequence of each alternative and priorities.
- Decide the best possible solution.

If decision fails, No need to panic, try another alternative/consult trusted person.

## Use Power Model in Problem Solving;

**P-** Identify / state the problem.

**O-** Examine the Options.

**W** -Weigh Each Option.

**E-** Elect Best Option.

**R-** Review and reflect.

## Coping with Emotion;

- Recognizing emotions in ourselves and others.
- Being aware of how emotions influence behaviour.
- Being able to respond to emotions appropriately.

Intense emotions, like anger or sorrow can have negative effects on our health if we do not react appropriately.

## Coping with stress;

- Coping with stress is about recognizing the sources of stress in our lives.
- Recognizing how this affects us.
- Acting in ways that help to control our levels of stress by changing our environment or life style and learning how to relax so that tensions created by unavoidable stress do not give rise to health problems.