

## Life Skills – skills to be taught or acquired

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### Abstract

Life skills education at all ages from school level to degree level is of great use and many educational bodies and institutions are providing life skills education in their personality development programmes with an objective in the overall development and grooming integrated personalities in personal, social and public sector with functional capabilities, responsibilities to self, society and nation.

**KEYWORDS:** Life Skills, self awareness, learning, abilities, skills

## LIFE SKILLS



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Life skills have been defined by the World Health Organization as “abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life”. They represent the psycho-social skills that determine valued behavior and include reflective skills such as problem-solving and critical thinking, to personal skills such as self-awareness, and to interpersonal skills. Practicing life skills leads to qualities such as self-esteem, sociability and tolerance, to action competencies to take action and generate change, and capabilities to have the freedom to

decide ‘what to do’ and ‘who to be’. Life skills are thus distinctly different from physical or perceptual motor skills, such as practical or health skills, as well as from livelihood skills, such as arts, crafts, money management and entrepreneurial skills. Health and livelihood education however, can be designed to be complementary to life skills education, and vice versa.

Life skills-based education is now recognized as a methodology to address a variety of issues of child and youth development and thematic responses.

Expected learning outcomes include a combination of knowledge, values, attitudes and skills with a particular emphasis on those skills that relates to critical thinking and problem solving, self-management and communication and inter-personal skills

**Is literacy a part of life skill?** Yes, literacy is part of life skill and the very term basic education, should impart both literacy and life skill. The world is facing the most difficult of times now, with the technology at its best stage of development, exposing privacy, beyond the warranted limits. People growing insensitive, to video shoot a mishap to upload first, whether it’s a suicide, homicide or rape or mercy killing, insensitivity is the call of the day. We need to develop the skill and know-how to do something or reach our goals or to empathize or to be sensitive netizen’s and citizens. Life skill competencies such as critical thinking, creativity and organizing ability, social skills, communication skills, adaptability, problem solving skills, ability to cooperate etc., which can shape a human being for the future need to be developed. Literacy and life skill to apply the conceptual thinking and how to reflect in concrete situations, capacity building to be involved in effective interaction with the environment and provide an appropriate motivational attitude, the psychological prerequisites for a successful performance with self-awareness, self-esteem, confidence, problem solving capabilities, crisis management skills, situational analysis and critical thinking.

### Is soft skill and life skill the same?



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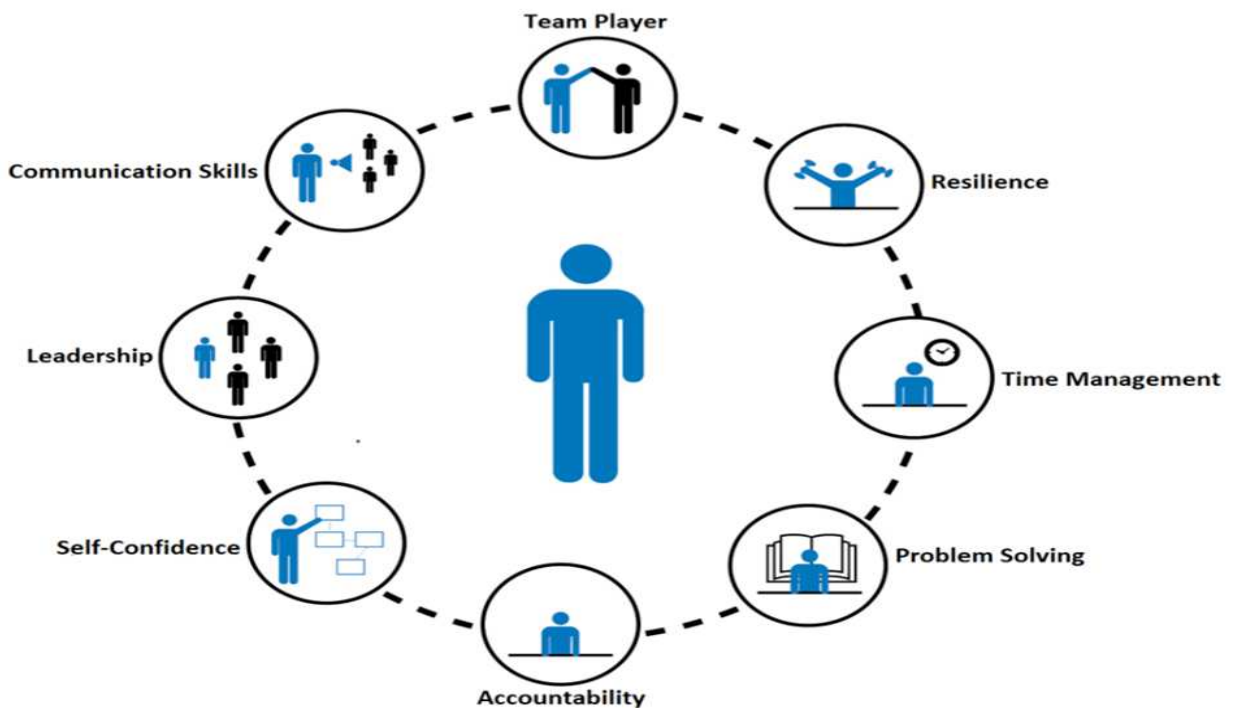
When some wade through life with apparent ease, some struggle to get through. Life skills with its core focus make a great effect and a big difference to an individual's personal, familial, social, spiritual and professional success. Soft skills equip a person into a social structure. Thus soft skills can improve or add on value to an individual's life skills.

### Individual and workplace dimension or social and citizen skill



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Life skill has a dual angle. Personal fulfilment being the epitome of life skill, self-realization and social responsibility includes empowerment, self fulfilment and the capacity to be part of a heterogeneous group and yet strive for common goals. Life Skill is also success in personal and professional life. In social skills, life skills is about how cohesive one can be, happiness, wellbeing, group functioning, and how one can relate to others and live together.



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### Life skill education –taught or acquired?

More than the generic definition, it is a necessity to know how it can be defined in particular life situations and throughout life. It is a process developed as a result of life experiences, encounters, impressions and information through individual and social interactions, on a daily basis at work and in one’s own life. Social dimensions condition

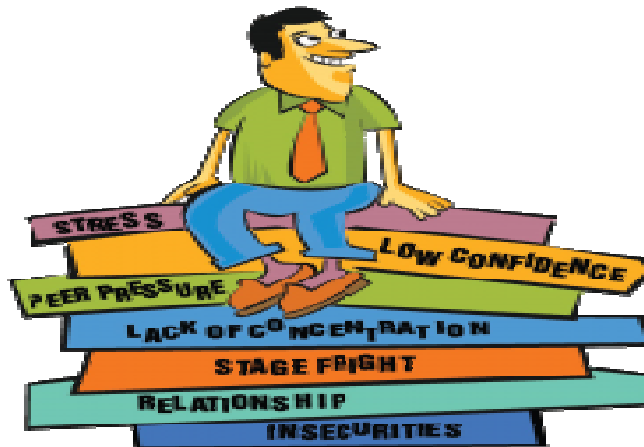
the behavior and life to purposefully acquire skills, develop attitudes and values in order to face and master reality and life situations. These skills need to be adapted and defined.

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### Age to learn life skills

Learning life skills is not constrained to any age in life. Life skill learning integrates living and learning across family, community, work, leisure etc., from birth to death. It reflects the knowledge, experience, wisdom, harmony and self-realization in the realm of life.



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### Life skills – should it be included in curriculum?

Adolescence embarks a crucial period of growth and development, a period of transition from childhood to adulthood. Hormone changes, physiological changes and psychological changes happen during this time. Cognitive maturity begins at this stage

with an analytical mental process, abstract thinking, more articulation, and independent thoughts. Adolescence is the period of adventures, creativity, idealism, experimentation. It is a period of peer pressure whether positive or negative. Adolescence takes uninformed decisions on crucial issues, about their sexuality etc. with great vulnerability.

Adolescence is period of developing identity. It is a period of frequent mood changes reflecting all the feelings of happiness, anger, sadness, fear, love, shame, guilt, pride etc. They are also reluctant to share their concerns. Proper counselling facilities may not be available and if available also they may be shy to share.

Adolescence is a time when relationships are redefined whether it is parents, peers or members of opposite sex. Lack of social skills prevents them from building positive and healthy relationships with others. Also the importance of mutual respect and socially defined boundaries of relationships takes a back seat during adolescence. Negative peer pressure is hard to resist during this age and vulnerability to yield to this pressure to experiment with life is on the higher side. Substance abuse, irresponsibility and aggressive self-conduct becomes a norm. Experimentation to smoking may lead to hard drugs abuse and addiction.

Social media is at its best in this era. Exposure to media, has given rise to insensitivity and many mixed messages from the fast changing world, strengthening them to question traditional values, conventional practices and ethics behind them. The generation gap or human communication gap makes them seek social media and ill-informed peers which lead to suffering, conflict with law or society.

Hence understanding life skills helps greatly to integrate a human being.

WHO states that life skill is adaptive and positive behavior towards the demands and challenges of everyday life. 'Adaptive' means flexible approach to be able to adjust in different circumstances. 'Positive behavior' is eliciting good thoughts in different circumstances to find hope and opportunities to move forward. 'Livelihood skills' is the occupational skills of capabilities to be resourceful to find a living for oneself and the society. Life skills are essentially different from livelihood skills. Life skills is the integration of psychosocial competencies, interpersonal skills to make informed decisions, to solve problems amicably, to think critically and creatively, communicate effectively, build healthy relationships, empathize with others, cope with one's life adversities, to live life productively, think effectively, to deal with others effectively using social skills etc. It helps to reflect at a personal level, and social skills do not depend on logical thinking alone. Negotiation skills and emotional skills can impart rational decisions.

Moving to higher education, in this age and era, any higher education is deemed to culminate with management education, in any field, from Engineering, Medicine, Nursing, Hospitality, Aeronautics, Arts, Science or Commerce, the youth completes their education with management education. When management education teaches to manage others, how many of them have the education to manage self? Self-management is key to success in managing oneself and others. Only if we know to manage our self, can we successfully manage others. Hence

Self-Management is an important skill. One should be aware to manage or cope with one's own feelings, emotions, stress and family pressure, peer pressure, social pressure and emotions.

WHO has laid down ten core Life Skills:



1. **Self-Awareness:** recognition of 'Self', strengths, weakness, desires, dislikes. It helps in effective communication and interpersonal relations, empathy etc.
2. **Empathy:** understanding and caring about other people's needs, desires and feelings. It is the ability to feel like another person. Without empathy we cannot feel for others and we tend to think, feel and act from our self-interest only. Empathy helps in nurturing behavior to care, tolerate others who are in need of help with sickness, mental disorders or stigmatized or ostracized people for various reasons.
3. **Critical thinking:** ability to analyze information to arrive at a rational, objective way. Critical thinking affects our attitude, behavior, values and ethics.
4. **Creative thinking:** is imaginative with wide variety of new things, ideas and flexibility.
5. **Decision making:** helps to make constructive decision to self and others. It helps in healthy assessment of different options and the effect of different decisions on them.
6. **Problem solving:** unresolved problems cause mental stress and physical strain and stress leading to health issues and constant sickness and lack of well-being. This skill helps in finding logical, practical solutions to harping problems.
7. **Interpersonal relationship:** this skill helps to relate with people positively. It helps in keeping good relations with peers, family members and good social relations. It helps to end unwanted relations constructively without much damage.
8. **Effective Communication:** the basic mode of expression is communication. Verbal, non-verbal, sign language or through touch and emotions. Communication needs to take into account our culture, circumstances and situations. One needs to express opinions, desires, needs, fears, rejection etc.

through communication and seek help or advice or give help or advice through effective communication.

9. **Coping with stress:** there are different sources of stress in our lives. This skill helps to recognize the source, the affect and effect of the source and stress in our life and to act in ways that helps us to control stress levels or change the circumstance or situation or lifestyle or environment to alleviate the same and if we cannot alleviate, then the coping mechanism to withstand stress and move forward.
10. **Coping with emotion:** we are emotional beings. How to recognize the emotion, the ‘why’, ‘when’, ‘how’ and ‘what’ of emotions about ourselves and others and to respond to these emotions appropriately. Intense emotions can create havoc with our health. Appropriate coping mechanism save us from health issues.

Growing minds need ‘Life Skills’ to act responsibly, to translate knowledge, attitudes and skills to abilities. In middle age, life skills imparts, self-actualization and in geriatrics, life skills is essential to find meaning and purpose in living.

Psychological factors like emotional pain, conflicts, frustrations and anxieties drive in high risk behavior. Alcoholism, drug abuse, casual relationships, insensitivity and intolerance to spouse, boredom, rebellion etc. are on a rising graph in this period. Life skill training is an efficient tool to for youth empowerment for responsible behavior and to take control of oneself to resist them from anti-social and high risk behaviors.



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Life skills program or education should be imparted from school level to college level, with practical activities, feedback, reflections, reinforcement, discussions, experience sharing, brainstorming, demonstration, guided practice, role plays, audio visual activities through art, music, dance, decision mapping or problem trees, group presentation, educational games, simulations, case studies, storytelling, debates, practical application with follow up. Life skills come under applied process and hence life skill education should impart knowledge and information on the most relevant skills in behavior, positive and negative effect of behavior, correcting misperceptions, opportunities to observe effective application, self-evaluation, benefits, practicality and process.

### Conclusion:

Life skills are essential abilities to promote overall wellbeing and constructive, healthy competence. It imparts wisdom to focus on positive behavioral change and developmental approach in the 'ASK' (attitude, skill and Knowledge) area. It helps translation of 'ASK' into actual abilities. It can influence the way they feel about self and others, the conception of self confidence and self-esteem. Life skills help in effective negotiation, and critical thinking.



For overall development, education sector should reflect on the curriculum to prepare students in school and higher education to create new avenues of education. We need to promote standards of excellence so that we can reduce social problems of drug abuse, sexual behavior, addiction to alcohol and social media and societal ills promoting and producing life failures. Through proper awareness we can build a nation of promising youth. All educational sectors from school level to higher educational bodies and institutions need to include this life skills training as part of their PDP's (personality development programs) so that we can catch them young to impart life skill knowledge, awareness and education, to inculcate values, abilities, skills and to develop them into integrated human beings, doing good to self, family, society and the nation at large.

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