

Continuous and Comprehensive Education for Co-Scholastic Skills: Life Skills

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Adolescents-the population in the age group of 10-19 years- constitute more than one-fifth of population of our country. Adolescence is the period of rapid development when young acquire new capacities and are faced with new challenges. With greater levels of logical and critical thinking and problem solving they are involved in establishing social identity. It is not only a time of opportunity but also of vulnerability to risk behaviours which can have lifelong consequences. In order to prepare young people for the life and work in a rapidly changing world, it is important to **develop life skills** in them. This will enable them to manifest their inner potential with confidence and competence and face the challenges of life.

"**Life Skills** are abilities for **adaptive** and **positive behavior** that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life." (WHO) The effective and appropriate utilization of life skills can influence the way one feels about oneself and others and can enhance one's productivity, efficacy, self-esteem and self-confidence.

'Adaptive' means that a person is flexible in approach and is able to adjust to different circumstances.

'Positive Behaviour' implies that a person is forward looking, and finds a ray of hope, solution and opportunities even in difficult situations.

In particular, life skills are a group of psychosocial competencies and interpersonal skills that help people think critically , creatively, make informed decisions, solve problems, and communicate effectively, build healthy relationships, empathise with others, and cope with stress & emotions and manage their lives in a healthy and productive manner.

Life Skills are individual skills/abilities that each one of us possess and yet, need to enhance in order to meet the challenges of life.

There are many such skills, but core life skills include the ability to:

- Think critically, creatively, Make decisions and solve problems .
- Clarify and analyze values.
- Communicate including listening, build empathy, be assertive, and negotiate.
- Cope with emotions and stress .
- Be self-aware and feel empathy with others .

The WHO has identified five basic areas of Life Skills that are relevant across cultures incorporating ten Life Skills:

- Self Awareness and Empathy;
- Creative Thinking and Critical Thinking;
- Decision Making and Problem Solving;

- Effective Communication and Interpersonal Skills;
- Coping with Emotions and Coping with Stress.

These skills have been classified in three groups, namely, Thinking Skills; Emotional Skills and Social Skills as below:

Thinking skills	Emotional Skills	Social Skills
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self Awareness • Critical Thinking • Creative Thinking • Decision making • Problem solving 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coping with Emotions • Coping with Stress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empathy • Interpersonal Relations • Effective Communication

1. Self Awareness



Self-awareness is a unique human capacity and includes our recognition of 'self', of our character, of our strengths and weaknesses, desires and dislikes, values, outlook, needs, aspirations and feelings. Developing self awareness can help us to recognize when we are stressed or feel under pressure.

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, means us in other person's shoes. Without empathy, our communication with others will amount to one-way traffic. 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.

3. Critical Thinking is the ability to analyze information and experiences in an objective manner. It helps adolescents to recognize and to assess the factors influencing attitude & behavior - values, pressures from peer, media and family. While thinking critically one weighs the pros & cons and the consequences of any action. This is the key to form right attitudes towards life and assists in developing responsible behavior.

4. Creative Thinking is a novel/innovative 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). It can also be called ‘out-of-the-box-thinking’. This enables to explore available alternatives and consequences of actions or non-actions and contributes to Decision Making & Problem Solving.

5. Decision Making is ability to assess available options and to foresee the consequences of different decisions (actions/non-actions). This ability helps us to deal constructively with decisions about our lives. This can have positive consequences for health.. Taking no decision is also a decision. Making decision after examining the choices & consequences in view of one’s values and goals is ‘Responsible Decision Making’.

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 and **also** 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.

Key Messages

- Various life skills work best in conjunction.
- Many life skills are required to manage a particular situation effectively, for example having effective communication; one may also have to use critical thinking, empathy and creative thinking.
- The appropriate combination of Life Skills at a given moment is an art.

What is the Life Skills Education Approach? The life skills approach is an interactive, educational methodology that not only focuses on transmitting knowledge but also aims at shaping attitudes and developing interpersonal skills. The main goal of the life skills approach is to help adolescents enhance their ability to take responsibility for making healthier choices, resisting negative pressures, and avoiding risk behaviors. Teaching methods are age appropriate, gender-sensitive, interactive, and participatory. The most common teaching methods include working in groups, brainstorming, role-playing, story telling, debating, and participating in discussions and audiovisual activities. Adolescents learn life skills from parents, teachers and other significant people who act as role models. Stories from Panchtantra and Jataka Tales are based on effective utilization of Life Skills, e.g., *'The thirsty crow'* or *'The Hare and Tortoise'*.

Life skills can never be learnt listening to lectures.

YUVA School Life Skills programme which is based on ten core life skills has the potential for developing life skills among students. To be effective, the teaching of Life Skills is coupled with the teaching of information related to hygiene, health, environment and the promotion of positive (health promoting and pro-social) attitudes and values. It will help them to acquire a positive attitude towards life, value for self and others, respect for elder, compassion for animals and value of harmony, peace and violence.

Thus it will enrich the total personality of the learner.

The development of Life Skills requires modelling of Life Skills by school staff and a "safe", supportive classroom environment that is conducive to the practice and reinforcement of skills. Furthermore, Life Skills Education needs to be developed as part of a *whole school initiative* designed to support the healthy psychosocial development of children and adolescents, for example, through the promotion of child-friendly practices in schools. Thus the involvement of ALL Teachers, Principals, and other staff members is essential for ensuring a successful and complete roll out of Life Skills Education in the system.

Central Board of Secondary Education has introduced Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) for class 9 and 10 which include evaluation of scholastic and co-scholastic skills. Assessment of life skills in students are part of co-scholastic skills which would be assessed on 5 point scales. Records of all the students are to be maintained separately round the year.

It will be easier for a teacher to assess the development of life skills in her/his students if she/ he follow the YUVA SLP hand books. Based on the hand books number 3 (YUVA for All) and number 9 (for classes 9 and 10) YUVA Cell SCERT has prepared indicators for assessing life skills among school students.

Guidelines to use the indicators for Assessment

ζ To assess the life skills of students in your class round the year, you have to conduct YUVA **sessions** (which are based on life skills) indicated in you weekly time table.

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After conducting each session in the class you will be able to assess/identify the life skills of students with the help of indicators that have been provided to you in this 'Manual'.

These indicators are suggestive and not exhaustive,

The indicators are meant for assessment of Life Skills component of CCE using YUVA sessions.

You should ask these questions after conducting each session. (Students may be asked to write their responses with examples to supplement their response as instructed.) They may maintain a notebook/ diary for this.

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While conducting the role plays mentioned in the **sessions** it is important that you involve different students every time. This will help more students to develop self-esteem and confidence and will give you opportunity to observe skills in more number of students.

ζ You have to observe the students closely for assessing their life skills.

- ζ You can put ✓ against the indicator (see annexure for the list of indicators) that shows development of certain skill or positive development or X if it is negative.
- ζ You will assess students in all three types of skills separately.
- ζ At the end of the year add all ✓s and assess the grade on 5 point scale

Most indicators in a skill	A+
Many indicators in a skill	A
Some indicators in a skill	B+
Few indicators in a skill	B
Very few indicators in a skill	C

- ζ Maintain record for each student separately.
- ζ It will be better if you take help of students for maintaining records
- ζ They should know about their own life skills regularly as this will give them chance to improve them in case needed

Method of assessment

- **Individual assessment:** which focuses on one child while she/he is doing an activity/task and thus recognises individual work and accomplishments
- **Group assessment:** which focuses on the learning and progress of a group of children working on a task together with the objective of completing it. This method of organization is found to be more useful in order to assess social skills, co-operative learning processes and other value related dimensions of a child's behaviour.
- **Self-assessment:** refers to the child's own assessment of her/his learning and progress in knowledge, skills, processes, interests, attitudes etc.
- **Peer-assessment:** refers to one child assessing other children. This can be conducted in pairs or in groups.

All teachers need to be involved in assessing Co-Scholastic Skills of children because it:

- Reduces Subjectivity
- Makes all teachers involved
- Makes all teachers accountable.
- Removes Biases

- Distributes work load among teacher
- Reduces the work load of the class teacher
- Simplifies work with regularly maintained record (on computer)
- Provides a point of reference to all teachers.