



## 21ST CENTURY LIFE SKILLS - A STEP TOWARDS MAKING YOUTH FUTURE READY

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### Introduction:

Adolescence, a vital stage of growth and development marked with the period of transition from childhood to adulthood. It is a period of turmoil for most of the youngsters because of extended relationships beyond parents and family; they are intensely influenced by their peers and the outside world in general. Thus, this period has increased potential and at the same time, one of greater vulnerability. The child isn't little but is still not prepared to shoulder the various responsibilities of being an adult. He has opinions, ideas and judgements but what he doesn't have, still, is a fully developed abilities to make balance between life challenges. As a result, we find a large number of youths are led astray and are engaged in anti-social activities which lead to serious social problems like alcoholism, smoking, sexual abuse and drug abuse. These vices drain the physical and intellectual capabilities of our youth and lead them towards high-risk behavior. However, every youngster's dream to leave the nest and live on their own once they turn 18. Adulthood

comes with its own new wonders and challenges. Age doesn't always mean a teenager is equipped to live independently. There are few skills, adolescents should know before they head out into the world to chart their own path.

Every moment, sometimes without even thinking about it, one rely on few basic psycho-social skills that helps in managing daily living and that have an impact on physical and emotional health – these are called life skills. Life skills are not just something about learning finances, cooking or doing laundry. It is indeed much more than that. World Health Organization has defined Life skills as the abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life. As teens grow into their independence, they need to learn the set of interrelated psychosocial competencies and interpersonal skills that help them to make informed decisions, solve problems, think critically and creatively, communicate

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effectively, build healthy relationships, empathize with others, and cope with emotions and stress of their lives in a healthy and productive manner. This could be better understood in a way that to have a successful relationship with our loved ones and society at large, one need to understand and care about other peoples' needs, desires and feelings. 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 neighbors. When one has understanding of own self as well as others, he/she is better prepared to communicate our needs and desires. One will be more equipped to say what they want people to know, present thoughts and ideas and tackle delicate issues without offending other people.

Whether we call them **life skills**, soft skills, social/emotional skills\ or growth mindset, there is a consensus among researchers and practitioners that adolescents need certain abilities to become agile learners, to achieve fullest potential at school, and in private lives. Valuable benefits brought by life skills development among youth based on research findings include:

- Promotion of positive social attitude and behavior among the adolescents,

- Help in boosting self-esteem, reduce stress, depression, and anxiety, and improve the overall quality of life.
- Prevention of anti-social activities and behavior of adolescents.
- Helps in the promotion of general well-being and primary prevention
- Practicing pro-social is a gateway to building other important skills such as conflict resolution, healthy communication and kindness towards others
- Helps them reason and present their thoughts in an organized and persuasive manner.
- Recognize the impact of ones actions and teaches them to take responsibility for what they do rather than blame others
- Improves their social status as they interact and entertain their friends and acquaintance
- Developing Life Skills at this stage of life makes the individual ready for the future, instills leadership qualities, be more adaptable, confident, and empathetic.
- With better 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, a person will be considered more ethical and gets respect in society

### **Ways to develop Life Skills among adolescents:**

There are a number of transferable skills that every student needs to use in his/her

academic, personal and social lives. It is important to equip youth with the right set of life skills that turn them into successful and effective professionals in future.

- 1. Inculcate reading skills:** Reading is the best feasible way to bind with oneself and with the world out there. The more a child reads, the more he/she is familiar with words, circumstances, feelings, fiction, and characters. Analyze the story and portray the situation of the story and comprehend the distinction between good and bad.
- 2. Keeping a journal:** Writing our thoughts down can help us explore what is going on in our minds – what we think, how we feel, what inspires or frightens us. Writing provides a sense of clarity especially for confusing and complex feelings we don't yet understand
- 3. Be open with set boundaries:** In order to form and maintain strong bonds with others, there needs to be a mutual give-and-take when it comes to sharing information with one another. A boundary in your interpersonal relationships might look like having limits on when you spend time together or expectations for when you will be there for one another.
- 4. Practice active listening:** Use tactics like active listening and open body language to demonstrate attentiveness. This opens the door to more positive interactions
- 5. Be polite:** Good manners go a long way. Words like “please” and “thank you” are small but powerful ways to soften requests.
- 6. Improve your emotional intelligence:** Put yourself in their shoes. Imagine what they might be going through and try to understand their feelings. One will better understand their perspective, which will help you respond appropriately.
- 7. Community Service** not only helps in fruitful interaction not only with classmates and teachers in school but also with other adults as well as children belonging to the underprivileged classes develop the social skills to render service towards the community
- 8. Playing educational games:** Educational games are instructional tools which support students in learning knowledge and skills and involve the use of problem solving strategies and techniques.
- 9. Engage in art and craft activities:** Pursuing arts and crafts allows to exercise flexible thinking and incorporate a number of extremely crucial cognitive skills. Along with this, involvement in art and craft generally can minimize anxiety and combat negative mood.
- 10. Practicing mindfulness** to develop full awareness in the here and now, promote non-judgmental observance and acceptance

of our inner thoughts and feelings and help us release and overcome emotional pain.

**11. Build Your Support Network:** Having emotional support can help create a protective buffer against stress

Life skills have no expiry dates and are necessary for every stage of life. The same way toddlers need to learn gross motor skills, teens need to prepare for their adult life. According to Harvard's Center on the Developing Child, it's less about grades and extracurricular activities, and more about a core set of skills that help people navigate life's inevitable challenges. No one is born with these skills, but everyone can learn them through practice. By learning these life skills, adolescents increase their understanding of the world around them and equip themselves with the tools they need to live a more industrious, productive and fulfilling life, thereby finding ways to best handle the challenges of life.