

# Life Skill Education for Adolescents: It's Relevance in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

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## ABSTRACT

*Life of individual is undergoing significant transition and change in the 21st century. Among the most affected are the adolescents. Adolescents are considered as the future of a society due to their various developmental capacities. But it has been observed that most of the adolescents are not able to utilize their capabilities due to lack of proper environment and engaged in antisocial activities. Life skills are important of part of adolescent's life. Life skills help them to take positive action to promote health life and positive social relationships. So it is necessary that life skill education should form an integral part of our education system. In the present paper attempt has been made to throw light on the importance of life skills and imparting its education among adolescents.*

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## 1. Introduction

In the 21st century, life of people is undergoing significant transition and change. Societal pressures, complexity and diversity, environmental change and continued deprivation put adolescents at the crossroads of their lives to face the responsibilities of adulthood and to enter in the world of work. Adolescents are the future of our country and Core life skills forms an essential part of their life. So there is urgent need to help and guiding them in decision-making, problem solving, critical thinking, developing interpersonal skills, self-awareness, empathy, coping with stress and managing emotions. It is the responsibility of the parents to help them by understanding and solving their problems and try to develop life skills so that adolescents take responsibility for making choices, resisting negative pressure and avoiding risky behaviour. So we should try to safeguard, protect and guide them. In this regard life skills education is a good support system for adolescents. Effective acquisition and application of life skills can influence the way they feels about others, themselves and will equally influence the way they are perceived by others.

## 2. Significance of the Study

Now a days the life of adolescents are becoming miserable due to many reasons including inappropriate home, school as well as social environment. They are becoming individuals who are less motivated, less confident and are engaging in antisocial activities and spoiling their valuable life. Adolescence is a period in which their intellectual, physical and all other capabilities are very high but their antisocial activities and behaviour are deteriorating all their capabilities and they are becoming a burden to the society. Again the traditional system of education can no more provide inputs to adolescents to deal with the complexities that have developed as a result of increasing complexities in contemporary societies. Imparting life skill training through incorporating life skill education will help our adolescents to overcome such difficulties in life. Moreover, there is need to equip adolescents with life skills and Life Skills Education so that adolescents can cope up with this

present complex scenario of life. Thus, it is necessary to develop life skills education programs as part of curriculum at different levels of schooling process. Keeping in mind the above fact the present study tries to throw light various life skills needed for healthy life, life skill education and importance of imparting life skill education among adolescents.

## 3. Life Skills

Life skill development is a natural process start when the child is born but it often needs intervention to boost the skill development. The ways individual grow, learn, and behave provide the basic steps for life skill development. Life skills enable individuals to identify their own strength and weakness so that to keep a steady personality. Life skill of a person develops over the years continuously in a dynamic manner. Life skills are ability for adaptive and positive behaviour that individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life. **World Health Organization (W.H.O)** has defined life skills as, "the abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life (Wikipedia). In other words Life skills are nothing but the abilities of an individual that facilitate their physical, mental and emotional well-being and competence in young people as they face the realities of life. It is through life skills they will solve their problems, manage situations and cope up with a variety of stressors. Life skill education enhances young people's ability to take responsibility for making choices, resisting negative pressure and avoiding risky behaviour. The ten life skills are as follows

1. **Critical thinking:** - It is the ability that helps to analyze information and experiences in an objective manner and enable one to recognize and assess the factors that has impact in our attitudes and behaviour eg-values, peer pressure, and the media.
2. **Creative thinking:** -Ability to look beyond our direct experience and address issues. It contributes to both decision making and problem solving by enabling us to explore the available alternatives.

3. **Decision making** –It is a choice that makes between two or more possible options.
4. **Problem solving:** Helps us to deal constructively with problems in our lives.
5. **Interpersonal relationships:** -Help us to relate in positive ways with the people we interact with. It helps one to make and keep friendly relationships which are important to our mental and social well-being. It also includes keeping good relations with family members, which are an important source of social support.
6. **Effective communications:** Ability 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, desires, needs and fears.
7. **Coping with emotions:** It is the ability that helps to recognize emotions in ourselves and in others, make people aware about how emotions influences our behaviour, and enable one to respond to emotions appropriately..
8. **Self-awareness:-** Means recognition of ourselves, our character, our strengths and weaknesses, desires and dislikes. Development of self-awareness can help an individual to recognize the situation when we are stressed or feel under pressure.
9. **Empathy:** - Empathy is the ability to imagine what life is like for another person, even in a situation that we may not be familiar with.
10. **Coping with stress:** - Coping with stress is recognizing the sources of stress in our lives, recognizing how this affects us, and acting in ways that help to control our levels of stress.

#### 4. Need of life skills and Life Skill Education for Adolescents

Adolescence is the most crucial phase of an individual's life. It is considered as transitional stage from childhood to adulthood which is characterised by physical, cognitive, emotional and social changes. Due to globalization and technology development life of styles of people has changed markedly .The highly competitive world of today and the lack of traditional norms and values have increased the stress among adolescents resulting in multiple mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, loneliness, rejection, anger, confliction in interpersonal relationship and failure. In such a situation, training in life skill education helps them to deal with such issues effectively. Life skill education is nothing but a value added program the aim of which is to provide students with strategies to make healthy choices that contribute to a meaningful life. It enables the adolescents to understand their self as well as helps to assess their skills, abilities and different areas of development. It also helps adolescents to make effective adjustment with other people, with their environment and making responsible decision. The prime objective of life skill education is to make the learner aware to develop a concept of oneself as a person of worth and dignity. It is considered as basic learning need of all individuals. Skills like leadership, responsibility, communication, intellectual capacity, self esteem, Interpersonal skill can be extends up to its maximum level, if it is effectively practiced. So there is the need to create life skill education as the foundation of various youth

programmers and an integral part of our formal education process. It promotes mental well-being in young people and equips them to face the realities of life. Life skills education equips individual to behave in a socially acceptable ways and in healthy living as it supports mental well-being and behavioural preparedness, (Nair, 2005). Consequently, life skills education can be seen as empowering adolescent to take more responsibility for their actions (Srikala and Kishore, 2005). In life skill education various skill based approach are adopted to develop students innate quality and also motivating them to adopt socially acceptable pattern of life styles. .

#### 5. Benefits of Imparting Life Skills among Adolescence

Imparting life skill education in adolescents will bring valuable benefits. Such as-

- a) Promotion of self esteem, peace education, self confidence and encourage one to take positive actions and improving their coping skills of stress and problem solving ability.
- b) Prevention of antisocial activities and behaviour by developing life skills among adolescents including-cognitive, emotional, interpersonal and social skills that enable individuals to deal effectively with challenges in everyday life
- c) Development of life skills in individual can influence the way adolescents feel about themselves and others, and equally will influence the way they are perceived by others.
- d) Life skills enable them to utilize their knowledge, attitudes and values in practice ie. What to do and how to do it and enable individuals to behave in healthy ways and Promotes ability of social adjustment, boost their level of adaptability and psychological capacity.
- e) Life skill education also improves the academic performance of individuals as well as helps in decreasing mental disorder symptoms especially anxiety, depression and stress among students (Nasser et al.. 2010)

#### 6. Programmes of activities for Promoting Life Skills among Adolescents

Following activities can be undertaken to develop life skills among students as well as adolescents.

- Class room discussion can be organised on various problem in small or large group. It provides scope for students to learn from one another and practice turning to one another in solving problems. Thus, enables students to deepen their understanding of the topic and personalize their connection to it and helps develop skills in listening, assertiveness, and empathy.
- Role play is an informal dramatization where people act out in a given situation. It gives strategy for practicing skills; experiencing how an individual I can handle a situation in real life; increase empathy for others and their point of view; and develops insight into one's own feelings.
- Through play also life skills can be developed among adolescents. It can be used for teaching content,

critical thinking, problem solving and decision making and for review and reinforcement. Simulations are activities structured to feel like the real experience. Games and simulations provide scope for fun, active learning, and rich discussion in the classroom as participants work hard to prove their points or earn points.

- Situation analysis is another means that allows students to explore problems and dilemmas and safely test solutions. It gives opportunities to work together, share ideas, and learn that people sometimes see things differently.
- Case studies are powerful tool for thought and discussion. With the involvement in the thinking process, students can improve their own decision making skills. Case studies can be applied to some specific activities so that students can be helped to practice healthy responses before they find themselves confronted with a health risk.
- Debate provides opportunity to address a particular issue in depth and creatively. Students can be encouraged to participate in debate, for instance,

whether smoking should be banned in public places in a community. It allows students to defend a position and offers a chance to practice higher thinking skills.

- Story telling is another important means that help students think about local problems and develop critical thinking skills. Students can use their creative skills in different activities such as- to write stories as well as a group can work interactively to tell stories.

## 7. Conclusion

Adolescence is a period in which their antisocial activities and behaviour deteriorate all their positive qualities and capabilities. So providing life skill training through inculcating life skill education will help our adolescents to overcome such difficulties in life. It can help the adolescents to lead a better life and enables them to perform taking advantage of their potentials and become prepared to encounter future needs and changes. Therefore life skill education is a need of the society and every education system should include life skill education as a part of its curriculum as it contributes for developing positive health behaviour, positive interpersonal relationships and well being of individuals.

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