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CERTIFICATE COURSE IN LIFE SKILL EDUCATION



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life skill training

What are Life Skills?

The World Health Organization 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".

UNICEF defines life skills as "a behaviour change or behaviour development approach designed to address a balance of three areas: knowledge, attitude and skills". The UNICEF definition is based on research evidence that suggests that shifts in risky behaviour are unlikely if knowledge, attitudinal and skills-based competency are not addressed.



Life skills are essentially those abilities that help promote mental well-being and competence in people as they face the realities of life. Most professionals in the field of development concur that life skills are typically applied in the context of health and social events. They can be utilised in numerous content areas, including drug abuse prevention, sexual violence prevention, teen pregnancy prevention, HIV/AIDS prevention, and suicide

prevention. The definition includes, among others, consumer education, environmental education, peace education, education for development, means of subsistence, and income generation. In conclusion, life skills empower youth to take positive action to protect themselves, promote health, and cultivate positive social relationships.

II. What are the Core Life Skill Strategies and Techniques?

UNICEF, UNESCO and WHO list the ten core life skill strategies and techniques as:

- ★ Problem Solving
- ★ Effective Communication Skills
- ★ Creative Thinking
- ★ Self-Awareness Building Skills
- ★ Coping with Stress and Emotions.
- ★ Critical Thinking
- ★ Decision-Making
- ★ Interpersonal Relationship Skills
- ★ Empathy



Understanding one's strengths and weaknesses requires self-awareness, self-respect, and self-confidence. As a result, the individual is able to recognise opportunities and prepare for potential threats. This results in the development of a social awareness of one's family and society's concerns. Consequently, it is possible to recognise family and societal issues. With life skills, a person is able to consider

alternatives, weigh pros and cons, and make logical decisions when confronted with a problem or issue. In addition, it requires the ability to form positive interpersonal relationships with others.

Life skills enable effective communication, such as the ability to distinguish between hearing and listening and transmitting messages accurately to avoid miscommunication and misinterpretation.

III.. What are the Main Components of Life Skills?

The World Health Organisation (WHO) categorizes life skills into the following three components:

Critical thinking skills/Decision-making skills

It consists of decision-making/problem-solving and information-gathering abilities. Additionally, the individual must be adept at predicting the future outcomes of their own and others' actions. They must be able to determine alternative solutions and evaluate the impact of their own and others' values.

Interpersonal/Communication skills

It consists of verbal and nonverbal communication, active listening, and the ability to express emotions and provide feedback. Also included are negotiation/refusal skills and assertiveness skills, which have a direct impact on one's ability to manage conflict. Empathy, which is the ability to listen and understand others' needs, is also a key interpersonal skill. Respecting those around us is an integral part of teamwork and the ability to cooperate. This skill set development enables the adolescent's social acceptance. These abilities lead to the acceptance of social norms, which serve as the basis for adult social behaviour.

Coping and self-management skills

It refers to skills that increase an individual's internal locus of control so that they believe they can affect change and make a difference in the world. Self-esteem, self-awareness, self-evaluation skills, and the capacity to set goals are also included in the broader category of self-management abilities. Anger, grief and anxiety must all be dealt with, and the individual learns to cope loss or trauma.

Stress and time management are key, as are positive thinking and relaxation techniques.

UNICEF promotes the understanding that the life skills approach can be successful, if the following are undertaken together:

a) The Skills –

This involves a collection of interconnected psychosocial and interpersonal abilities. For instance, decision-making is likely to incorporate elements of creative and critical thinking as well as values analysis.

b) Content

To effectively influence behaviour, specific content-area-specific skills must be utilised. "What are we making decisions about?" The learning of decision-making will be more meaningful if the material is current and consistent. Such subject matter may include drug abuse, HIV/AIDS/STI prevention, suicide prevention, or sexual abuse. Regardless of the subject matter, a balance of three elements must be considered: knowledge, attitudes, and skills.

c) Methods

In the absence of participant interaction, skill-based education is impossible. It relies on the effectiveness of groups of individuals. It is impossible to acquire interpersonal and psychosocial skills through reading alone. All three components must be present for this strategy to be successful: life skills, content, and method. This implies that the acquisition of life skills is possible through the use of specific methods and tools.

IV. Criteria for using Life Skills.

UNICEF identifies the following criteria to ensure a successful life skills-based education:

- It should address not only changes in knowledge and attitude, but also, and most importantly, changes in behaviour.

- Generally speaking, traditional "information-based" approaches are insufficient to effect changes in attitudes and behaviours. A lecture on "safe behaviour," for instance, will not necessarily result in the practise of safe behaviour. Therefore, the lecture should be supported by exercises and situations in which participants can practise safe conduct and experience its effects. The adult learning theory emphasises that adults learn best when they can make connections between new information and their prior experience and practise.

- It will function optimally when augmented or reinforced. If a message is given once, the brain remembers only 10 percent of it one day later, but if it is given six times, the brain remembers 90 percent. Thus the need for repetition, review, reinforcement, and recapping.

- It will be most effective when combined with policy development, access to suitable health services, community development, and media.

V. How can Life Skills Help Young People make Better Choices concerning their Health?

Developing life skills enables adolescents to translate their knowledge, attitudes, and values into healthy behaviour, such as the ability to reduce special health risks and adopt healthy behaviours that improve their lives in general (such as planning ahead, career planning, decision-making,

and forming positive relationships). Modern adolescents are exposed to contradictory messages regarding sexuality, substance abuse, alcohol consumption, and adolescent pregnancy. On the one hand, parents and teachers warn about the dangers of early and promiscuous sexual activity, adolescent pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, drugs and alcohol, while on the other hand, messages and behaviour from entertainers and peer pressure contradict these messages. Frequently, they encourage the opposite behaviour. Teenagers can combat these obstacles and protect themselves from teen pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, drug-related violence, and sexual abuse through the development of life skills. Developing life skills among adolescents will hopefully empower girls to avoid pregnancy until they reach physical and emotional maturity, develop in both boys and girls responsible and safe sexual behaviour, sensitivity and equity in gender relations, prepare boys and young men to be responsible fathers and friends, encourage adults, particularly parents, to listen to and respond to young people, assist youth in avoiding risks and adversities, and involve them in decisions that affect their lives.

VI. Outcomes of Life Skills-Based Education

Programmes designed to foster the development of life skills have produced the following results: increased ability to plan ahead and choose effective solutions to problems; improved self-image, self-awareness, social and emotional adjustment; increased acquisition of knowledge; improved classroom behaviour; gains in self control and handling of interpersonal problems and coping with anxiety; and enhanced constructive conflict resolution with peers, imitators, and authority figures. Studies have also demonstrated that sex education based on life skills was more effective in bringing about changes in adolescent contraceptive use, delay in sexual debut, delay in the onset of alcohol and marijuana use, and in developing attitudes and behaviours necessary for preventing the spread of sexually transmitted diseases of HIV/AIDS.

