



1. Introduction to Life Skills

Life Skills are defined as psychosocial abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the challenges and demands of everyday life. They are loosely grouped into three broad categories of skills: cognitive skills for analyzing and using information, personal skills for developing personal agency and managing oneself, and interpersonal skills for communicating and interacting effectively with others

– UNICEF

1.1 Life Skills

By life skills, we mean those vital competencies that enable a person to sail smoothly through this journey of life with *savoir faire* at any stage to ensure full participation in everyday life.

A *skill* can be defined as an ability, most of the time acquired through deliberate practice, to carry out a certain activity smoothly and successfully. Everything from tying your shoelaces to running a country is a skill. Skills are usually related to things, ideas, and people.

The nature and amount of skill that one may need depends on the nature and complexity of the activity in question. The skills relevant to one person may not

be relevant to another. Depending on one's station in life, age, gender, culture, geographic location, profession, etc., different sets of skills assume varying degrees of relevance. For instance, a wheat farmer in Punjab, India, may need skills that are quite different from the skills demanded of an investment banker based in Wall Street, NY.

But there exists a gamut of skills that are of a more profound and fundamental disposition and are necessary and sufficient for all people in this planet to go about his or her life and make the most out of it.

The possession of these skills, which we will call *Life Skills* henceforth, right away guarantee the attitude and wherewithal to acquire any other skill or ability to deal with whatever challenge that comes one's way.

Put in simple terms, life skills are all about taking good care of yourself, interacting positively with others, and managing challenges that you come across.

Taking good care of oneself implies having a positive self image and self esteem or self confidence, being motivated, and being happy. This calls for self-awareness, the ability to deal with emotions, and the ability to cope with stress.

Interacting positively with others implies having healthy relationships, being assertive, being sociable, cooperative, compassionate, etc. This calls for empathy, effective communication, and interpersonal skills.

Managing challenges involves having the ability to figure out the right thing to do when faced with adversity and demonstrating leadership qualities. This demands problem-solving and decision-making skills which often calls for creative or out-of-the-box thinking and critical thinking.

- The lack of these skills can lead to inferiority complex, negative attitude, mental strain and in extreme cases, depression and self-harm tendencies.
- The lack of these skills are often the reason for constant conflicts; strained and abusive relationships; lack of trust, respect, sharing and caring; loneliness; cruelty; violence, etc.
- If these skills are absent, an individual will not have a clear value system or a pragmatic mind. He will not be able to take the right decision or plan ahead, causing a feeling of failure, worthlessness, and frustration.

A student or a person or a community not equipped with life skills cannot hope to tide over the adversities that inevitably arise as they go about the business of life. On one end of the scale, we may have dullness, lack of professional satisfaction, anxiety, frustration, and loneliness whereas on the other end, we may have depression, violence, substance abuse, and self-harm tendencies.