

*Section - 1*  
*Exploring Life Skills*



*“If we cannot love the person whom we see,  
how can we love God, whom we cannot see?”*

- Mother Teresa



# Unit : I An Introduction to Life Skills

"You must be the change you wish to see in the world."

-Mahatma Gandhi

Adolescence has often been portrayed as a period of stormy stress, but adolescents can make an immense contribution to society if they are given proper support and space through handholding and informed interaction. Even the 1994 **Cairo International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD)** recognized adolescents and youth as *'the most important resource for future development'* and made several recommendations to meet their multidimensional needs. Adolescents are the most productive force of a country as they have unlimited energy, vitality and idealism, as well as a strong urge to experiment and create a better world.

**WHO** defines early adolescence both in terms of age (10-14 years) and in terms of a phase of life marked by special attributes. These attributes include rapid physical, psychological, cognitive and behavioural changes and developments, including the urge to experiment, attainment of sexual maturity, development of adult identity, and their transition from socio-economic dependence to relative independence.

As a dynamic productive force, it is important for a country and its adolescents that the transition from childhood to adulthood is smooth and effortless. But it is a fact that most of the adolescents are unable to utilize their potential in an appropriate way and are engaged in frivolous and non productive activities due to lack of proper guidance and motivation. These high risk behaviours are affecting society to a large extent and therefore require effective and immediate programmes which would be beneficial to young adolescents. In this connection, Life Skills Education plays a vital role in creating awareness and provides guidance and direction to them. Life Skills Education empowers them with improved decision making skills, abilities that promote mental well being and competencies to face the realities of life.

Life Skills Education would enable adolescents to articulate their issues and know their rights; build their self-esteem and self confidence; and develop the ability to take responsibility for self, relationships and (to an extent) society around them. Researchers recommend that middle schools can foster these skills by providing students with opportunities to improve their Life Skills. So the major objectives of Life Skills Education are to empower young adolescents to respond to real life situations in positive and responsible ways; to increase awareness among youth about the social concerns and to alleviate social evils.





## 1.1 What are Life Skills?

A skill is a learned ability to do something well. So Life Skills are the abilities that individuals can develop to live a fruitful life.

**Life Skills** are psychosocial abilities that enable individuals to translate knowledge, attitudes and values regarding their concerns into well informed and healthy behaviours. Empowered with such skills, young people are able to take decisions based on a logical process of "what to do, why to do, how to do and when to do".

**WHO** defines **Life Skills** as "*the abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable the individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life*".

Here '**adaptive**' means that a person is flexible in approach and is able to adjust in different circumstances and '**positive behaviour**' implies that a person is forward looking and even in challenging situations, can find a ray of hope.

**UNICEF** defines **Life Skills** as "*a behaviour change or behaviour development approach designed to address a balance of three areas: Knowledge, Attitudes and Skills*".

**Life Skills** are defined in the **Targeting Life Skills (TLS) Model (Hendricks, 1996)** as "*Skills that help an individual to be successful in living a productive and satisfying life.*"

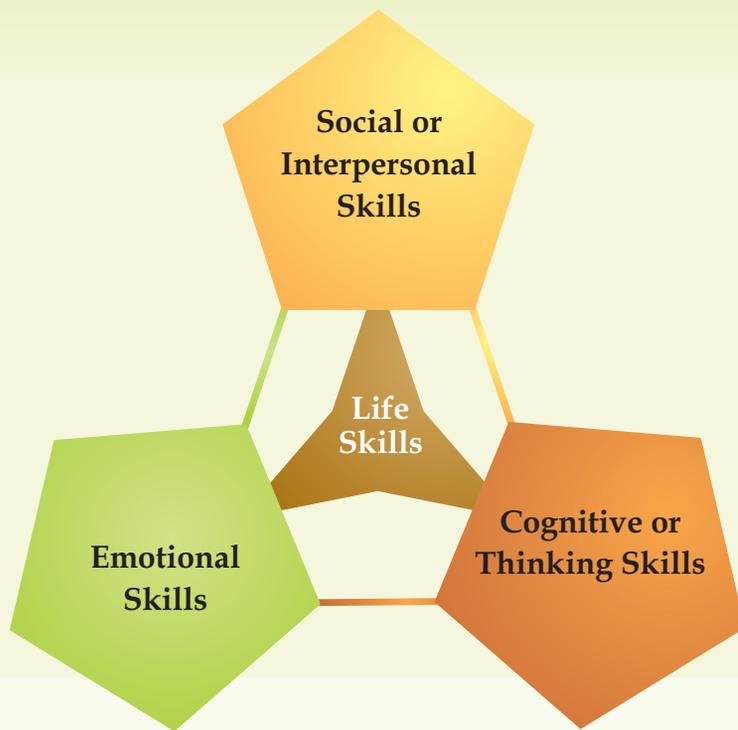
**Yarham (1919)** defined **Life Skills** as "*the personal competence that enables a person to deal effectively with the demands and challenges confronted in everyday life*".

### Key Life Skills

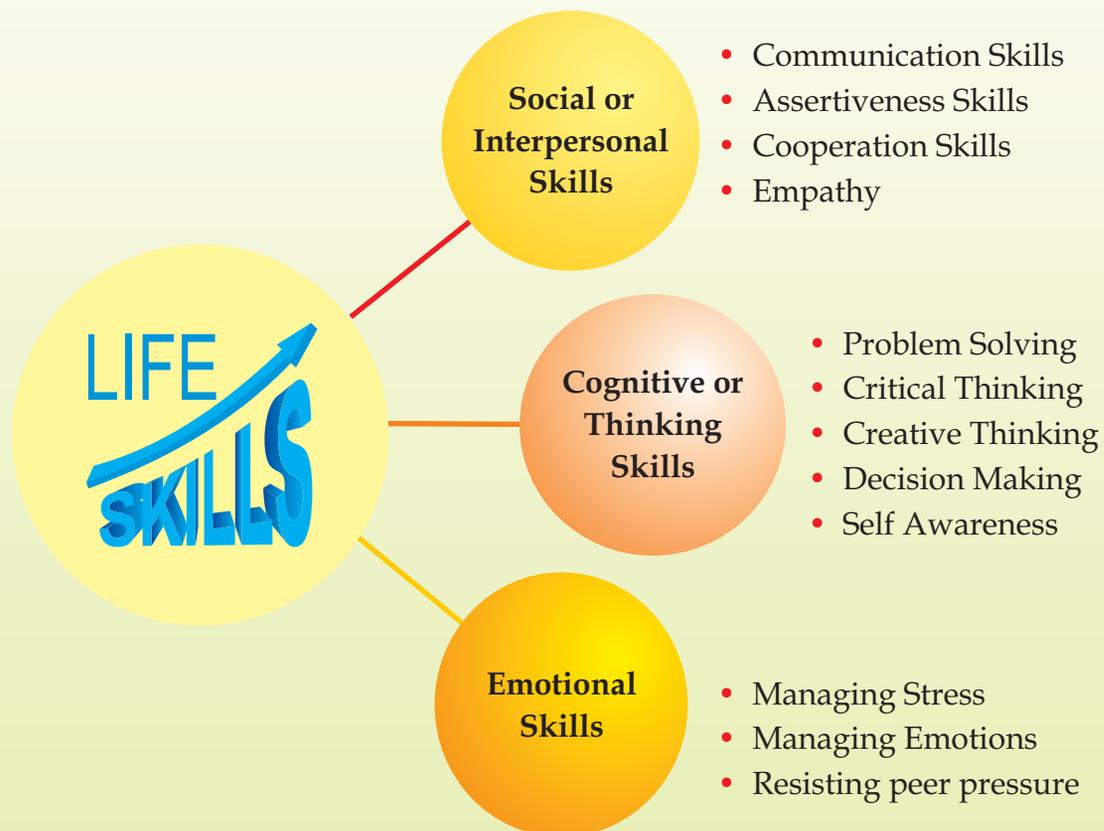
**Life Skills** include psychosocial competencies and interpersonal skills that help people make informed decisions, solve problems, think critically and creatively, communicate effectively, build healthy relationships, empathize with others, and manage their lives in a healthy and productive manner.

Life Skills fall into three basic categories which compliment, supplement and reinforce each other:





These three basic categories further include the following skills.





WHO has identified ten core Life Skills



- **Self Awareness** includes the recognition of 'self', our character, our strengths and weaknesses, desires and dislikes. Developing self awareness can help us recognize when we are stressed or under pressure. It is often a prerequisite to effective communication and interpersonal relations, as well as for developing empathy.
- **Empathy** is required to develop a successful relationship with our loved ones and society at large. It is the ability to imagine what life is like for another person. Without empathy, our communication with others will amount to a one-way traffic. It 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 diversities. Empathy can also encourage nurturing positive behaviour towards people in need of care and assistance, or tolerance, as is the case with AIDS sufferers, or people with mental disorders, who may be stigmatized and ostracized by the very people they depend upon for support.
- **Critical Thinking** is an ability to analyze information and experiences in an objective manner. Critical Thinking can contribute to a well balanced way of life by helping us to recognize and assess the factors that influence attitudes and behaviour, such as values, peer pressure and the media.
- **Creative Thinking** is a novel 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 others' ideas).

- **Decision Making** helps us to deal constructively with decisions about our lives. It can teach people how to actively make decisions about their actions in relation to a healthy assessment of different options and, what effects these different decisions are likely to have.
- **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.
- **Interpersonal skills** help us to relate in positive ways with people we interact. This may mean being able to make and keep friendly relationships, which can be of great importance to our mental and social well-being. It may mean maintaining good relations with family members who are the most important source of social support. It may also mean an ability to end relationships constructively.
- **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 would also mean being able to ask for advice and help in the time of need.
- **Coping with Stress** means recognizing the sources of stress in our lives, recognizing how they affect us, and how we act in a way that helps us control our levels of stress by changing our environment or lifestyle, and learning how to relax.
- **Managing Emotions** means 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 don't respond to them appropriately.

*(Adapted from "Life Skills Education for Children and Adolescents in Schools"-Programme on Mental Health, World Health Organization, Geneva, 1997)*

**All these skills are interrelated and reinforce each other. Together, they are responsible for our psychosocial competence; build our self-esteem and self efficacy and nurture holistic development.**





## 1.2 Who needs Life Skills?

Everyone and anyone who wants to lead a meaningful life, needs Life Skills. They are applicable to all ages of children and adolescents in schools since, young people in this age group seem to be most vulnerable to behaviour related health problems. Life Skills are thus needed for the promotion of good health and well being, rather than as an intervention aimed only at those already at risk.

## 1.3 Life Skills Development

Ouane (2002) says "*Life Skills are developed as a result of a constructive processing of information, impressions, encounters and experiences, both individual and social that are part of one's daily life and work, and the rapid changes that occur in the course of one's life*".

**Life Skills Development** is a life-long process that helps individuals grow and mature; build confidence in one's decisions taken on the basis of adequate information and thought, and discover sources of strength within and outside. It is noteworthy that, from times immemorial, every culture and society has invested in educating and empowering its younger generation to lead fulfilling and responsible lives. For example, the '*Panchatantra*' stories from India have very important lessons in Life Skills enhancement that remain relevant to all generations.

**The Life Skills Program can be effectively provided to young adolescents by teachers, peer educators, parents, counselors, psychologists, health workers and social workers.**

All these program providers or facilitators of Life Skills Education should

- Be warm, caring, supportive and enthusiastic
- Be resourceful
- Be competent enough to guide and counsel students effectively
- Have adequate knowledge about adolescence
- Be positive role models for the students

### Transacting Life Skills Education

No doubt transacting Life Skills Education is a challenging job but it is rewarding. Schools play an important role in transacting Life Skills Education because the traditional mechanisms for passing on Life Skills are no longer adequate. Therefore, the schools are an appropriate place for the transaction of Life Skills





Education. Life Skills Programme can be infused in other school subjects and it can also be introduced as a new subject.

While transacting Life Skills Education, students should be actively involved in a dynamic teaching-learning process. The emphasis should be on those teaching learning experiences that promote '*experiential learning*' because Life Skills cannot be learnt in abstract and theoretical way. So the critical components of this type of education are participatory and interactive teaching learning methods.

**Greene** (2003a) suggests a teacher should imagine, reflect and act with more and more concrete responsibility. The teachers should not merely prepare Life Skills lessons but they should be prepared and planned as a part of unified and sequential programme which promotes psychosocial competence and mental health of the young adolescents.

It is rightly said by **Albert Bandura**, "*When people mentally rehearse or actually perform modeled response patterns, they are less likely to forget them than if they neither think about them nor practise what they have seen*". So the teachers and facilitators can make use of real life activities, worksheets and assignments, simulation, drama, brainstorming, situation analysis, relaxation exercises, games and many more such interactive and participatory techniques to transact Life Skills Education. It is by participating in such learning activities that young adolescents learn to manage themselves, their relationships and their health related decisions.

The schools should promote Life Skills Education by:

- Creating a friendly, supportive, stimulating and structured learning environment
- Catering to the needs of all the students
- Promoting mutual respect and individual empowerment
- Encouraging collaboration among teachers, disciplines and students
- Strengthening community action by involving parents and outside agencies in schools.

### Importance of Life Skills Education

Many research studies have demonstrated that Life Skills Education is very effective in:

- Promoting positive attitudes and behaviours among the young adolescents
- Improving communication abilities





- Promoting healthy decision making
- Preventing negative and high risk behaviours
- Promoting greater sociability
- Teaching anger control
- Increasing self-esteem and self confidence
- Improving academic performance.

Well designed and well delivered Life Skills Programme can help young adolescents become more responsible, healthy and resilient both during adolescence and adulthood.

## 1.4 Life Skills Journal

Today the young adolescents are so obsessed with electronic gadgets that they spend very little time with their friends. Their emotional skills are not as developed and they cannot express themselves fully. In order to strengthen their emotional resilience and to reduce stress, the young adolescents need to develop positive attitude towards people, things and events in their life. So journal writing can be a way to get through it all as it makes easy to get into the habit of focusing on the positive aspects of life. Journal writing can help nurturing Life Skills also in the process.

A Life Skills journal can be a time diary or a life transforming tool. A student can write in a fancy leather bound book or in a small spiral notebook. A Life Skills journal is personal so each student should be allowed to write in it as he/she wishes.

### How to Maintain a Life Skills Journal?

- **Decide on a Journal:** Use a Life Skills journal as a time diary. Choose one that has dates and ample space to record what happened when. Here one can write about all those moments which are life transforming. One can draw to reveal one's thoughts and can also colour those sketches in the Life Skills journal.
- **Decide on a framework:** One can write long, descriptive paragraphs about what one appreciates in one's daily life. One can write a preset number of items per entry (for example, ten per day) or one can resolve to write about whatever seems right for a particular day. The main idea is to get oneself into a place of reflection and positivism. One should do what works best for oneself.
- **Commit to a schedule:** An important aspect of long-term success of Life Skills journal is the frequency with which it is used. It is usually best to aim for once a day in the beginning, or several times per week, but one should allow oneself





some time to catch up if things get busy. The schedule should not be so rigid that one feels like giving up writing if it gets skipped once or twice.

- **Just keep writing:** To maintain a more optimistic attitude, be sure to write regularly. Even if one skips writing frequently, try to remember the main motive of writing the Life Skills Journal and one will be able to get back to the habit of writing anytime one wants.

### Benefits of Life Skills Journal

Educators and psychologists recommend journal writing for all ages because there are many benefits of a Life Skills Journal:

- **Journal writing** is a way to express pent up emotions in a socially acceptable way.
- It helps in improving the communication skills of the students as they can freely express themselves in writing and in other creative ways without the pressure of a more structured writing where punctuation, spelling and grammar rules are so important.
- It can help shy students to overcome their problems.
- The students who write regularly develop a better understanding of themselves and the world around them.
- It can help in managing anger by helping the students to acknowledge it, recognize its source and make new choices about how to deal with it.
- Writing in a Life Skills Journal can keep the students sane and balanced throughout their life.
- It is one of the ways to encourage creative thinking.
- It offers self-insight to the students as they can learn the truth about themselves.
- It is a good way to keep a record and to go back to a specific time of your life.

**Some ideas to get students involved in journal keeping and to help them benefit from the process are by:**

- Helping students commit to a time for journal writing. Do not allow only classroom journal writing sessions, but also urge them to write in their journal at home.
- Explaining that a journal can be their best friend.
- Making journal books a class project for language and arts.
- Providing a topic every week to encourage those students who are not very spontaneous to write in their journals.





### Things to be remembered

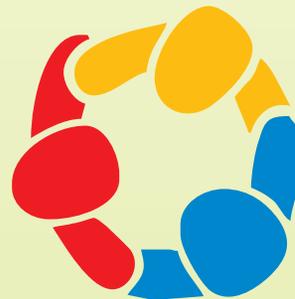
- Be totally honest while writing something down.
- Express feelings and thoughts and not just the events because feelings are the real indicators of that event.
- Keep reviewing the journal so as to avoid duplicity in the journal.
- Don't always mention the obvious things; try to notice the subtle things also.

*"I never teach my pupils; I only attempt to provide the conditions in which they can learn."*

*- Albert Einstein*

### Key Messages

1. Life skills are abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life.
2. The Life Skills Education aims to reinforce existing knowledge and positive attitudes and values along with the prevention of negative attitudes and risky behaviours.
3. Life Skills Education contributes to the promotion of personal and social development and the prevention of health and social problems.
4. Participatory and interactive teaching learning methods are the critical components of Life Skills Education.
5. The schools can promote Life Skills Education by creating friendly, supportive, stimulating and structured learning environment.



*Life Skills*

*achieve your personal best*





## 1.5 A Better Me

Some people quietly make a difference to our lives. They are the ones who touch our life in some way or the other. They can make a difference in terms of showing gratitude, compassion and warmth, stress management, etc. but most of us are busy in our own lives and therefore the least bothered to change our lives and that of others. We need to take a break from our routines to help someone. Keep in mind that we too can make a difference to the lives of others. We just need to look around and find someone who needs our support and care.

Life is not just to waste during every passing day. It is to live better every day. We need to promise ourselves that we will improve everyday as a person. If you think you are already the best and you cannot be better, just read this short story.

### Time for Self Appraisal



A little boy went into a grocery store, reached for a soda carton and pulled it over to the telephone. He climbed on the carton so that he could reach the buttons on the phone and started punching in the phone number. The store owner listened to the conversation that followed.

The boy asked, *“Ma’am, can you give me the job of cutting your lawn?”*

Woman (at the other end of the phone line) replied, *“I already have someone to cut my lawn”*.

*“Ma’am, I’ll cut your lawn for half the price of the person who is cutting your lawn now”*.

Woman responded, *“I am very satisfied with the person who is presently cutting my lawn”*.

**Note for Teacher:** The part of this unit from section 1.5 to 1.14 is in the form of stories and activities that can be used for introducing the ten core Life Skills to the students. This content can be used as a student’s handout along with the specific activities from the section - ‘Internalizing Life Skills’ can be conducted by the teacher / facilitator / peer educator.





Boy (with more perseverance) offered, *“Ma’am, I’ll even sweep your curb and your sidewalk, so on Sunday you will have the prettiest lawn in your area”*.

Woman answered, *“No, thank you”*.

With a smile on his face, the little boy replaced the receiver. The grocery store owner, who was listening to all this, walked over to the boy and said, *“Son, I like your attitude; I like that positive spirit and would like to offer you a job”*.

The little boy replied, *“No, thanks, I was just checking my performance at the job I already have. I am the one who is working for that lady I was talking to!”*

This is what we call *“Self Appraisal”*, which is highly recommended, because it encourages you to be proud of your accomplishments and candid about your weaknesses.

(Source: [http://www.cannyben.blogspot.in/2005\\_05\\_31\\_archive.html](http://www.cannyben.blogspot.in/2005_05_31_archive.html))

However good we are, we should always keep an eye on our performance and keep on checking if there is any scope for improvement. At the same time, we should also introspect to improve ourselves and increase our worth as a person. Self worth is a favourable estimate of oneself. It comes from within us and we cannot get it extrinsically. Here are some simple ways to increase your worth.

- Nurture good feelings about yourself.
- Applaud yourself often.
- Speak positively to yourself about yourself.
- Write down something you feel proud about, preferably at the end of the day.
- Be open and honest with others.
- Be assertive. Learn to say 'No' to others without offending them.
- Take pride in whatever work you do.
- Walk tall and proud.
- Dress smartly.
- Love yourself.
- Work on your strengths rather than focus on your weaknesses.
- Reward your successes.
- Be honest with yourself.



- Help other people who need your care and support.
- Face your fears and challenges.
- Be optimistic.

When you do this, you would feel better and more confident. When you feel more confident, you can do everything better. Then applaud yourself once again. Try not to compare yourself with others who are better skilled than you because you will feel miserable. And, if you compare yourself with those who are inferior in talent or capability, you may become arrogant and overconfident. So try to compare yourself with yourself. This can be done by asking yourself these questions:

- Am I a better person than I was?
- How can I be a better person than I am today?

Questions like this will help you improve what you do.

For example athletes, while practising for athletic competitions, many do not train with other runners. They run with timers. They time themselves and keep running again and again, trying to improve their own timings. On a particular day, if they ran a certain distance in three minutes, then they try to complete it in less than three minutes. Here they do not compete or compare their performance with others. They race against themselves. So when you try to build your inner strength, compare how you are now, how you were earlier and how you intend to be in future. Of course, it is a wonderful idea to look up to those (for example great saints, leaders, teachers, patriots, artists, writers, scientists, etc.) you admire, be inspired by them and emulate them. What is stressed is the avoidance of making unhealthy comparisons.

It is important to increase one's self-worth as it is directly related to self confidence. It elevates one's self confidence and one can present one's strengths to the world thus leading to an emotionally healthy life. So spend some time in building up your self-worth, just like you spend time in building up your physical health and intelligence.

*"There is nothing noble about being superior to some other person.*

*The true nobility is in being superior to your former self."*

*- An Indian Proverb*





## Think and Do

1. Can there be a more superior being than man? Imagine a super evolved species and write his/her autobiography. Points to be included:
  - Relationship with humanity
  - Development of body parts
  - Social interactions
  - Both inner and outer beauty
  - Development of the brain
  - Thinking skills
  - What makes the super species better than today's human being
2. Who else do you consider better than yourself? Reflect and note down in your Life Skills Journal:
  - What are my positive traits?
  - What are my negative traits?
  - If I have to become a better "Me" in a year's time, what do I need to do?





## 1.6 Empathise... do not Sympathise

### A Butterfly Story



A man found a cocoon of a butterfly. One day a small opening appeared, he sat and watched the butterfly for several hours as it struggled to force its body through that little hole. Then it seemed to stop making any progress. It appeared as if it had gotten as far as it could and it could go no farther.

The man felt sympathetic on seeing the butterfly struggle so much. He decided to help it. He took a pair of scissors and snipped off the remaining bit of the cocoon. The butterfly then emerged easily.

But it had a swollen body and small, shriveled wings. The man continued to watch the butterfly because he expected that, at any moment, the wings would enlarge and expand to be able to support the body, which would contract in time. Neither happened! In fact, the butterfly spent the rest of its life crawling around with a swollen body and shriveled wings.

It never was able to fly.

What the man in his kindness and haste did not understand was that the restricting cocoon and the struggle required for the butterfly to get through the tiny opening were nature's way of forcing fluid from the body of the butterfly into its wings so that it would be ready for flight once it became free from the cocoon.

(Source: <http://www.forwardsteps.com.au/docs/Struggling-Butterfly-Story.pdf>)

Sometimes struggles are also needed in our life. They develop our strength. Life without obstacles and struggles would cripple us and we will not be able to progress. We would not be as strong as what we could have been. And, we could never fly.

During these tough times, people need empathy from us, but we in turn try to be sympathetic just like the man in the story. Empathy and sympathy are different feelings. Empathy is a much deeper emotion as compared to sympathy. The latter feels pity for another person while maintaining a distance from another person's feelings. Whereas, an empathetic person truly understands the depth of another





person's feelings as he/she tries to recognize the feelings being experienced by the other person. An easy way to distinguish between empathy and sympathy is that, empathy is about feelings and sympathy is about actions.

One can understand the **difference between sympathy and empathy** with the help of an example of a therapist. A therapist is sympathetic while maintaining a distance from the patient thus failing to understand the patient's viewpoint. On the other hand, an empathetic therapist attempts to further understand the patient's point of view, thus maintaining a closeness with the patient. The empathetic therapist does not get involved in the emotional state of the client. Therefore, the therapist needs to maintain a distance while being empathetic towards the patient.

'Empathy' is the translation of the German term **Einfühlung**, meaning, 'to feel as one with'. It implies an ability to experience the emotions that match the other person's emotions, to know what the other person is feeling, or "walking a mile in someone else's shoes", in order to understand the other person's perspective properly. It enriches by making us look at people, situations and objects outside ourselves - **IT EXPANDS OUR VIEWPOINT.**

According to **Alvin Goldman**, "Empathy is the ability to put oneself into the mental shoes of another person to understand his/her emotions and feelings".

According to **Mike Robbins**, in Empathy:

- E- Everybody needs somebody
- M- Model and mirror
- P - Put yourself in their shoes
- A - Ask if you can help
- T- Treat others the way you want to be treated
- H - Helpful
- Y - You feel better and they feel better

**Buddhism evolved as a result of Gautam Buddha's empathy towards his fellow beings.**





## Benefits of Empathy

1. When we practise empathy, we recognize opportunities like...
  - The butterfly in every caterpillar
  - The tall tree in a tiny seed
  - The chicken in the egg
  - The saint in every person
  - The calm after a storm
  - A leader in every monitor
  - A champion in every child.
2. **Empathy makes us be aware:** When we become like others even for a while, we become sensitive, accepting and loving towards them. And, people appreciate us for it and want to return that love.
3. We discover our self through others, and get more love in life.
4. It heals the sufferings of others.
5. It leads to compassion towards sufferers.
6. It connects people together thus building a bond of trust among them. People who are in pain feel understood and less alone.
7. It is a powerful communication tool as it increases the emotional intelligence of the receiver.

*"Empathy is forgetting oneself in the joys and sorrows of another, so much so that you actually feel that the joy or sorrow experienced by another is your own joy and sorrow. Empathy involves complete identification with another."*

*- Dada Vaswani*





## Think and Do

The following test makes you ponder upon the levels of empathy. It is the ability to feel and comprehend other people's emotions. An empathetic person makes an active effort to be in tune with another person, leaving out personal attitudes such as sympathy, antipathy, fondness and moral judgments.

- How do you share joys and pains of people around you?
- Have you ever been told by someone that you are not able to understand him/her? Narrate the situation.
- How do you feel when someone dear to you suffers?
- How do you feel, when someone dear to you is happy?
- When you describe a personal experience you had, do you just describe the facts or do you also describe your emotions?
- How do you feel when you see a stranger suffering?
- Do you feel unease when you talk about your feelings or emotions?
- Are you able to step into "*someone else's shoes*"?
- Do you ever feel an impulse to act when you see a person in difficulty? If you have, describe the situation.

### Empathy is

**seeing** with the **eyes** of another,  
**listening** with the **ears** of another,  
and **feeling** with the **heart** of another.





## 1.7 Lateral Thinking

### A Blind Boy



A blind boy sat on the steps of a building with a hat by his feet. He put up a sign which said, *"I am blind, please help"*. There were only a few coins in the hat.

A man was walking by. He took a few coins from his pocket and dropped them into the hat. He then took the sign, turned it around, and wrote some words. He put the sign back so that everyone who walked by would see the new words.

Soon the hat began to fill up. A lot more people were giving money to the blind boy. That afternoon the man who had changed the sign came to see how things were. The boy recognized his footsteps and asked, *"Were you the one who changed my sign this morning? What did you write?"*

The man said, *"I only wrote the truth. I said what you said, but in a different way."*

What he had written was: *"Today is a beautiful day and I cannot see it."*

Do you think the first sign and the second sign were saying the same thing? Of course both signs told people that the boy was blind.

But the first sign simply told people to help by putting some money in the hat. The second sign told people that they were able to enjoy the beauty of the day, but the boy could not enjoy it because he was blind.

The first simply said the boy was blind. The second sign told people that they were lucky that they were not blind. Should we be surprised that the second sign was much more effective?

(Source: <http://anuragsingh.name/blog/2011/01/16/life/the-blind-boy/>)





So be creative and innovative. Thinking differently from the usual is **Lateral Thinking**. The term Lateral thinking was coined by **Edward de Bono**, a Maltese psychologist, physician and writer. It first appeared in his book titled "*The Use of Lateral Thinking*" (1967).

**De Bono** defines **Lateral thinking** as "*methods of thinking concerned with changing concepts and perception*". According to him, lateral thinking revolves around reasoning that is not immediately obvious. It takes thinking away from the predictable and expected.

Lateral thinking is a tool to promote fresh and creative thinking which can help us find solutions to our problems. It leads us to be innovative and creative while seeking solutions as is clear from the example of Japanese people who faced the problem of storage of round watermelons.

### Is there another way?



The Japanese grocery stores are much smaller and therefore do not have space to waste. Once they faced a problem. Watermelons, as we have seen are big and round, wasted a lot of space. Most people would simply tell the grocery stores that watermelons grow round and there is nothing that can be done about it.

That is how the majority of people would respond. But some Japanese farmers took a different approach. If the supermarkets wanted a square watermelon, they asked themselves, "*How can we provide one?*" It wasn't long before they invented the square watermelon.

The solution to the problem of round watermelons was solved as the farmers did not assume it was impossible but simply asked how it could be done. They found out that if you put the watermelon in a square box when they are growing, the watermelon will take on the shape of the box and grow into a square fruit.

This made the grocery stores happy as it was much easier and cost effective to ship the watermelons. Consumers also loved them because they took less space in their refrigerators.

(Source: <http://www.ezsoftech.com/stories/mis63.asp>)





Here are a few lessons which we can take away from this story:

- **Do not assume:** Throughout our life, all of us have been doing things in a certain way which take the shape of a round watermelon. We do not even think of doing them in some other way. We assume that they cannot be changed. But we should break away from such assumptions and look for new and better ways to do things. This will greatly improve our overall life.
- **Think out of the box:** We should look at our problems from a different perspective to solve them.
- **Question your habits:** Forming habits after a thoughtful process is a positive thing, but most of us adopt them from others without even thinking about them. We should make an effort to question the way we have been doing things and improve our lives.
- **Look for another and a better way:** When doing things, we should look for even better ways of doing them and we will find them.
- **Even the word 'Impossible' says "I am possible":** There is nothing impossible in this world. If we decide to look for a solution to a particular problem which seems impossible, we can find it through our lateral thinking.

### Benefits of Lateral Thinking

- Stimulates creativity and innovation
- Stimulates "out of the box thinking"
- Facilitates brainstorming
- Helps solve problems
- Helps come up with brilliant ideas

### Lateral Thinking and Logical Thinking

**Logical thinking** is following a logical path or process. A problem is solved by following a set of steps, for example, arithmetic problems.

Whereas Lateral thinking is thinking out of the box, which stimulates creativity. For example, solving problems through the trial and error method.





Reflect on this classic example of Lateral Thinking, which makes us appreciate the difference between Lateral and Logical Thinking.

### A Pebble Story

Many years ago, in a small Indian village, a farmer had the misfortune of owing a large sum of money to a moneylender.



The moneylender, who was old and ugly, fancied the farmer's beautiful daughter. So he proposed a bargain. He said he would forgo the farmer's debt if he could marry his daughter. Both the farmer and his daughter were horrified by the proposal.

So the cunning moneylender suggested that they let Providence decide the matter.

He told them that he would put a black pebble and a white pebble into an empty money bag. Then the girl would have to pick one pebble from the bag.

- If she picked the black pebble, she would become his wife and her father's debt would be forgiven.
- If she picked the white pebble she need not marry him and her father's debt would still be forgiven.
- But if she refused to pick a pebble, her father would be thrown into jail.

They were standing on a pebble strewn path in the farmer's field. As they talked, the moneylender bent over to pick up two pebbles. As he picked them up, the sharp-eyed girl noticed that he had picked up two black pebbles and put them into the bag.

He then asked the girl to pick a pebble from the bag.

Now, imagine that you were standing in the field. What would you have done if you were the girl? If you had to advise her, what would you have told her?

Careful analysis would produce three possibilities:

- The girl should refuse to take a pebble.
- The girl should show that there were two black pebbles in the bag and expose the moneylender as a cheat.
- The girl should pick a black pebble and sacrifice herself in order to save her father from his debt and imprisonment.

The girl's dilemma cannot be solved with traditional logical thinking. Think of the consequences if she chooses any one of the above three possibilities. What





would you recommend that the girl should do?

Here is what she did ....

The girl put her hand into the moneybag and drew out a pebble. Without looking at it, she fumbled and let it fall onto the pebble-strewn path where it immediately became lost among all the other pebbles.

*"Oh, how clumsy of me," she said. "But never mind, if you look into the bag for the one that is left, you will be able to tell which pebble I picked."*

Since the remaining pebble is black, it must be assumed that she had picked the white one. And since the moneylender dared not admit his dishonesty, the girl changed what seemed an impossible situation into an extremely advantageous one.

(Source: <http://www.citehr.com/2398-pebble-story.html>)

It becomes clear from the story that to think in a lateral manner, one's perception needs to be changed. The problem needs to be considered from a different perspective, away from the obvious assumptions. Even the most complex problems have a solution. We just need to think in lateral manner to solve them.

### Lateral Thinking Techniques

According to **Edward de Bono**, following are the techniques of Lateral Thinking:

- **Alternatives / Concept Extraction:** Use concepts to breed new ideas.
- **Focus:** Sharpen or change your focus to improve your creative efforts.
- **Challenge:** Break free from the limits of accepted ways of operating.
- **Random Entry:** Use unconnected input to open new lines of thinking.
- **Provocation:** Move from a provocative statement to useful ideas.
- **Harvesting:** Select the best of early ideas and shape them into practical approaches.
- **Treatment of Ideas:** Develop ideas and shape them to fit an organization or situation.

*"The Lateral Thinking creativity program provides you with a number of proven and concrete ways to learn the power of creativity and innovation."*

*- Edward de Bono*





### Think and Do

Solve the following lateral thinking puzzles:

(Answers are elsewhere in the book)

1. Acting on an anonymous phone call, the police raid a house to arrest a suspected murderer. They do not know what he looks like, but they know his name is John and that he is inside the house. The police bust in on a carpenter, a lorry driver, a mechanic and a fireman all playing cards. Without hesitation or communication of any kind, they immediately arrest the fireman. How do they know they have got their man?
2. How could a baby fall out of a twenty storey building onto the ground and live?
3. A man and his son are in a car crash. The father is killed and the child is taken to the hospital, gravely injured. When he gets there, the surgeon says, "*I can't operate on this boy- for he is my son!!!*" How can this possibly be?
4. There are six eggs in the basket. Six people each take one of the eggs. How can it be that one egg is left in the basket?
5. Why is it better to have round manhole covers than square ones?
6. A man holidaying abroad fell off a yacht into deep water. He could not swim and he was not wearing anything to keep him afloat. It took thirty minutes for the people on the yacht to realize that someone was missing. The missing man was rescued two hours later. Why did he not drown?
7. Five pieces of coal, a carrot and a scarf are lying on a hill near a remote house. Nobody put them on the lawn but there is a perfect logical reason why they should be there. What is it?
8. A woman gave birth to two boys who were born at the same hour of the same day of the same month of the year. But they were not twins and she had no access to a time machine. How could this be?
9. A man was driving alone in his car which spun off the road at high speed. He crashed through a fence and bounced down a steep ravine before the car plunged into a fast flowing river. As the car slowly settled in the river, the man realized that his arm was broken and that he could not release his seat belt and get out of the car. The car sank to the bottom of the river. He was trapped in the car. Rescuers arrived two hours later, yet they found him still in the river, but alive. How come?
10. A police officer saw a truck driver clearly going the wrong way down a one-way street, but did not try to stop him. Why not?





## 1.8 Analytical Thinking

### The Golden Advice

A king often went on hunting trips into the forest with his minister and servants. On one such trip, he came across a sage who kept repeating, "My advice will be sold for a hundred coins of gold!" The king was a sport. He thought, "What is a hundred coins of gold to me? If this sage's advice is good, I will be a better man." So he went up to the sage. Giving him the gold coins, the king asked him for some advice. The sage calmly took the coins and said, "O King, always remember this. Never do anything before thinking what its effect will be". The king's minister laughed and thought, "Ha! Such an ordinary thing and it costs a hundred gold coins! What a fool the king is!" The king guessed what his minister was thinking. All the same, he told him calmly, "See that the sage's words are engraved in stone and placed in my private chamber so that I can see them every morning and night". The minister thought this was quite strange, but he did as he was told. A few months later, one of the king's enemies met the royal physician and bribed him with ten thousand gold coins to poison the king. The royal physician was afraid to do something wrong, but the idea of earning so much so easily was very tempting. He agreed to it.

A few days later, the king fell ill. This was a golden opportunity for the physician. He mixed the poison as if it were a dose of medicine and moved towards the king's bed. Suddenly his eyes fell on the sage's golden words engraved in stone. Never do anything before thinking what its effect will be. The physician began thinking- if the king dies of poisoning, the guards will kill me. Of what use will the gold coins be then? He threw away the poison and mixed the right medicine instead. The clever king saw him doing this and demanded to know why. Under threat, the physician confessed the truth. The king called for the minister and said, "The other day, when you heard the sage's advice, you laughed. But see how useful it has turned out to be. Had the physician not seen the words, he would have poisoned me. I would have died and so would he. There would have been riots and the kingdom would have been in grave danger." The minister had to admit the truth of the golden advice.

**STOP**  
**THINK**  
**ACT**  
**LOOK BEFORE YOU LEAP!!**





**Look before you leap.** This story talks about analyzing a situation and then taking action. In other words, critically thinking and then acting.

### What is Critical Thinking and Analytical Thinking?

Before we find out the meaning of 'critical and analytical thinking', we should find out the meaning of the word "*thinking*". According to the Oxford dictionary, thinking means "*using thought, rational judgment and intelligence*". And when we use our thinking process for different purposes, it is classified as 'various ways of thinking'.

**Critical Thinking** - There are several meanings associated with the word "*critical*" depending on the context, like "*expressing or involving an analysis of the merits and demerits of a work*".

### Skills involved in Critical thinking



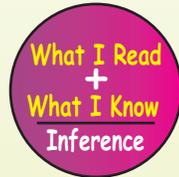
#### Interpretation

The ability to grasp the real meaning of something.



#### Analysis

Ability to break a complex problem down into smaller and more manageable parts for the purpose of examination.



#### Inference

The act or process of arriving at logical conclusions.



#### Explanation

The act of clarifying something.



#### Evaluation

The process of systematically assessing or appraising something.



#### Self Regulation

The ability to control one's emotions and propensity to suspend judgment, i.e., thinking before acting.





So critical thinking is a thought process that involves analysis, evaluation and reflecting upon an idea, an observation or an experience that a person has undergone, so as to arrive at a judgment or, a conclusion.

**Analytical thinking** - The word 'analytical' refers to "*the ability to analyze*" or "*division into elements or principles*". Analysis means to break a complex problem down into smaller, more manageable "*independent*" parts for the purposes of examination - with the hope that solving these smaller parts will lead to the solution of the more complex problem as well.

**To analyze an incident, for example, you may start by asking:**

- What happened?
- When and where did it happen?
- Who was involved?
- What did they do? How did they behave or react?

**You might also go on to ask:**

- What were the main factors?
- Why was the timing and place important?
- Why did people act or behave as they did?
- Why was this approach taken?
- How effective was the approach?
- What were the strengths or weaknesses of this approach?
- How might things have been done differently?
- What can I learn from this?

Analytical thinking is a thinking process which involves analysis. It is a powerful thinking tool for understanding the parts of a situation. It can further be defined as:

- The ability to scrutinize and breakdown facts, thoughts, theories, ideas, arguments, events, situations, practices and procedures into their strengths and weaknesses.
- Developing the capacity to think in a thoughtful, discerning way to solve problems, analyze data, and recall and use information.

From the above explanation, we can conclude that analytical thinking is one of the components of critical thinking. Both are related to each other. Both help us get to a solution or arrive at a conclusion. So as to assimilate how to handle situations





effectively, one needs to develop analytical and critical thinking. Thus one needs the ability to analyze and critique.

*“Education can and should do much influence social, moral and intellectual discovery by stimulating critical attitudes of thought in the young.”*

*- George Bernard Shaw*



### Think and Do

Think of a recent situation where you reacted or acted impulsively without thinking about the consequences of the action. Recall the incident as clearly as you can by asking yourself following questions.

- What happened?
- What were the main factors?
- When and where did it happen?
- Why was the timing and place important?
- Who was involved?
- What did they do, how did they behave or react?
- Why did people act or behave as they did?
- Why was this approach taken?
- How effective was the approach?
- What were the strengths and weaknesses of this approach?
- How might things have been done differently?
- What can I learn from this?

You can mention details of the incident in your Life Skills Journal.





## 1.9 Solution is the word

The earth is richly endowed with nature. In the entire universe, the earth is the only planet known to support life everywhere i.e. on the slopes of high mountains, on the floors of oceans, in the sweltering deserts and at the frigid poles. Life comes in many forms and sizes and is known as biodiversity or environmental richness. Preserving this natural environment is important as it is the source of all our resources for life. But the very actions of our own species i.e. men are causing a major threat to this natural environment. This is the global climate change.

The earth's climate has warmed and cooled for millions of years, but currently, the climate is growing warmer day by day. All of us are observing the indications of this change all around us in the form of rising sea levels, rising surface temperature and melting ice caps.



The main cause of the current global warming is the "greenhouse effect". The carbon dioxide from smoke emitted by the factories, industries and automobiles and other gases like chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), methane and nitrous oxide gets collected in the atmosphere. As a result the atmosphere traps the heat being radiated back by the earth towards the space like a greenhouse. All these gases are expected to raise the global temperature by an average of 2°C by the year 2100, causing the polar icecaps to melt, sea levels to rise and unusual weather conditions which may cause millions of deaths.

This is a harsh reality faced by mankind which must be solved. Everyone has to think of a solution to this problem because everyone is creating and leaving a carbon footprint and thereby adding to the greenhouse effect.

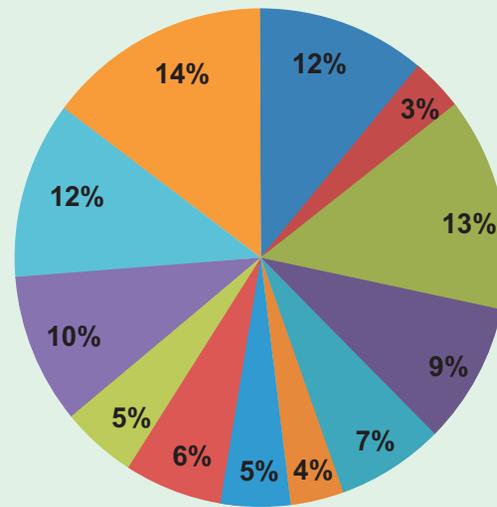
A **carbon footprint** is the total amount of greenhouse gases emitted by an activity, organization, event, product or person. It is a powerful tool to understand one's impact on global warming. It is expressed in kg carbon rather than kg carbon dioxide. To convert kg carbon dioxide into kg carbon, multiply it with a factor 0.27 (1,000 kg CO<sub>2</sub> equals 270 kg carbon).





## Main elements which make up the total of a typical person's carbon footprint in today's world

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| ■ Share of Public Transportation - 12 % | ■ Financial Services - 3%              |
| ■ Recreation and Leisure - 13%          | ■ House Buildings and furnishings - 9% |
| ■ Car manufacture and delivery - 7%     | ■ Clothes and personal effects - 4%    |
| ■ Food and Drinks - 5%                  | ■ Holiday Flights - 6%                 |
| ■ Public Transport - 5%                 | ■ Private Transport - 10%              |
| ■ Home Electricity - 12%                | ■ Home gas, oil and coal - 14%         |



A carbon footprint is made up of the sum of two parts, the primary footprint (slices of the pie chart depicting the percentage of holiday flights, public transport, private transport, home electricity and home gas, oil and coal) and the secondary footprint (rest of the slices of the pie chart).

The **primary footprint** is a measure of our direct emission of carbon dioxide from the burning of fossil fuels, including domestic energy consumption and transportation. We have direct control of these.

The **secondary footprint** is a measure of the indirect emission of carbon dioxide from the whole lifecycle of products we use-i.e. from production till breakdown. The more we buy, the more emissions will be caused on our behalf.





## Carbon footprint breakdown in India

- India's average carbon footprint is 1.6 tonnes / annum per person as compared to the world's average of 3.9 tonnes / annum per person.
- One night of air-conditioner use (one ton AC suitable for a small sized room) results in approximately the same carbon footprint in just eight hours as driving a Maruti 800 car for 85 kilometers.
- A 1000 km domestic flight on any Indian airline creates a footprint of 110 kg of carbon dioxide equivalent. The same journey by rail would create a footprint of 14 kg of carbon dioxide.
- The carbon footprint generated by a single roundtrip flight between India and USA/Canada overshoots the annual footprint of an average Indian by 62%.
- One kilogram of mutton production in India causes about the same greenhouse emissions as driving a Maruti 800 car for 140 km.

All these seem to be serious. We could help control global warming by taking a few simple steps towards saving our planet.

- Take a pledge to reduce your home energy use by using energy efficient light bulbs. Installing only six compact fluorescent light bulbs will save the average family consumption by ₹ 300 per year.
- Eating meat costs a lot of energy. Eating vegetarian food once a week can make a big difference.
- Food travels a long distance from farm to plate. Transporting food to far off places means higher energy consumption, lower quality produce and less local agricultural investment. Visit your local farmer's market and make a meal entirely from local food, instead of picking up variety of imported vegetables from a supermarket or a mall.
- Organic food seems to be sold everywhere, but what does 'organic' mean? Organic food is "*produced by farmers who emphasize the use of renewable resources and the conservation of soil and water to enhance environmental quality for future generations*". Buy organic foods at the grocery store which is a more sustainable product.
- You can reduce your household waste by purchasing items that have minimal packaging.
- Of the 25 billion single serving plastic water bottles we use each year, 80% end up in landfills. Recycle your water bottles and, better yet, choose to re-use a refillable water bottle made of a safe material.
- Unwanted gifts should be swapped. Even gift cards can be re-used or





exchanged. Recycle your old cards yourself, and/or turn the images into gift tags or new cards for the next year.

- “Phantom” loads occur in most appliances that use electricity, such as DVD players, televisions, music systems, computers and kitchen appliances. In an average home, 75% of the electricity used to power home electronics is consumed while the products are turned off. This can be avoided by unplugging the appliance or using a switch on the power strip to cut all power to the appliance.
- Most mass produced during wrapping as found in stores is not recyclable and ends up in landfills. Instead, here's a great chance to be creative! Wrap presents with old maps, the comics section of a newspaper, or children's artwork. If every family wraps just three gifts this way, it would save enough paper to cover 45,000 football fields.
- Download and buy new music online instead of buying it on CDs. The “jewel cases” that CDs come in are usually made from polyvinyl chloride, a dangerous material that cannot readily be recycled. Downloading and buying online will also help cut down on the production costs and energy used to create the discs themselves.
- ENERGY STAR computers and monitors save energy only when the power management features are activated, so make sure power management is activated on your computer.
- Donate your time or money to an environmental group! Get into holiday spirit by volunteering! There are countless ways that may help to improve your community and the planet-from cleaning up a local river to initiating a recycling drive or plant some trees around and motivate others also to do so.
- Unplug battery chargers when the batteries are fully charged or the chargers are not in use.
- Calculate and monitor your personal carbon footprint constantly.
- Avoid high speeds. Above 60mph, fuel mileage drops rapidly.

*“What we are doing to the forests of the world is but a mirror reflection of what we are doing to ourselves and to one another.”*

**Reduce Your Carbon Footprint** - Mahatma Gandhi





## 1.10 My Smart Decisions

### An interesting insight into decision making

A group of children were playing near two railway tracks, one still in use while the other disused. Only one child was playing on the disused track, the others on the operational track.

Think for a while that a train is coming, and you are just beside the track interchange. You can make the train change its course to the disused track and save most of the kids. However, that would also mean the lone child playing on the disused track would be sacrificed. Or would you rather let the train go its own way?



Let's pause to think what kind of decision we could make...

Most people might choose to divert the course of the train, and sacrifice only one child. You might think the same way. Exactly, I thought the same way initially because to save most of the children at the expense of only one child was rational decision most people would make, morally and emotionally. But, have you ever thought that the child choosing to play on the disused track had in fact made the right decision to play at a safe place?

Nevertheless, he had to be sacrificed because of his ignorant friends who chose to play where the danger was. This kind of dilemma happens around us every day in the office, community, in politics. The child who chose not to play with the rest on the operational track was sidelined. And in the case he was sacrificed, no one would shed a tear for him.

The right decision would be not try to change the course of the train because the kids playing on the operational track should have known very well that track was still in use, and that they should have run away if they heard the train's sirens. If the train was diverted, that lone child would definitely die because he never thought the train could come over to that track! Moreover, that track was not in use probably because it was not safe. If the train was





diverted to the track, we could put the lives of all passengers on board at stake! And in your attempt to save a few kids by sacrificing one child, you might end up sacrificing hundreds of people to save these few ignorant kids.

While we are all aware that life is full of tough decisions that need to be made, we may not realize that hasty decisions may not always be the right ones.

(Source <http://www.ezsoftech.com/stories/mis62.asp>)

*"Remember that what's right isn't always popular and what's popular isn't always right."*

Children often make quick judgments based on desire, especially when some unexpected situations come up, leaving them with little time to think about the pros and cons. Some of those hasty decisions may involve cheating in school; skipping a class test; going somewhere which their parents do not approve of. All these bad decisions can lead to a loss of trust, low grades, disgrace and other reckless behaviour. Children try to explain their bad decisions by saying that everyone does it or what else could they do.

### **How to make smart decisions?**

Smart decisions are the products of a creative mind and always take time. Learning to make smart decisions helps to avoid painful and embarrassing situations in life.

Here are the four steps for making smart decisions:

1. **Think:** Smart decisions should be made after a careful thought. One should take stock of oneself i.e. knowing about one's values, strengths and weaknesses. One should also know what one wants to be. Knowing what you really are and what you really want from life can help in making smart decisions in life.
2. **Consult:** Before making important decisions consult or take advice of an expert or an elderly person whom you trust.
3. **Explore your options:** Do not make snap judgments. Try to explore different alternatives available to you and weigh their pros and cons.
4. **Make a decision:** Select a best option and then act upon it. But try to evaluate if the decision made is working or not.





## The skills needed to make decisions



### Active Listening

To listen to what the other person is saying.



### Empathy

To understand what the person is feeling.



### Negotiation

To “give and take” when solving problems.



### Understanding limits

Know the limits.



### Support for the decision

Once the decision is made, others should comply.



## The process of decision making

### Defining the Problem

The problem must be understood properly so as to find a relevant solution.



### Brainstorming possible solutions

Different ideas should be explored so as to make a smart decision.



### Considering the consequences of each solution

The consequences or the pros and cons of each possible solution should be considered before making a decision.



### Selecting a solution

The solution which seems to be best should be put to in action.



### Evaluating the decision

The decision made should be evaluated in terms of how well it solved the defined problem.



### Selecting the second option

If the first choice did not result in the desired outcome, then select the second option.





### Things to be kept in mind

- Decisions are based on values.
- Smart and good decisions lead to one's goals easily.
- Behaviour is based on decisions.

### Think and Do

#### 1. Do you make smart decisions?

Do you

- Consider the consequences rather than make a complete leap of faith about most things?
- Avoid making decisions for fear of making poor ones?
- Generally take advice when given?
- Enjoy taking part in family discussions and decision making processes?
- Follow what peers say rather than make independent decisions?

Score:

Question Number	Yes	No
1	2	0
2	0	2
3	2	0
4	2	0
5	0	2

**10:** A careful decision-maker. Not rash at all.

**6-8:** Considers options and then may act a little rashly.

**0-4:** Either makes poor decisions or none at all. Need to work hard to slow down or take risks and make some choices.

#### 2. Use the decision making steps to discuss "What if" questions with one of your classmates:

- You fail in a class test.
- A stranger offers a ride.



- Your friends want you to bunk school.
- Your father tells you not to go out with friends.

As you and your friend discuss these "What if" situations, many possible solutions with appropriate consequences will result. Note them in your Life Skills Journal.

**Laterally thought answers to the puzzles (you can think of different but other contextually correct answers as well)**

- The fireman is the only man in the room. The rest of the card players are women.
- The baby fell out of a ground floor window.
- The surgeon cannot operate on her own son; she is his mother.
- The last person took the basket with the last egg still inside.
- Round covers cannot be dropped or fall down a manhole, unlike square ones which can if get tilted diagonally.
- He fell into the Dead Sea, which lies between Israel and Jordan. The water is salty and so dense that anyone in it floats very easily.
- They were used by children who made a snowman. The snow has now melted.
- They were two of a set of triplets (or quadruplets, etc.)
- The water in the river only came up to the man's chest.
- The truck driver was walking.





## 1.11 Effective Communication

### Mountain Story



A son and his father were walking in the mountains. Suddenly, his son falls, hurts himself and screams, “AAAhhhhhhhhhhh!!”

To his surprise, he hears the voice repeating, somewhere in the mountain, “AAAhhhhhhhhhhh!!”

Curious, he yells, “Who are you?”

He receives the answer, “Who are you?” Angered at the response, he screams, “Coward!”

He receives the answer, “Coward!”

He looks to his father and asks, “What’s going on?” The father smiles and says, “My son, pay attention.” And then he screams to the mountain, “I admire you!” The voice answers, “I admire you!” Again the man screams, “You are a champion!” The voice answers, “You are a champion!”

The boy is surprised, but does not understand. Then the father explains, “People call this echo, but actually this is how we communicate. In the process of communication you receive the response that you give. If you say bad things you will get to hear bad things yourself and if you speak well you get to hear good yourselves as well. People respect you if you also do the same.”

So follow “echo-principle” in life for better and effective communication.

(Source: <http://www.inspirationalstories.com/7/758.html>)

**Communication is an everyday natural occurrence. It is the act of transmitting messages and sharing thoughts, feelings and ideas through verbal and non-verbal means.**

*“A man is as alive as he can communicate. Communication skills are essential in any sphere of human interaction. The ability to communicate is vital to the success of any endeavour.”*

Unfortunately we do lack effective communication skills. In certain situations, some of the basic conditions necessary for good communication are not met such as,





1. Listening carefully and responsibly (to do so one must make eye contact, take down notes, not interrupt the speaker until he/she finishes and reinforce the understanding by 'question tagging' i.e. use words like 'really', 'is that so', 'oh', 'you couldn't reach in time', etc., depending on the situation).
2. The speakers must express themselves more clearly and completely.
3. The words used should clarify the purpose of the conversation.
4. If questions are asked, they should be creative and open ended, i.e. they should not require answers as 'yes' or 'no'.
5. Both the listener and the speaker must show complete concentration in the conversation.
6. To communicate effectively, keep in mind:
  - Clarity and speed of speech
  - Tone and pitch of voice
  - Choice of words
  - Keeping the message short and simple
  - Get a feedback
  - Build a good vocabulary.

By screaming, yelling, throwing fits, calling names and showing little respect one makes a bad situation worse.





### Learn to listen

There are different ways by which students communicate at school. They read, speak, write and most importantly they listen. In fact, listening is a skill that enhances understanding and comprehension. In order to be a good listener, one must concentrate totally on what the speaker is saying. This helps them to absorb and analyze the content.

Do you know that it is possible to hear and not listen? Sometimes when you are bored or disinterested, you may hear without listening! Has this ever happened to you?

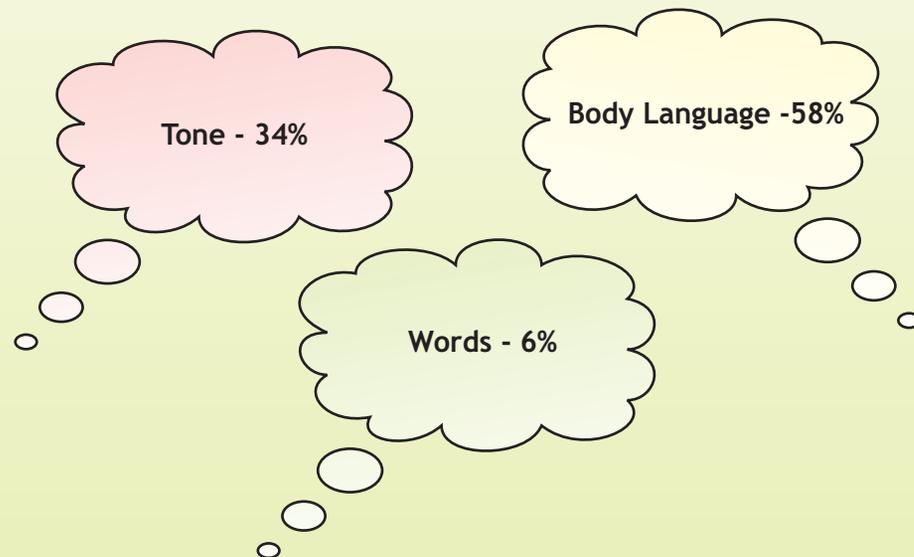
A '*listener*' could show active responses like asking questions, making exclamations like "wow" or respond by actions like nodding, smiling, etc.

### How do we communicate?

**Purpose:** To establish the significance of non-verbal and verbal communication.

**What to do:** Enact a situation when you meet someone for the first time.

### How do you make an impression?





Here is an excerpt from the Reader's Digest that tells you how communication is possible without words.

### Beautiful Communication

They were four in the Bombay city tourist bus where I worked as a guide to an elderly couple, a young man and a girl. It was raining, the mike was not working, the bus near-empty and silent and then I realized that my passengers were deaf mutes.

As if she had read my mind, the young girl whose name was Lisa informed me that she could talk and hear a little while the others were totally deaf. She would lip read me and explained the sights of Bombay to her friends. The young man was her boyfriend. Both of them were in a California University and had come to attend a workshop in Bangalore. The elderly couple was his parents. For all of them, it was their first visit to India.

I found it all unusual. The girl would watch my mouth intently, then with nods, smiles and quick and dexterous signs convey to the others what I had been telling them. Soon we were 'chatting freely'. The older woman enquired about my family, caste, and discussed the art of wearing a sari and the problem of Bombay's population explosion. She also told me that she worked in a bank and her husband was a teacher in a deaf and dumb school.

Soon the trip was over. Lisa clasped my hands. The others pointed out to their hearts and then to me. I was deeply moved. We had broken all the barriers and communicated through the silence.

-Jyoti Nirodi, Varanasi



### Non - Verbal Communication

Any interaction that does not use words is called a non-verbal communication or communication through body language.

#### Body Language includes

Posture - sitting or standing position

Position - of head and shoulders

Gestures - use of hands

Way of walking

Expression - of face

Eye contact

Speech pattern - speed, fluency, pauses





**While communicating**, we tend to get aggressive, passive or assertive. Most people react to situations in one of these three ways. Being aggressive or passive can result in negative communication. Being assertive supports in communicating the message in straight and firm words, clearly.

### **What is Assertiveness?**

According to **Elizabeth Scott, M.S.**, *"Assertiveness is the ability to express one's feelings and assert one's rights while respecting the feelings and rights of others. Assertive communication is appropriately direct, open and honest, and clarifies one's needs to the other person."*

Assertiveness comes naturally to some, but is a skill that can be learned.

### **How does Assertiveness compare to Aggressive and Passive Behaviour?**

Assertive, aggressive and passive behaviour are different communication styles.

Sometimes people confuse assertive behaviour with aggression seeing that both types of behaviour involve standing up for one's rights, expressing one's needs and refusing to compromise in any way.

Assertiveness is no doubt standing up for one's rights and expressing oneself in ways that respect the other person. In no way it violates the rights of others. It is communicating one's needs, feelings and opinions to others in a direct and honest manner. It is all about being calm but still being firm. People with assertive behaviour think *"win-win"* and try to compromise so that both the parties win.

Individuals with aggressive behaviour are often driven by anger and think in retaliatory terms. They tend to employ tactics that are demeaning, abusive and disrespectful. They do not think of other person's point of view. They win at the expense of others thus creating a conflicting situation.

Individuals with passive behaviour do not know how to communicate their feelings and needs to others. They fear conflict so much that they keep their feelings under wraps and let their needs go unmet. They keep the peace and let others win.

Over a passage of time, passive - aggressive communication style damages relationships and diminishes mutual respect.

Here is a common scenario with examples of each style of behaviour:

**Scenario: Someone cuts in front of you while you are in a waiting line.**

**An aggressive response** would be to assume that he/she did it on purpose and angrily say, *"Hey you, no cuts, can't you be in the queue!"*

A passive response would be to just let the person stay in front of you.

**An assertive response** would be to assume that they may not have seen you in line, and politely say, *"Excuse me, but I was in line"*.





## Benefits of Assertiveness

Assertiveness is a healthier communication style. Being assertive offers many benefits.

- Helps you to keep people from bullying you. On the other side, it can also help you not to ignore what the other person is saying.
- Helps in communicating your needs, wants and feelings to others in an effective manner.
- Both persons/groups feel respected and heard as nobody's feelings are hurt.
- Helps in strengthening mutual relationships.
- Helps you become more confident and positive in approach, thus enhancing your self-esteem.
- Helps in leading a balanced life as you take more in control of your daily life.
- Improves your decision-making skills and helps in resolving conflicting situations.
- Helps in managing friends and others effectively and empathetically.
- Reduces stress and anxiety.
- Helps in developing a positive rather than rash behaviours to manage aggressive and passive behaviours in others.
- Helps in standing up for your rights.
- Develops the ability to say 'no' assertively and not feel guilty.
- Helps in having more personal time, thus enhancing the prospects of advancement.
- Helps in earning respect from others.
- Creates a "win-win" situation for both parties.
- Improves your communication skills.
- Helps in coping with mental health problems.

No doubt, assertiveness has many benefits but assertiveness is a skill to be learnt which takes time and practice.

## Learning to be more assertive

1. **Learn about yourself:** The first step in becoming more assertive is to take an honest look at yourself and answer the following questions to see where you currently stand.
  - Is it difficult to accept constructive criticism?
  - Are you able to say 'no' to the unreasonable requests from friends?
  - Can you ask for help without any hesitation?





- Is it hard to maintain eye contact while talking to others?
- Are you able to express your opinion freely if it is different from those of others?

The answers to these questions will let you know where you stand on the assertiveness spectrum. Knowing where you want to be, you may benefit from learning the assertiveness skills.

2. **Use "I" statements:** Use of "I" statements rather than "You" statements helps in communicating your needs more clearly. It shows ownership of your reactions and less blame which is an assertive action. Remember to stick to the first person and avoid "You are".

**For example:**

*"When you do (their behaviour), then (the effects/results of their behaviour), and I feel (how you feel)."*

Putting it in day to day life examples:

*"When you arrive late, I have to wait, and I feel frustrated."*

*"When you borrow my notebook before a test, I cannot prepare, and I feel tensed."*

3. **Listen carefully:** Listen carefully to what others are saying. Do not interrupt them. Let them know that you have heard what they said. It is important to understand the other person's point of view. If need be, do ask questions for clarification.
4. **Maintain a direct eye contact:** Maintain a direct eye contact with the other person but be sure your facial expression agrees with the message delivered by the other person.
5. **Use assertive body language:** Communication is not just verbal, non-verbal behaviour also plays an important role in communication. Let your body reflect confidence even if you are not feeling it. Stand erect and be relaxed. Do not use dramatic gestures. Practise assertive body language in front of a mirror.
6. **Do not say 'Yes' when you want to say 'No':** Learn to say 'No' if someone is asking you to do something that you do not want to do at that time. Be straight forward and honest.
7. **Be firm:** Use a firm but pleasant tone.
8. **Rehearse what you want to say:** If it is difficult to say what you want to then do not get discouraged. Figure out typical scenarios or situations where you went astray and then practise those situations. Consider role playing with a friend or a family member and ask for their feedback.





9. **Start small:** Start with situations and people with whom it would be easier to be assertive. As your confidence level increases, increase the difficulty level.
10. **Keep emotions in check:** In most conflicting situations, you might feel like crying or get angry or frustrated. These are normal feelings which all of us experience which get in the way of resolving the conflicts. Try to be calm and breathe slowly but keeping your voice even and calm.
11. **Try to think win-win:** Being assertive does not mean "winning the argument" or "being right" but be respectful of the other person even if you do not like their actions. It is finding a compromise or a way for both of you get your needs met.

*"Assertiveness is not what you do, it's who you are!"*

*- Shakti Gawain*

### Think and Do

1. In the table given below are some situations, write in the columns how you would react to these:

Situation	Passive	Assertive	Aggressive
Your teacher scolds you for not doing your homework.			
Your friend asks you to show your answer sheet in an exam.			
Your parents check you for spending excess time talking on the telephone or watching television.			
You need a raise in your pocket money.			
Your parents are going out to dinner.			
You are left in charge of your younger brother.			

2. Make one assertive, one aggressive and one passive statement and write them down in your Life Skills Journal.
3. Reflect and note down your reflections in the Life Skills Journal:
  - Was there any moment in your life when you wanted to say "No" and end up saying "Yes"? Why?
  - What are the key characteristics of an assertive person?
  - What are the advantages and disadvantages of being assertive?





## 1.12 The importance of Relationships

### Family and Stranger

On my way back from school, I met a stranger. And I said, *"Oh, excuse me please"*.

He said, *"Please excuse me too; I wasn't watching for you"*.

Both of us were very polite. After saying goodbye, we went on our way.

But at home a different story is told, how we treat our loved ones, young and old.

I reached home, threw my bag on the couch. My mother came in and said, *"Pick up your bag and keep it on your study table"*. I ignored what she said.

I went to my younger sister watching television, snatched the television remote from her hand and pushed her aside. She fell down and started crying. My mother came running inside, *"What happened?"*

While pointing towards me, my sister said, *"He pushed me and snatched the remote from my hand"*.

I immediately replied, *"I just took the remote and she is cooking up stories"*.

But my mother was adamant and said, *"Say sorry to her, she is hurt"*.

*"Oh it was all her fault, she watches so much of cartoons, she could have given me the remote when I asked her and you also favour her all the time"*, said I and left the room.

Later that day, while I was doing my homework, my sister stood beside me very still. When I turned, I nearly knocked her down. *"Move out of my way"*, I said with a frown. My sister walked away, her little heart broken. I did not realize how harshly I have spoken.

While I was lying awake in bed trying to sleep, a small voice came to me and said, *"While dealing with a stranger, you use common courtesy, but the people you love, you seem to abuse. Look on the study table, you will find a card there. That card was made by your baby sister. She drew and coloured it herself. Your sister stood quietly not to spoil the surprise, and you never saw the tears in her eyes."*

By this time, I felt very small, and now my tears began to fall.

I quietly went and knelt by her bed and said, *"Wake up, little sister, wake up"*. *"Is this the card you made for me?"*

My sister smiled, *"I thought I should say sorry and tell you that you are the best"*





*brother. I knew you would like it and you can watch television whenever you want to.”*

*I said, “Sister, I am sorry for the way I acted today. I should not have pushed you that way.”*

*My sister said, “Oh brother, that’s okay. I love you anyway.”*

*I said, “Sister, I love you too, and I do like this card, especially made by you”.*



Humans are social animals. It is essential to adapt and build relationships for our mental health, self-esteem, and ability to work is influenced greatly by our relationships. Your relationships will work best if you are able to be yourself. Relationships in which you can be yourself are likely to make you feel more comfortable and happier. This does not mean you can throw tantrums when you feel like it, nor be rude to people as you wish. However relationships tend to be unsatisfying when one is fulfilling a role rather than being oneself. So in order to improve relationships one must first understand them. Your relationship with others is the key to your success or failure.

*A relationship is a connection between individuals such as parent-child relationship. Relationships usually involve some level of interdependence and tend to influence each other. They share their thoughts and feelings with each other.*

Good relationships do not just happen. Any type of relationship requires a lot of work to be maintained and build upon. It is wrong to hold a view that the best way of improving our relationships is to change other people.

### **Improving your relationships**

#### **1. Know thyself**

The Socratic dictum of 'know thyself' seems to be a simple adage, but it is essential for building good relationships. If you are not aware of your needs, wants and limits then there is every likelihood of your becoming dependent on others and clingy. Knowing yourself will enable you to revel in other's success and achievements rather than resenting them.

#### **2. Knowing the other person**

Knowing the other persons you are intimately connected with is definitely worth it but it is not an easy task.

#### **3. Take responsibility**

This is the most important to improve your relationships. It means taking responsibility for your feelings and needs.





#### 4. **Treat others the way you want to be treated.**

This is the essence of good relationships. We all yearn to be treated with love, kindness, compassion and acceptance. Relationships flourish when we treat one another with kindness.

#### 5. **Gratitude instead of complaints**

To maintain good relationships, we should have an attitude of gratitude and try not to complain too often because complaints create stress. On the other hand gratitude creates healthy relationships.

#### 6. **Being tolerant**

You cannot change other persons easily. Try not to focus on the negative aspects of their personality because it is going to make you feel unhappy. As long as no one is treating you badly, you have to be tolerant.

#### 7. **Change yourself rather than changing others**

If your relationship is stormy, then work on changing yourself rather than others because it is not easy to change other people. The only way to change the other person is to change the way you relate to them. Working to change yourself is a difficult process. Once you start making changes in yourself, the other person is likely to begin to change. These changes take time and require persistence.

#### 8. **Loving, living and sharing**

Best relationships are based on living, loving and sharing. Living means letting others live as they choose. Do not try to force your preferences on them. Loving means unconditional love. This is probably the hardest thing to do for maintaining healthy relationship because sometimes we try to place conditions on our love as a way of shaping the outcomes we desire for. We should try to come out of this temptation and simply love people for who they are. Sharing creates harmony and balance in a relationship.

#### 9. **Face the difficulties and problems within your relationships**

Do not let problems to aggravate in a relationship as they fuel up misunderstanding and anger which can rip apart your relationship. Talk openly about your feelings to one another to sort out your problems.

#### 10. **Nurture your relationships**

The word nurture means to nourish which promotes well being of yours and of those around you. Be attentive and find opportunities to nurture your relationship with others.





- Nurture your relationships with time. Spend quality time with the other person. If left unattended and uncared, the relationship will come to an end.
- Never be too busy to call or talk to loved ones.
- Talk face-to-face with family and friends.
- Be a good listener by paying attention to details.
- Be available whenever a friend or a family member is in need.
- Remember the important dates in the lives of your loved ones and wish them.
- Send flowers, special occasion cards and ‘thank you’ notes as small tokens to express your love and appreciation.
- Value relationships for who they are, not what they do.
- Whenever need be, never hesitate to say, "I am sorry".
- Have a positive attitude.

All these act as a cementing force to improve your relationships. Apart from these, try to accommodate the differences along with the compatibilities for a long lasting connection.

*"However good or bad you feel about your relationship, the person you are with at this moment is the right person, because he or she is the mirror of who you are inside."*

*- Deepak Chopra*

### Think and Do

1. Think on the following and note your thoughts down in your Life Skills Journal:
  - a. What qualities do you look for in a positive relationship?
  - b. What do you do to show that you value a friendship or a family relationship?
  - c. What makes you feel that someone does not value your relationship with him or her?
  - d. In case of a discord or disagreement, what measures should be taken so that it does not affect one's relationships?

### 2. My Relationship Chart

There are three basic types of relationships:





- a. **Personal:** People you trust and share your private thoughts with and whose opinions matter most. Examples: close friends.
- b. **Social:** People in your community who you recognize by their role in society. Examples: teacher, police officer, bus driver, neighbour.
- c. **Family:** All relatives as well as any other people you consider family. Examples: parents, siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins.

Think about the important people in your life. Use the chart to help you evaluate your relationships. Choose an important person for each type listed on the left side of the chart. Fill in that person's name and their relationship to you. Then list the reasons you feel these people are important to you.

Relationship type	Important person	Why they are important
Personal		
Social		
Family		





## 1.13 Be Emotionally Smart

If you want to be happier, learn the "Law of the Garbage Truck" written by David J. Pollay, syndicated columnist with North Star Writers Group.

### Discover the Law of the Garbage Truck

The Law of the Garbage Truck



I hopped in a taxi, and we took off for the Central Station. We were driving in the right lane when all of a sudden a black car jumped out of a parking space right in front of us. My taxi driver slammed on his brakes, the car skidded and at the last moment the car stopped just one inch from the other car's back-end. The driver of the other car whipped his head around and he started yelling at us. My taxi driver just smiled and waved at the driver of the other car. My taxi driver was friendly.

I asked, "Why did you just do that? This driver ruined your car and could have killed us!" This is when my taxi driver told me what I now call, "The Law of the Garbage Truck".

He said, "Many people are like garbage trucks. They run around full of garbage, full of frustration, full of anger, and full of disappointment. As their garbage piles up, they need a place to dump it. And if you let them, they'll dump it on you. Don't take it personally. Just smile, wave, wish them well and move on. Do not spread it to other people at work, at home or on street. Believe me. You'll be happier."

The essential point is that successful people do not let garbage trucks take over their day. Life is too short to wake up in the morning with regrets, so "Love the people who treat you right. Forgive the ones who do not."

**Irving Berlin** rightly said, "Life is ten percent what you make it and ninety percent how you take it."

This law of life is like a tool. If applied consistently, it can transform your life into a more useful and joyful experience. Happiness is directly related to emotional intelligence. Happier people are more emotionally intelligent than those who are unhappy.





Till recently, the intelligence quotient of a person was the main factor in deciding his or her worth as a student or a professional. Now Emotional Intelligence (EI) or Emotional Quotient (EQ) has emerged as a more vital factor in judging a person. It refers to one's attitude to oneself and others, as well as one's emotional balance and maturity. It is the capacity to identify, understand and control feelings or emotions of oneself and of others. It is the ability to remain in control of one's emotions.

**Peter Salovey and John D. Mayer** have defined **Emotional Intelligence** as, "*the subset of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions*" (1990).

According to **Daniel Goleman**, "*Emotional intelligence is a master aptitude, a capacity that profoundly affects all other abilities, either facilitating or interfering with them*". The term Emotional Intelligence encompasses the following five characteristics and abilities:



1. Self Awareness
2. Self Management
3. Self Motivation
4. Empathy
5. Social Skills

These competencies are measured in determining the Emotional Quotient (EQ) of an individual.

**Constituents of Emotional Intelligence are the ability to**

- persist in the face of difficulty
- monitor one's feelings
- read other's feelings
- get along with others
- resist temptation in the service of a higher goal
- take action that considers the needs of self and others

Emotional Intelligence revolves around the regulation of emotions i.e. the ability to manage emotions depending upon the situation. Persons with high Emotional Intelligence are aware of their emotions and are able to control them in different





situations. On the other hand, individuals with low Emotional Intelligence might not be aware of the source of their emotions and might allow anger to influence their thoughts.

Adolescents begin to develop Emotional Intelligence but still they are not always predictable in their emotional maturity and may experience mood swings i.e. going from sadness to anger to joy within a minute. This feeling is very common among the young adolescents of today who are more emotionally troubled. They are becoming more disruptive, uncooperative and very frustrated with whoever they come in contact with.



### Taking control of negative emotions

Adolescents can follow these guidelines that can help them in taking control of their bad emotions.



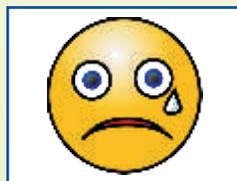
#### Recognize you are not alone

Every adolescent experiences mood swings but in varying degrees.



#### Talk to people you trust

Talk to your parents, elder siblings, and to friends. Share your feelings and experiences while dealing with bad emotions. Teachers and counselors can also be approached as they are in a better position to help you to sort out your problems. Do give vent to your bad emotions, as keeping them inside can worsen your health.



#### Cry

When feeling bad or depressed, cry. There is nothing wrong in crying and it makes a person feel emotionally lighter.



#### Catch your breath

If you are feeling angry or irritable, count up to ten or do something that lets your anger or irritation settle for a moment.



#### Exercise

Exercise helps in reducing stress and anxiety. Go for a walk, ride a bicycle, play some tennis, run, etc. but try not to push yourself too hard, or the real purpose of exercise will be defeated.





### Get enough sleep

Get adequate rest as tiredness can lead to more bad emotions like irritability and sadness.



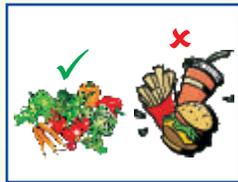
### Relax

Engage in some relaxation activities that help to quiet your mind like meditation, reading something of your interest, watching a comedy or cartoon movie. Learn some deep breathing exercises; they also help in calming down of bad emotions.



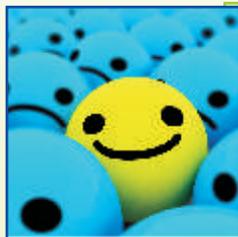
### Create

Get involved in some creative work such as writing a diary or journal, making something out of wood, or starting an art or music piece, etc. These help you to express your thoughts and feelings.



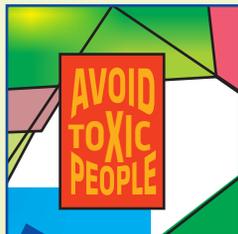
### Healthy diet

Have a balanced diet which helps to produce positive feelings or emotions. A balanced diet includes fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains, etc.



### Positive attitude

Buddha rightly said, "You become what you think". Your thoughts can be negative or positive or you feel good or bad depending on the circumstances. Emotions control your life. Practise positive emotions and have positive attitude as they bring you happiness and success.



### Avoid Toxic People

It is true if we are constantly in the company of people who are angry and discouraging, then we will also become like them. Avoid the company of such individuals.

When young adolescents increase their Emotional Intelligence, they can easily handle negative feelings or bad emotions.

### Role of Language in Emotional Intelligence

Language is an essential part of Emotional Quotient. It is an easier, but powerful mode to express one's feelings. Just go through the example of a four year old boy, Rahul who used his language skills to express his feelings towards his mother.





Rahul snapped at his mother saying, "Go away!" when she refused to buy him a toy. It was his way of expressing anger towards his mother.

Even before children develop language skills, emotional intelligence exists. This can be seen in most cases when, babies want to have some physical contact with either of their parents to feel secure when they go to sleep.

### Role of Emotional Intelligence

Emotional Intelligence plays an important role in our emotional, social and personal life. It helps in managing stressful situations and solves day-to-day problems. It also helps in developing good interpersonal relationships. So it is important to recognize and manage emotions not only for yourself but also for others around you.

### Enhancing Emotional Intelligence or Emotional Quotient

Tips:

- Identify your feelings
- **Learn to label your feelings** such as angry, sad, happy, excited, afraid and so on. The earlier you start labeling your feelings, the sooner you start developing your Emotional Quotient. This will also help you to be more sensitive towards your emotional needs and thereby express them properly.
- Discriminate between thoughts and feelings.
- Accept positive as well as negative feelings.
- Talk about different kinds of feelings.
- Acknowledge others' feelings.
- Get supportive feedback about your interactions with others from the people who you trust.

Just hold back your emotions and soon you will be emotionally mature of which you will be proud.

*"Instead of resisting any emotion, the best way to dispel it is to enter it fully, embrace it and see through your resistance."*

*- Deepak Chopra*





## Think and Do

1. For each of the situations given below write the following:

- Normal reaction
- Emotionally smart reaction
- Your reaction
  - a. What if your teacher insults you in front of the class?
  - b. What if your best friend lets you down?
  - c. What if your brother/sister/friend speaks rudely to you?
  - d. What if your younger sibling answers you rudely?
  - e. What if you were unable to perform well as compared to others?

Write about all these situations along with your reactions in your Life Skills Journal.

2. Imagine a situation when you helped your brother/sister when he/she was feeling frustrated, even though he/she was being rude to you. How does it feel to know that you can choose to act with patience in the face of someone else's anger? Write about it in your Life Skills Journal.



Courtesy: [blog.ehealthaustralia.org](http://blog.ehealthaustralia.org)





## 1.14 De-Stressing

### The cup of life



A group of working adults got together to visit their University lecturer. The lecturer was happy to see them. The conversation soon turned into complaints about stress at work and in life.

The Lecturer just smiled and went to the kitchen and got assortment of cups - some porcelain, some in plastic, some in glass, some plain looking and some looked rather expensive and exquisite.

The Lecturer offered his former students the cups to get themselves a drink.

When all the students had a cup in hand, the lecturer spoke, *"If you noticed, all the nice looking, expensive cups were taken, leaving behind the plain and cheap ones. While it is normal that you only want the best for yourselves, that is the source of your problems and stress. What all of you wanted was some water, not the cup, but you unconsciously went for the better cups."*

*"Just like in life, if life is water, then the jobs, money and position in society are the cups. They are just tools to hold or maintain life, but the quality of life doesn't change."*

*"If we only concentrate on the cup, we won't have time to enjoy or taste the water in it."*

(Source: <http://thejourneytoislam.wordpress.com/>)





We often complain about trivial pains and problems we face in life and forget about the bigger problems and feel stressed. We are after the glitter of this world and forget the actual purpose and goals in our life. Take a minute or two to think about which is more important to you—the water or the cup. So let us stop complaining and enjoy our life by acknowledging that stress is part of our daily life.

According to **Mrs. Anila Mathews**, a Life Skills teacher, *"Stress is a set of physical, mental and chemical reactions in our body to real or perceived circumstances of fear, danger, excitement, irritation etc. that motivate us to change and react to the situation"*.

Stress affects the body and mind. Its impact can be positive and negative.

### Two kinds of stress

1. **Eustress or positive stress** occurs when your level of stress is high enough to motivate you to move into action to accomplish things. It improves your performance.



2. **Distress or negative stress** occurs when your level of stress is either too high or too low and your body and mind begin to respond negatively to the stressors. It impairs your performance.





### Sources of stress for students

Plenty of things can cause stress in the lives of the students such as

- Demands of parents
- Intense competition
- The need to excel
- Peer pressure
- Examinations
- Living up to society's expectations
- Heavy Curriculum



**Be aware, recognize when you are stressed.**



### Symptoms of stress in adolescents

- No longer happy about school activities
- Approaches most school assignments with resignation or resentment
- Exhibits boredom
- Sleeplessness
- Overreacts to normal concerns or events
- Fatigue, extreme tiredness, low energy level
- Unhappiness with self and accomplishments
- Nervous habits such as blinking, head shaking, or stuttering
- Physical ailments such as frequent stomach aches or headaches





- Frequent illness
- Dependence i.e. demanding constant support and reassurance
- Engages in attention-getting behaviours such as aggressive or acting-out behaviours
- Inability to make decisions
- No sense of humor
- Lack of concentration

### Coping with stress

#### Take a break

- Breathe deeply
- Sit back and relax
- Do something you love
- Read a good book
- Change your surroundings

#### Organize your life

- Manage your time
- Make 'To Do' lists
- Plan ahead
- Set mini goals
- Learn to Plan

#### Communicate

- Express your emotions
- Talk to a friend
- Eliminate negative talk
- Cry
- Laugh

#### Stretch

- Stand up and reach up
- Neck stretch: roll your head in a half circle, starting at one side, and then dropping your chin to your chest, then to the other side
- Watch a cat stretch and do the same

#### Practice Relaxation

- Meditation
- Deep Breathing
- Get a Massage
- Visualization
- Take a Bath
- Try saying the Serenity Prayer

You cannot avoid stress, but you can handle it just like an eagle that knows how to fly higher during a storm.





## An Eagle Story

An eagle knows when a storm is approaching long before it breaks. It will fly to some high spot and wait for the winds.



When the storm hits, it sets its wings so that the wind will pick it up and lift it above the storm. While the storm rages below, the eagle is soaring above it.

The eagle does not escape the storm. It simply uses the storm to lift it higher. It rises on the winds that bring the storm.

All of us experience storms in our lives and when they come upon us, we can rise above them by our determination and also faith in God.

(Source: <http://www.abbalovesus.com/Eagle.html>)

The eagle story provides us with a powerful lesson not to hide our heads in the sand like the ostrich when we see problems approaching us. We must act like the eagles. We must be realistic since life is not a bed of roses. Storms will enter our lives and we must find ways to use them to rise higher in life.

*“There is more to life than increasing its speed.”*

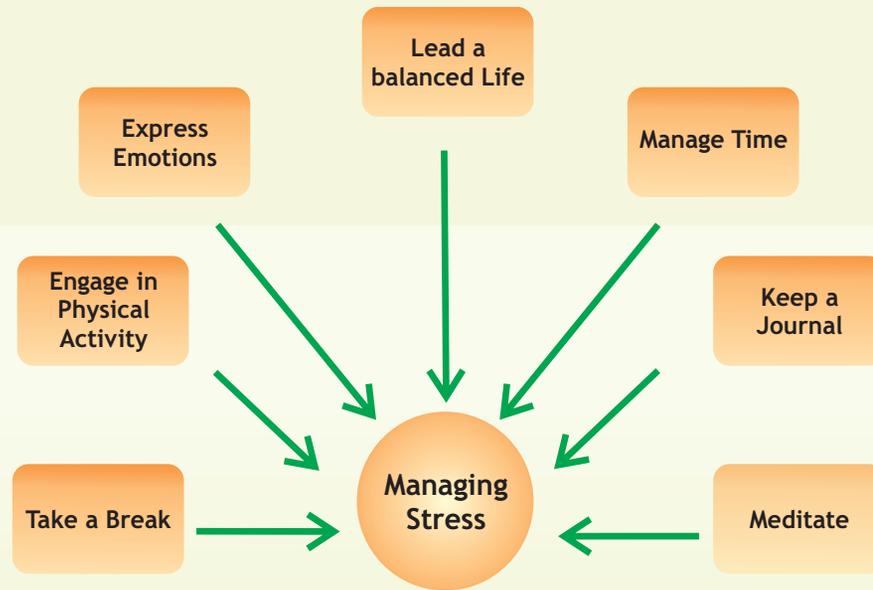
*- Mohandas K. Gandhi*





## Think and Do

1. Write a recipe for de-stressing (mention all the ingredients required along with the quantity).
2. Discuss the activities that your family members use to de-stress. Make a Stress Buster Chart for your entire family.



*"Stress should be a powerful driving force, not an obstacle"*

*- Bill Phillips*

