

Yoga An Effective Tool for Life Skill Education for Adolescents: Its Relevance and Importance

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ABSTRACT

Adolescents are considered to be the productive members of a society due to their physical and intellectual capacity. But unfortunately most of the adolescents are unable to utilize their potential to maximum due to inappropriate environment. They are engaging in antisocial activities and spoiling their life. To make life of adolescents valuable and to convert them to individuals with high potential, education system should be reformed giving due importance to life skill education. Life skills are those abilities which will help in the promotion of general well-being and psychosocial competence of the individual. Life skills empower young people to take positive action to protect them and promote health and positive social relationships. It also entails being able to establish productive interpersonal relationships with others. In the present paper the investigator goes through the importance of life skills, various life skills, life skill education, the benefits of imparting life skill education in our curriculum and how yoga helpful to inculcate these skills.

Keywords: Adolescents, Problem of adolescent, Life skill, Life skill education, Yoga.

Adolescents and Problems of Adolescents

Adolescence is a most crucial period. It is a period of stress and storm according to Stanley Hall which ranges the age between 13- 19 years. That's why it is also called teenage. The current scenario of adolescents revealed by increased depression, increased suicidal rates, increased drug use is the clear indication of the challenges that adolescent's are facing. Information overload, mixed messages from media, press, teachers, and family and from society at large add to the confusing scenario of the assimilating young mind. No doubt that they are at risk because they lack social support to seek accurate information and services. Thus providing an experience that would strengthen adolescent's coping abilities to counter environmental stress.

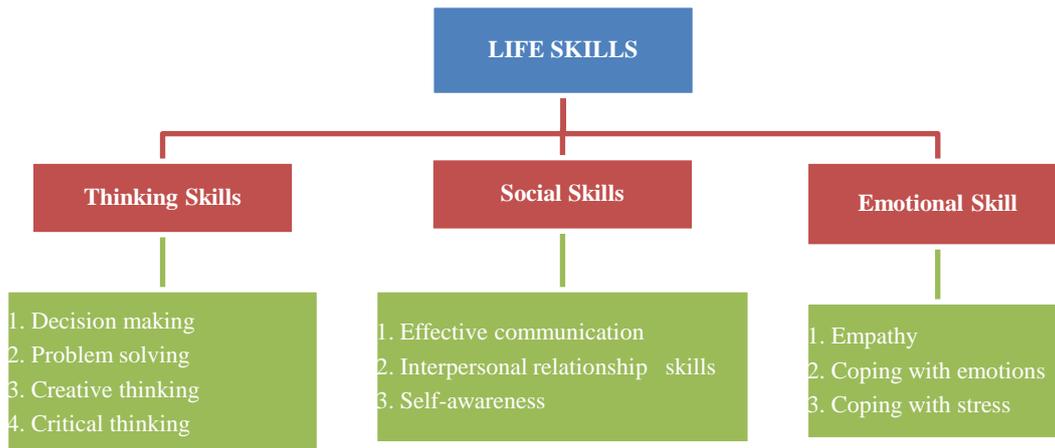
What is Life Skills?

Life skills have been defined as *"the abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life."* (WHO) **'Adaptive'** means that a person is flexible in approach and is able to adjust in different circumstances. **'Positive behaviour'** implies that a person is forward looking and even in difficult situations, can find a ray of hope and opportunities to find solutions.

Life Skills are abilities that will help students to be successful in living a productive life. Learning and practicing Life Skills help students to improve their personal and social qualities such as self esteem, compassion, respect and confidence etc. Life skills develop psychosocial competence in adolescents. Psychosocial competence has an important role to play in the promotion of health in terms of physical, mental and social well being. In particular where health problems are related to behaviour and where behaviour is related to inability to deal effectively with stress and pressure in life.

MAJOR LIFE SKILLS

The core set of life skills which help in promoting health and well-being of children and adolescents are:



THINKING SKILLS: The individual must also be skilled at evaluating the future consequences of their present actions on others. They need to be able to determine alternative solutions and to analyze the influence of their own values and the values of those around them. The components of thinking skills are:

- ☞ **Decision making** – Helps to deal constructively with decisions about our lives. The process of assessing an issue by considering all possible/available options and the effects those different decisions might have on them.
- ☞ **Problem solving:** - Having made the decisions about each of the options, choosing the one which suits the best, following it through even in the face impediments and going through the process again till a positive outcome of the problem is achieved. If problems in life are left unsolved can cause mental stress and physical strain.
- ☞ **Creative thinking:** - It is the ability to look beyond our direct experience and address issues. It contributes to both decision making and problem solving by enabling us to explore the available alternatives and various consequences of our actions or non-action. It helps us to look beyond our direct experience, and even if no problem is identified, or no decision is to be made, creative thinking can help us to respond adaptively and with flexibility to the situations of our daily lives.
- ☞ **Critical thinking:** - It is an ability to analyze information and experiences in an objective manner. Critical thinking can contribute to health by helping us to recognize and assess the factors that influence attitudes and behavior, such as values, peer pressure, and the media.

SOCIAL SKILLS: These include verbal and non-verbal communication, active listening, and the ability to express feelings and give feedback. Also in this category are negotiation/refusal skills and assertiveness skills that directly affect one's ability to manage conflict. The components of social skills are:

- ☞ **Effective communication:** - 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, desires, needs and fears. And it also means being able to ask for advice and help in a time of need.

- ☞ **Interpersonal relationships:** - Interpersonal relationship skills help us to relate in positive ways with the people we interact with. This means being able to make and keep friendly relationships, which can be of great importance to our mental and social well-being. It also includes keeping good relations with family members, teachers, peers which are an important source of social support.
- ☞ **Self-awareness:-** Self awareness includes our recognition of ourselves, our character, our strengths and weaknesses, desires and dislikes. Developing self-awareness can help us to recognize when we are stressed or feel under pressure. It is also often a prerequisite for effective communication and interpersonal relations, as well as for developing empathy for others.

EMOTIONAL SKILLS: These refer to skills which help one to increase the internal locus of control, so that the individual believes that she/he can affect change and make a difference in the world. The components of emotional skills are:

- ☞ **Empathy:** - Empathy is the ability to imagine what life is like for another person, even in a situation that we may not be familiar with. Empathy can help us to understand and accept others who may be very different from ourselves, which can improve social interactions, for example, in situations of ethnic or cultural diversity. Empathy can also help to encourage nurturing behavior 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.
- ☞ **Coping with emotions:** - Coping with emotions involves recognizing emotions in ourselves and others, being aware of how emotions influence behavior, and being able to respond to emotions appropriately. Intense emotions, like anger or sorrow can have negative effects on our health if we do not react appropriately.
- ☞ **Coping with stress:** - Coping with stress is recognizing the sources of stress in our lives, recognizing how this affects us, and acting in ways that help to control our levels of stress. This may mean that we take action to reduce the sources of stress, for example, by making changes to our physical environment or lifestyle. Inevitably, cultural and social factors will determine the exact nature of life skills. For example, eye contact may be encouraged in boys for effective communication, but not for girls in some societies, so gender issues will arise in identifying the nature of life skills for psychosocial competence.

LIFE SKILL EDUCATION

Life skill education is a programme on mental health of WHO Geneva for promoting psychosocial competence. Life skill education is a value added program which aims to provide students with strategies to make healthy choices that contribute to a meaningful life. It helps adolescents to understand their self and to assess their skills, abilities and areas of development. It also helps adolescents to get along with other people and adjust with their environment and making responsible decision.

The main objective of life skill education is to enable the learner to develop a concept of oneself as a person of worth and dignity. Life skill education is a basic learning need for all individuals. Various skills like leadership,

responsibility, communication, intellectual capacity, self esteem, Interpersonal skill etc. extends its maximum level, if it is practicing effectively. We need to create life skill education as the cornerstone of various youth programmers and an integral part of our formal education process.

In life skills education, children are actively involved in a dynamic teaching and learning process. The methods used to facilitate this active involvement include working in small groups and pairs, brainstorming, role play, games and debates. A life skills lesson may start with a teacher exploring with the students what their ideas or knowledge is about a particular situation in which a life skill can be used. The children may be asked to discuss the issues raised in more detail in small groups or with a partner. They may then engage in short role play scenarios, or take part in activities that allow them to practice the skills in different situations as actual practice of skills is a vital component of life skills education. Finally, the teacher will assign homework to encourage the children to further discuss and practice the skills with their families and friends.

Skill based approach in life skill education follows well established mentoring techniques to develop students innate quality and also motivating them to adopt socially acceptable pattern of life style's particularly, strategy consisting of a group of people combined together to help themselves by identifying their talents and directing them to choose an appropriate steps to enhance their skill and abilities as a part of development.

In order to have an effective implementation of life skill education there is a need for professionally trained and skilled personal from within the country. Professional training requires a purposely planned programmed of study prepared by experts which has the approval of a competent authority and a group of experts to train the trainers of life skill education.

Skill Areas & Indicators of Assessment

☞ Thinking skills Students demonstrates the ability to:

- be original, flexible and imaginative
- raise questions, identify and analyze problems
- implement a well- thought our decision and take responsibility
- generate new ideas with fluency
- elaborate/build on new ideas

☞ Social Skills Students demonstrates the ability to:

- Identify, verbalize and respond effectively to others' emotions in an empathetic manner
- get along well with others
- take criticism positively
- listen actively
- communicate using appropriate words, intonation and body language

☞ Emotional Skills Students demonstrates the ability to :

- Identify one's own strengths and weaknesses
- be comfortable with one's own self and overcome weaknesses for positive self-concept
- identify causes and effects of stress on oneself
- develop and use multi-faceted strategies to deal with stress
- ability to express and respond to emotions with an awareness of the consequences.

Yoga

Yoga is way and art of living. Yoga is a form of comprehensive education that can be utilized by adolescents to develop physical stamina and flexibility, emotional stability, intellectual and creative talents. A close study of the processes reveals that the yoga tradition cannot be confined to only the physical or the postural; it enters into a deeper engagement and exploration of the psychological and emotional domains. If understood in its totality, yoga can lead to valuable insights and be of great help in laying the foundation for leading a meaningful life.

How yoga is helpful to enhance Life Skill in Adolescents?

The introduction of yoga in schools for all adolescents aims to help free their mental and creative energies in a constructive manner, so as to lead to self-confidence and self-awareness. For those students who are interested and can spare the time, additional classes could be arranged. These would include rhythmic movements and some selected simplified asana for stretching, toning the muscles and creating flexibility within the skeletal system, as well as the development and maintenance of healthy nervous and endocrinal systems. The overall effect would be heightened sensitivity, balanced energy and improved attentiveness. Students could be made to articulate and share their findings with each other which would result in many insights both for the students as well as the teachers.

The context of the yoga tradition, Astanga yoga, based on the dimensions explained, is necessary for the understanding of adolescents. However, the actual imparting of the practices needs to be extremely simple and basic.

Effects of yoga on emotional aspects:

Regulates hyperactive behaviour

Harmonizes mental energy

Activates vital energy

Builds character

Effects of yoga on mental aspects:

Improves concentration

Enhances recall

Works on conscious and subconscious

Stimulates left and right brain

Effects of yoga on physical aspects:

Vitalizes and improves brain

Strengthens and balances skeletal, muscular, endocrinal and nervous system

Effects of yoga on creative aspects:

Enhances imagination

Focuses thoughts and intuition

Develop personal self esteem and self awareness

There are several schools of yoga which, though different in approach, have similar underlying assumptions:

- Body and mind are connected; the health of one affects the other.
- Regular practices in the form of asana as well as relaxation are recommended for their revitalizing and tranquilizing effects on the system.
- Discipline that starts at the level of the body soon moves to the mental aspects. The overall effect is an increase in the effectiveness of the individual in whatever she/he undertakes.
- Balance is important in all that one does, neither indulgence nor deprivation.
- Development of healthy attitudes such as cleanliness and contentment.
- Psycho-mental work, through introspective and various meditational methods, with the aim of bringing about clarity of understanding and self-awareness.
- Harmony with self, others and nature.

Relevance and importance of teaching Life Skill Education to Adolescents

Imparting life skill education to adolescents will bring valuable benefits which include:

Promotion of self esteem, peace education, self confidence etc (**Moon, 1993**).

Prevention of antisocial activities and behavior (**Botvin et.al. 1983, Pentz, 1984**)

Helps in the promotion of general well being and primary prevention (**Errecart et al., 1991; Perry and Kelder, 1992; Caplan et al., 1992**)

Life skills enable individuals to translate knowledge, attitudes and values into actual abilities and enable individuals to behave in healthy ways, given the desire to do so and given the scope and opportunity to do so.

Results of research studies also prove that life skill education improves the academic performance of individuals (**Weissberg et.al. 19898**)

CONCLUSION

Adolescence is a period when the intellectual, physical and all the capabilities are very high but their antisocial activities and behavior are deteriorating all their capabilities and they are becoming a burden to the society. Imparting life skill training through inculcating life skill education by yoga will help our adolescents to overcome such difficulties in life. Life skill education can serve as a remedy for the problems as it helps the adolescents to lead a better life. Therefore life skill education is a need of the society and every education system should impart life skill education as a part of its curriculum as it is capable of producing positive health behavior, positive interpersonal relationships and well being of individuals. The adolescents have to prepare for a global successful adult life of competition and independent functioning which is possible only through enhancing their psychosocial competencies through life skills training.

Thus, there is a dire need of integrating life skills in the curriculum of schools as well as colleges. In order to transact the curriculum successfully, teachers must be trained continuously. Only professionally trained teachers can develop the life skills in the students properly. Research studies show that development of life skills in the students have increased their academic achievement, reduced the violence in the schools and colleges, have prevented the students from the abuse of drugs and alcohol, and developed their self confidence, self concept and self esteem. Life skills help in creating an environment of peace. High level of life skill helps in becoming good citizen and productive worker. It helps in reducing the antisocial activities and suicidal attempts. Life skills reduce the stress, help in controlling the emotions and making the informed decisions. Thus life skill development is an important subject which must be taught in our educational institutions.

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