

Life Skills for Well Being of Adolescents

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Abstract

Wellbeing can be described as how one feels about oneself and one's life. Every aspect of life influences state of wellbeing. Wellbeing is not just the absence of illness. It is a complex combination of a person's physical, mental, emotional and social health factors. Wellbeing is strongly linked to happiness and life satisfaction. Well-being integrates mental health (mind) and physical health (body) resulting in more holistic approaches to disease prevention and health promotion.

Life skills are a person's ability to deal effectively with the demand and challenges of everyday life. It is a person's ability to maintain a state of mental wellbeing and to demonstrate this in adaptive and positive behavior while interacting with others, his/her culture and environment.

Life Skills developing the physical, mental, emotional and social health of individuals and developing healthy skills for life that leads to individual and community wellbeing in every aspect of life.

Childhood abuse, trauma, violence, a long-term physical health condition social disadvantage, poverty social isolation, unemployment, are some factors that may make more vulnerable to experiencing a period of poor mental wellbeing stresses and pressures in life. The enhancement of life skills could make an important contribution in the promotion of health in its broadest sense; in terms of physical, mental and social well-being. The most direct interventions for the promotion of Life Skills are those which enhance the person's coping resources, and personal and social competencies. In school based programs for children and adolescents, this can be done by the teaching of life skills in a supportive learning environment. Keywords: Life Skills, Well-being.

Introduction

Well-being is a positive outcome that is meaningful for people and for many sectors of society, because it tells us that people perceive that their lives are going well. Good living conditions are fundamental to well-being. There are many indicators of well-being such as quality of relationships one maintain with others, positive emotions and resilience, the realization of own potential, and overall satisfaction with life. Wellbeing does not necessarily mean feeling happy all the time, but does mean that overall you feel content, safe and healthy.

There is general agreement that, well-being includes the presence of positive emotions and moods (e.g., contentment, happiness), the absence of negative emotions (e.g., depression, anxiety), satisfaction with life, fulfillment and positive functioning. In simple terms, well-being can be described as judging life positively and feeling good.

Well-being integrates mental health (mind) and physical health (body) resulting in more holistic approaches to disease prevention and health promotion. Well-being is associated with numerous health, job, family, and economically-related benefits. For example, higher levels of well-being are associated with decreased risk of disease, illness, and injury; better immune functioning; speedier recovery; and increased longevity.

Researchers from different disciplines have examined different aspects of well-being that include the following-

- Physical well-being.
- Economic well-being.
- Social well-being.
- Development and activity.
- Emotional well-being.
- Psychological well-being.
- Life satisfaction.
- Domain specific satisfaction.
- Engaging activities and work

A person having good sense of wellbeing:

- See himself as a valuable person
- Follows disciplined life style
- Take care of physical and mental health;

- Have positive attitude towards life
- Feel confident to accept challenges
- Care himself and look after him.
- Set possible goals and tried best to achieve them.
- No guilty feeling, if unsuccessful

Well-being generally includes global judgments of life satisfaction. Elements of the Personal Wellbeing Index are satisfaction with:

- Your health
- Your personal relationships
- How safe you feel
- Your standard of living
- What you are achieving in life
- Feeling part of the community
- Your future security

Well-being has five measurable elements (PERMA) that count toward it:

- **P**ositive emotion (of which happiness and life satisfaction are all aspects)
- **E**ngagement
- **R**elationships
- **M**eaning and purpose
- **A**ccomplishment

No one element defines well-being, but each contributes to it. Both objective and subjective measures are used for measure of well being. Some aspects of these five elements are measured subjectively by self-report, but other aspects are measured objectively. Because well-being is subjective, it is typically measured with self-reports. The use of self-reported measures is fundamentally different from using objective measures (e.g., household income, unemployment levels, and neighborhood crime) often used to assess well-being.

Need of Life Skills

HIV/AIDS, Violence, Adolescent pregnancy; child abuse, Suicide; accidents, injuries, racism, conflicts, problems related to the use of alcohol, tobacco, unemployment, poverty and other psychoactive substances, environmental issues are some areas responsible for physically and mentally unfit of an individual and pressure in their life due to severe mental illness leading to killing of talents, unbearable loss for our society/nation because Individuals with high levels of well-being are more productive at work and are more likely to contribute to their society.

UNICEF defines life skill based education as tool for behavior modification. That is a behavior development approach designed to address a balance of three areas: knowledge, attitude and skills. Knowledge can be provided through class room teaching but the attitude and skills can be produced only through practice. Let us analyze what are problems faced by students due to this lack of attitude and skills and what are the areas that need behavior modification for the students.

Problems among students

The student population faced a lot of problems in the school, family and society. The major problems are:

- Handling physical changes in the body.
- Academic achievement
- Choosing a career
- Handling peer pressure
- interpersonal relationships issues
- parental pressure
- lack of protection from violence
- inability of community to channelize their energy
- lack of trust, recognition and respect
- media influence
- high risk sexual behavior
- parental discord and disharmony
- environmental factors like poor access to education and health services
- vulnerabilities like poverty, single parenting,
- drug abuse

- child labor
- adjustment issues
- emotional instability
- Mental health issues.

All these needs and concerns are to be addressed. Everyone who is relating to these issues is responsible to address these problems. It included the parents, teachers, peer group, community and the student himself. Since the student spend most of his time in school we can say teachers play a major role in providing support and directions to students to handle these problems. Before give support and directions the teacher should perceive this problem in an empathetic manner. Teacher should able to identify the root cause of the problems.

Most of the problems faced by students can be resolved through life skills education but initially the teachers to be trained on this otherwise the actual goal of life skill education will be misinterpreted.

Intervention of Life skills Programme can eradicate these problems with improvement of performance and growth of quality of life in individual so it is essential to suggest the learning of the life skills which might contribute to the utilisation of appropriate health services by young people.

Life skills help us to know the importance of looking our physical, mental and emotional wellbeing.

- **Life skills are essential for:** the promotion of healthy child and adolescent development; primary prevention of some key causes of child and adolescent death, disease and disability; socialization; preparing young people for changing social circumstances.
- **Life skills education contributes to:** basic education; gender equality; democracy; good citizenship; child care and protection; quality and efficiency of the education system; the promotion of lifelong learning; quality of life; the promotion of peace.

An important point is that all life skills are attainable. These skills help individual in controlling problems such as depression, anxiety, rejection, diffidence, anger, and confliction in interpersonal relationship.

A review by UNICEF found that approaches relying on life skills have been effective in educating youth about health-related issues—such as alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use; nutrition; pregnancy prevention; and preventing HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Life skills education programs can also be effective in preventing school dropout and violence among young people. Finally, these programs can lay the foundation for skills demanded in today's stressful life.

What are Life Skills?

Life skills are a collection of organized manners that help us to cope with life problems in daily life. These skills are different and are defined in different ways in various cultures. Some of these capacities are trained to children at school or by families.

Life-Skills Education as defined by the UNICEF is "*a behaviour change or behaviour development approach to address a balance of three areas: knowledge, attitude and skills*". Life Skills enable individuals to translate knowledge; attitude and values into actual abilities, that is, what to do and how to do it, given the scope and opportunity to do so.

Life skills are abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life. In particular, life skills are a group of psychosocial competencies and interpersonal skills that help people make informed decisions, solve problems, think critically and creatively, communicate effectively, build healthy relationships, empathise with others, and cope with and manage their lives in a healthy and productive manner.(WHO, Skills for Life, (Geneva: 2001, Pp.8).)

The UNICEF & UNESCO divides life skills into various categories:

Learning to know- Cognitive Abilities

- Information gathering skills - Evaluating future consequences of present action for self and other determination, alternative solution to problems
- Skills of analysis of self and others on motivation
- Critical thinking skills

Learning to be - Personal Abilities

Skills for increasing internal focus of control

- Self-esteem – confidence building skills
- Self-awareness skills including awareness of rights, values, attitudes
- Goal setting skills Self-evaluation, self-assessment

Learning to Live Together- Interpersonal Abilities

Interpersonal communication skills – Verbal and non-verbal

- active listening
- Expression of feeling
- Negotiation and refusal skills
- Assertive skills
- Refusal skills
- Empathy
- Abilities to listen to and understand another need and circumstances and express that underestimate, cooperation and team work
- Advocacy skills
- Networking and motivation skills
- Skills influence and persuasion

Essentially, there are two kinds of skills -those related to thinking termed as "*thinking skills*"; and skills related to dealing with others termed as "*social skills*". While thinking skills relate to reflection at a personal level, social skills include interpersonal skills and do not necessarily depend on logical thinking. It is the combination of these two types of skills that are needed for achieving assertive behaviour and negotiating effectively. "*Emotional*" can be perceived as a skill not only in making rational decisions but also in being able to make others agree to one's point of view. To do that, coming to terms first with oneself is important. Thus, self-management is an important skill including managing/coping with feelings, emotions, stress and resisting peer and family pressure.

Life skills education promotes mental well-being in young people and equips them to face the realities of life. By supporting mental well-being and behavioral preparedness, life skills education equips individuals to behave in a pro-social ways and it is additionally health giving.

The critique on *formal education* is that it has concentrated too much on the instrumental and vocational skills and on the cognitive dimension (literacy) rather than on other dimensions such as the reflective and the psychosocial dimensions. On the other hand researches have shown that life skills

can be systematically acquired and reinforced through *non-formal and informal learning settings*. Such learning occurs in families, communities, organisations and associations, the workplace and through the media. They focus attention on people's empowerment and on values and attitudes such as promoting a better understanding between individuals, active participation and the capacity to negotiate, to live together, and to develop critical thinking.

Life skills learning need to be included in curricula and not delivered as separate, stand-alone programmes except where conditions may require. Life skills cannot be learned in an abstract and theoretical way. Rather it requires the individual to subject his own experience, contexts and observations about problems to creative analysis and evaluation, to collect, probe and discuss his experience where it happens in real life. Life skills are in constant evolution both in terms of individual's personal as well as the economic, social and cultural contexts.

The Ten core Life Skills as laid down by WHO are: 1. Self-awareness 2. Empathy 3. Critical thinking 4. Creative thinking 5. Decision making 6. Problem Solving 7. Effective communication 8. Interpersonal relationship 9. Coping with stress 10. Coping with emotions

Self-awareness includes recognition of 'self', 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 often a prerequisite to effective communication and interpersonal relations, as well as for developing empathy with others.

Empathy - To have a successful relationship with our loved ones and society at large, we need to understand and care about other peoples' needs, desires and feelings. Empathy is the ability to imagine what life is like for another person. Without empathy, our communication with others will amount to one-way traffic. Worst, we will be acting and behaving according to our self-interest and are bound to run into problems.

Critical thinking is an ability to analyse 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 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 other ideas).

Decision making helps us to deal constructively with decisions about our lives. This can have consequences for health. It can teach people how to actively make decisions about their actions in

relation to 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 relationship skills help us to relate in positive ways with the people we interact with. This may mean being able to make and keep friendly relationships, which can be of great importance to our mental and social well-being.

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 may mean being able to ask for advice and help in a time of need.

Coping with stress means recognizing the sources of stress in our lives, recognizing how this affects us, and acting in ways that help us control our levels of stress, by changing our environment or lifestyle and learning how to relax. 95% of all the diseases are created by stress. Wrong beliefs like "I'm not good enough" or "Something is wrong with me" cause up to 95% of all illness and disease.

Coping with emotions means involving 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 do not respond appropriately.

The development of life skills education is a dynamic and evolving process, which should involve children, parents and the local community in making decisions about the content of the programme. Facilitating the learning of life skills is a central component of programmes designed to promote healthy behaviour and mental well-being. To be effective, the teaching of life skills is coupled with the teaching of health information and the promotion of positive (health promoting and pro-social) attitudes and values.

Conclusion

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 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 is aimed at facilitating the development of psychosocial skills that are required to deal with the demands and challenges of everyday life. Many countries are now considering the development of life skills education in response to the need to reform traditional education systems, which appear to be out of step with the realities of modern social and economic life. It includes the application of life skills in the context of specific risk and in situations where individual protects them from adverse physical, mental and emotional conditions. Furthermore, in addition to its wide-ranging applications in primary prevention and the advantages that it can bring for individuals well-being, life skills education lays the foundation for learning skills that are in great demand in today's challenging society.

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