

Let us develop life skills

Children spend most of their time either at home or in school. We need good physical and psycho-social skills to maintain good relationships with others. These skills are known as physo-social skills, life skills or life competencies which help us face challenges successfully in our daily lives.

In grade 6 and 7 we learnt about life skills which promote mental and social well being. We also learnt about how to maintain emotional balance, factors which influence our emotion and the skills required to manage our emotions.

In this lesson, we will learn about effective communication, emotional balance and empathy out of the ten basic life skills and also about team work and complying with social norms.

Life skills

Can you remember the last school sports meet? The whole school participated in it. A few students won medals/prizes but everyone enjoyed it. Teachers, students and parents all contributed to making it a success. What are the different life skills that are necessary to organise such an event efficiently and without conflict?

Effective communication

Effective communication is the ability to express ones ideas clearly and to be able to listen to others.



Figure 16.1 - Effective communication

Effective communication is an important element of working in a group. You need to make sure that people understand correctly what you communicate. When you do not agree with what others say this has to be communicated in a manner which does not hurt the feelings of others. Problems must be resolved by peaceful discussion. We should need to be able to understand non verbal communication specially when people do not express their feelings directly.

Have you observed the way players in a team communicate with each other? Cricketers and volleyball players communicate with each other through signals. Sometimes players discuss strategy during the game. The captain listens to the opinion of all the players before arriving at a decision. All players in the team support the captain. If a player does not follow the team plan the team would find it hard to succeed.

Characteristics of a good communicator

- Listens to others
- Talks in a pleasant manner
- Expresses ideas clearly and pleasantly
- Able to understand the feelings of others through observing their non verbal communication



Activity

You have been requested to organise an art competition in your class. Think that you are appointed as the team leader. Prepare and deliver a short speech to get the help of others in organizing this competition. After all students have made their speeches discuss how to improve them.

Emotional balance

Emotions influence our behaviour and thinking. We experience pleasant emotions such as happiness and joy as well as unpleasant emotions such as anger and sadness. Managing emotions is identifying our emotions and responding to them appropriately. You have learnt this in previous grades as emotional balance.



Figure 16.2- Meditation for emotional balance



Activity

Record the emotions you will experience and the appropriate response for each of the following situations

Situation	Emotion	Response
eg: Coming last in a team sport	Sadness, disgrace	Congratulate the other team warmly. Analyse reasons for defeat and attempt to correct deficiencies
(i) Getting angry with a friend		
(ii) Teacher advising you about your negligence		
(iii) Your younger brother suddenly falls ill		
(iv) You perform very well at an exam and become first in class		
(v) One of your classmates win an all-island competition		
(vi) Helping a person in need		
(vii) Your books are destroyed in a flood		

There are appropriate and inappropriate ways of responding to both positive and negative emotions. In grade 7 we learnt that the response to emotions depend on factors such as a person's age, personality, experiences and environment.

We experience different types of emotions in the class room or play ground. When we win we experience happiness or joy. When we lose we experience sadness, humiliation or anger. When we sustain an injury or have an accident we feel pain. Students who win track and field events at the sports meet will raise their hands in victory, cheer or carry

the house flag and run around the track and acknowledge those who cheered for them. Those who lose look sad which is also reflected in their body language, but they accept defeat graciously. The winner may sometimes respond by saying “you were a tough competitor”.

Laughing at those who lose, celebrating in a way which is a nuisance to others, consuming alcohol to celebrate, getting into arguments with your opponent or referee, throwing the bat or racket are inappropriate ways of responding.

Managing emotions help you to maintain good interpersonal relationships, develop the ability to cope with winning and losing and makes you a loveable person.

Empathy

Empathy is the ability to understand and share another person’s experiences and emotions and helping them to cope with it. Being able to identify and understand the emotions of a person who is in trouble or feeling sad and helping such persons are features of empathy. Empathy also enables us to share the happiness of others.



Figure 16.3 - Empathy

Seniru, Nirodha and Lochana went out to play during the interval. Seniru tripped and fell while running and knocked his head on a stone and started to bleed. He started crying in pain. His friends helped him to get up and wiped the dust off him. Nirodha asked him “Are you in a lot of pain?” Lochana comforted Seniru by saying “Don’t be scared we will go to the Saukyadana unit and keep some ice. That will reduce the pain.” After the comforting words of his friends Seniru felt less pain. All three went to the Saukyadana unit and Seniru obtained treatment. They returned to the classroom and looked happy.

If the two friends had panicked or got scared or if they laughed at Seniru he would have become distressed. Because the friends understood the pain and distress Seniru was experiencing and helped him their friendship became stronger.

You must have observed how friends respond to those who lose a match. Patting them on the back, praising their efforts, giving them something to drink, and helping them cope with the loss are examples of empathy. Empathy helps good social interactions.



Activity

One of your class mates is sad because his mother has gone overseas for employment. Describe how you will console him.

Apart from the above mentioned basic life skills we also need to develop the following which contribute to psychological and social well being.

Comply with social norms

Adhering to social norms help us adapt to our social environment. Acceptable behaviour and rules will vary according to the social situation. For example the rules and behaviour in the school environment is different to what is expected of you at home. The acceptable behaviour depends on the differences in the social environments such as home, school, tuition class, play ground or bus. You should be able to adopt a behaviour appropriate to each of these situations. You need to maintain good behaviour and effective communication in each of these situations. When you are functioning in a group, it is important to maintain unity, share both victory and defeat and motivate others.



Figure 16.4 - Comply with social norms in the class room

Ruwangi passed the scholarship exam and entered a new school. She was very unhappy during the first week in school. She had to wear a new school uniform and follow many school rules. On days when she forgot to wear the house badge she was pulled up by the prefects. In her previous school she had to wear the house badge only at the school sports meet. The number of students in the class were also more. Although they were friendly no one wanted to play during the interval. During the second week Ruwangi became friends with Nethuli who was seated in the same row. Nethuli explained the school

rules regarding the uniform which was helpful to Ruwangi. Nethuli explained that most students participate in the activities of different societies during the interval. Nethuli took Ruwangi to a meeting of the Environment Society. Thereafter she decided to become a member of the Environment Society. She also became friends with several other students. Now she is very happy in school.

This is an example of how a student adapted to the new culture and rules in a different environment. If she did not adapt to the new school environment she would have become isolated.

Working in a team

All students do not take part in track and field events at the sports meet. However each student contributes in different ways to the success of their house and the sports meet. Some students take part in the track and field events, others take part in the march past or the drill display. Others help decorate the house tents, provide food or help organise the events. Everyone cheers for their houses. They are happy about victory and support each other in defeat. The success of the event depends on the contribution of everyone.



Figure 16.5 - Team work

Flexibility, discipline, listening to and respecting the opinions of others, working in harmony, effective communication, empathy, managing emotions and socially appropriate behaviours all help optimal functioning of a group.

The above skills are useful not only during the sports meet but also in our day to day activities in the class room. World famous people such as Martin Luther King Jr and Mother Theresa as well as famous sportsmen all exhibit the above mentioned qualities. These skills developed in the class room and at play will help you become a successful citizen in the future.

Summary

Life skills help you to face challenges in daily life

Effective communication, managing emotions, empathy, complying with social norms and team work will help you achieve success in life.

These skills are important when you are working in a group or interacting with others in society.



Exercise

1. What are the skills necessary to be an effective communicator?
2. Write down how you can cope with negative emotions (we discussed these in Grades 6 and 7).
3. Define empathy.
4. What are the skills which help you to comply with social norms?
5. What are the other life skills which help to work in a team?