

**RESEARCH PAPER****Life Skills Education with Special Reference to Emotional Skills Development among Adolescents****Rubee Srivastava Sengupta¹ and Saminah Khan²**¹ Rajendra Academy for Teachers Education, Durgapur, W.B.² Hope Institute of Bengal, HowrahEmail: rubee.sengupta13@gmail.comReceived: 11th March 2019, Revised: 26th March 2019, Accepted: 30th March 2019**ABSTRACT**

Education system is undergoing a revolutionized change especially in this age of globalization, urbanization, industrialization along with the latest advancement in science and technology. Hence only mugging up the syllabus is the minimal requirement of education system in 21st century where the aim of education is to produce active, informed, creative and responsible individuals who can solve their problems, make decisions of their own, have sound social skills, are expert in stress and emotions management, are adaptable to any situation and are ready to face all types of challenges in life and thus capable of leaving an impact on the world. This is where the importance and need of life skills education lies in the present curriculum. The article describes in brief Life Skills education with special reference to emotional skills development among adolescents. The article also pinpoints types of emotional development, stages of emotional development, factors affecting emotional development, emotional changes in adolescents and how to support such emotional changes, strategies to foster emotional skills inside and outside the school, emotional skills checklist developed by CBSE etc. Last but not the least; the article depicts some practical ways to build socio-emotional intelligence in adolescents.

Key words: Life skills, Emotional development, Adolescents, Socio-emotional intelligence

INTRODUCTION

Education is no longer about accumulating knowledge but it is about actual learning where a child gets multifarious opportunities to enhance his/her creative thinking, critical thinking, can make decisions, solve problems independently, can cope with stress and emotions, develop empathy and enhance interpersonal relationships. Such an outcome is only possible with the incorporation of Life Skills Education in the curriculum. New educational trends focus at learner driven curriculum. A lesson can be taught for a day but if life skills education is provided to the students then they will continue the learning process as long as they live and will live their lives to the fullest with joy and satisfaction.

Life skills have been well defined by World Health Organization as "Abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enables individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life whether at school, at work or in our personal lives". It is also called 21st century skills as it contributes a lot to basic education, gender equality, democracy, good citizenship, quality and efficiency of education system, promotion of lifelong learning, quality of life, promotion of peace etc. The prime focus of life skills education on 'learning to know', 'learning to be', 'learning to do' and 'learning to live together'. It acts as a magic wand in maximizing the protective factors and minimizing the risk factors." Life skills have been categorized under three broad categories. Thinking skills enhances logical and analytical ability, creative thinking, problem solving skills and decision making abilities. Social skills enhance interpersonal skills, communication skills, leadership skills, co-operation, empathy and team building skills. Emotional skills involve self awareness and self management such as coping with emotions, feeling, stress and resisting peer pressure and family pressure. According to UNICEF, the ten core life skills are (i) self awareness (ii)critical thinking (iii) creative thinking (iv) decision making (v) problem solving (vi) effective communication (vii) interpersonal relationship (viii) empathy (ix) coping with stress (x) coping with emotions. In everyday life, the development of life skills help students to recognize the impact of their actions, make them responsible, build confidence, analyze and solve problems, make

decisions, develop a greater sense of self awareness and appreciation for others. The development of life skills affects and benefits the society and the world we live in by recognizing cultural awareness, respecting diversity and developing empathy with negotiation skills. Life skills education helps a student to make the most out of life by managing and living a better quality of life. Thus students who understand and use these life skills excel in educational and employment opportunities.

Emotions are good and they can be called the spices of life. An emotional skill is also known as self-soothing skills that can be developed across maturation. It helps in maintaining equilibrium while facing anger, fear, frustration, jealousy, disappointment etc. Some common emotional health related issues are self harm, suicide, negative attitude towards emotional disorders, adolescents unwilling to seek help, depression, anxiety etc. A highly educated and cultured person is one who keeps his/her emotions under control. The modern education does not advocate suppression of feelings and emotions but expression of feelings and emotions in a decent way. To thrive in 21st century students needs more than traditional academic learning. They must be adept at collaboration, communication and problem solving which are some of the life skills developed through social and emotional learning.

TYPES OF EMOTIONAL SKILLS

The happiness and well being of a person can easily be increased and life can be improved by building these emotional skills such as

1. Ability to see everything in a more positive light. (Positive Thinking)
2. To have positive views of yourself and your own self worth. (Self-confidence)
3. To have a solid and effective plan for how to achieve happiness. (Happiness Planning)
4. Ability to quickly recover and thrive in the face of difficulties. (Resiliency)
5. Ability to stop worrying about real and perceived events. (No Worry)
6. Ability to put yourself in other people's shoes and feel what they are feeling. (Empathy)
7. To be thankful for the people, things and experiences you have. (Ability to be Grateful)
8. Ability to change the way you feel about a situation by changing the way you think about it. (Reappraisal Ability)
9. To have emotionally positive interactions with other people. (Relationship Skills)
10. Ability to treat people from all walks of life with affection. (Kindness)
11. To be motivated to continue to improve and develop the self. (Ability to glow)
12. Ability to figure out and pursue what gives you a sense of meaning in life. (Sense of Purpose)
13. Ability to show and share your true and authentic self with others. (Self expression)
14. Ability to resist unhealthy behaviours to cope with your negative emotions. (Regulating Behaviour)
15. Ability to approach vs. avoid, new or scary life experiences. (Overcoming Avoidance)
16. Ability to make your own decision and live your life as you see fit. (Self empowerment)
17. Ability to communicate your needs effectively so that they can be met. (Assertiveness)
18. Ability to manage and control emotions in ways that optimize well being. (Emotion Regulation Skills)
19. Ability to be clear about which emotions you are feeling and why you are feeling them. (Emotional Clarity)
20. To be able to stop repetitive negative thought processes. (No Rumination)
21. To be able to accept your emotions non-judgementally. (Non-Judgement)
22. To be able to successfully progress towards your goal of improving yourself. (Personal Development)
23. To be able to organize your life in ways that help you build the other skills. (Planning Ability)
24. To be able to maintain positive self views even in the face of social rejection. (Tolerating Rejection)

FACTORS AFFECTING EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

1. **Hereditary Factors:** Similarities are found between the emotional development of parents as well as children.

2. **Maturation:** As the child develops mentally, he also gets emotionally matured. Psychologists have proved that the development of emotions of the child depends upon the level of maturation of the child.
3. **Training:** It has been proved that children through conditioning. Young children 'emotions are influenced by conditioning. Through experiments, it is seen that children start getting scared of the things with which their parent feel frightened but when parents express affection, the child also start responding in the same way.
4. **Health:** Children with sound health can control their emotions in a healthy way. Weak children remain irritable, easily excitable and emotionally unstable.
5. **Intelligence:** Intelligent children are emotionally stable. Children with low intelligence quotient are emotionally unstable.
6. **Family Relation:** Relation among the family members and the way they express their emotions affects the emotional behaviour of the child. If parents are stable in behaviour, the child also expresses his emotions in a balanced way but if the parents are violent, the child shows temper tantrums. Over pampering makes the child stubborn and indiscipline. If the parents don't show any affection, their children become submissive or introvert.
7. **Social Environment:** Just as family, school, society, neighbourhood exert influence on emotional development of child. A child learns to express his emotions in a socially approved way if people around are emotionally stable.
8. **Control Over Emotions:** To maintain physical and mental health, it is necessary to have control over emotions. During emotional state, body undergoes many changes such as change in blood circulation, pulse rate, breathing, eye stretching, closing of fist, effect on digestive system etc. and thus physical and mental health are affected.

EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN ADOLESCENTS

It is said that adolescence is a period of stress and storm which according to the latest research is the natural outcome of youth who are learning to cope with a much longer array of new and unfamiliar situations. Adolescents are subjected to the increased demand on their physical, mental and emotional resources. Social relationships have increased due to electronic social networking such as face book, twitter etc. Academic standard have become more stringent. Sports and other recreational pursuits have become more competitive. While adolescents are learning to cope with these challenges, it is quite expected that they will exhibit diverse range of fluctuating emotions throughout the day.

The ability of the adolescents to cope with the stress is influenced by many factors. Adolescents born with more sensitive temperaments may have a more difficult time coping with stressful situations and may require greater assistance to learn effective techniques to manage their stress. There are many factors that can help to mitigate the effects of stress and serve to increase youths 'resilience in the face of stress. One such protective factor is social support provided by family, peers, teachers, neighbours etc. Social support enables youth to practise handling stressful and challenging circumstances while simultaneously knowing that if they should need help someone is nearby and willing to assist them. Second protective factor is a sense of safety and security. Adolescents who feel safe and secure tend to cope with stress much better than those who feel unsupported, unsafe and unprotected by their immediate environment. Rules and regulations serve to create a sense of safety and comfort. If the adolescents are told that what is expected of them then they feel more comfortable and relaxed. They can cope with ups and downs of life in a better way if they are given opportunities to practise independent decision making skills. Culture also plays a significant role on determining how to respond to stress. If the adolescents adopt culturally accepted methods of expressing emotions, they can learn to cope with stress.

EMOTIONAL CHANGES IN ADOLESCENTS

A child is born with unique combination of genes, brain development, environment, experiences with family and friends, community and culture that help them forming an independent identity. As adolescence is a time of big social and emotional development thus it helps to know what to expect and how to support them through these changes. The moods of the adolescents might seem

unpredictable. These emotional ups and downs can lead to increased conflict and struggling to learn how to control and express emotions in a grown up way. Adolescents are more sensitive to emotions. They can sometimes misread facial expressions or body language. Adolescents are more self-conscious, especially about physical appearance and changes and mostly they are found comparing themselves with those of friends and peers. Adolescents go through a invincible stage of thinking and acting as if nothing bad could happen to them.

HOW TO SUPPORT SUCH EMOTIONAL CHANGES

1. Be a role model for forming and maintaining positive relationship with your friends, children and colleagues. The teens will learn from observing relationships that where there is respect, empathy and positive ways of resolving conflicts.
2. Get to know your child's friends and invite them at home to be in touch with your child's social relationships which further helps in the formation of "self".
3. Listen to your child's feelings attentively keeping your busy schedule aside.
4. Be explicit and open about your feelings. Tell your child how you feel when he/she behaves in a different way.
5. Talk with your child about relationships, sex and sexuality. They must be given the relevant information in a more positive way.
6. Boost confidence and self esteem by focusing on your child's strengths and interests.

LEARNING STRATEGIES TO FOSTER SOCIO-EMOTIONAL SKILLS

1. Encourage play based learning.
2. Break down learning into smaller co-ordinated pieces.
3. Provide clear learning objectives targeting explicit skills.
4. Create a safe environment for learning.
5. Nurturing relationships by fostering respect, empathy, negotiation skills and tolerance for others.
6. Foster reflective reasoning and analysis.
7. Offer appropriate praise.
8. Help children take advantage of their personality and strengths.
9. Provide appropriate challenges.
10. Use a hand on approach.
11. Practice flexibility.
12. Build in opportunities to learn from failure.
13. Provide long term engaging projects.
14. Build confidence in the ability to succeed.
15. Provide autonomy to make choices.
16. Encourage their curiosity through questioning and guessing.
17. Instil sufficient knowledge to ask questions and innovate.
18. Evoke contradiction.
19. Provide opportunities for group work.
20. Create a language rich environment.
21. Give constructive feedback.
22. Foster group discussions, peer to peer teaching, group reflection and problem solving.
23. Foster building cultural sensitivity, creativity and collaboration.
24. Foster project based learning and enquiry based learning.
25. Foster self talk strategies.

Outside the school, parents and educators have complementary roles and the programmes that encourage and enable communication between parents and Educators provide consistency and continuity to a child's skill development. Parents must have the same social and emotional knowledge and skills that teachers require to make emotional and social skills learning effective. Children of such parents excel in all aspects of their lives. Parents can provide safe and nurturing

environment and reinforce positive behaviour of their children. Involvement in extra-curricular activities such as sports, music, scouts can foster social and emotional learning.

EMOTIONAL SKILLS CHECKLIST TO BE USED BY TEACHERS

1. During an activity /competition does the child often say, "I will never win. I am not just a lucky person?"
2. Does he/she choose an activity/task according to ability during a group work?
3. Does he/she scream at the classmate when he/she is angry or disturbed?
4. Does he/she try to do the task again if declared unsuccessful in the first attempt?
5. Does he/she try to improve weaker areas by putting in regular practice?
6. Does he/she try to take help of teachers/partners under difficult situations?
7. Does he/she try to get secluded when under stress?
8. Does he/she try to take up some healthy activities like reading, gardening or playing during stressful time?
9. Does he/she become argumentative during discussions?
10. Does he/she show disrespect to the system or discipline of the class/school?

HOW TO BUILD SOCIO EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN TEENS

Socio emotional intelligence involves being able to recognize and manage feelings appropriately in ourselves and understanding what other people are feelings. Supporting children in developing socio emotional intelligence will boost the chances of success at school, at work and in life. This is how we can shape the socio emotional skills of teens-

1. Words set the culture. Children don't remember our words but they remember how the words made them feel and those will be the feelings with which they relate to the world.
2. Embracing your own imperfection will help your children to embrace theirs. Give them permission to fail and get it wrong and when they come to you to talk about their own mistakes, be grateful for the opportunities to strengthen the connection. Nothing feels better than someone embracing us when we are not deserving that embrace.
3. Telling the kids to be kind won't work, but letting them see you be kind to yourself, to them, to people you know, to strangers- works like magic.
4. Listening is the key to being someone people love being with. Create plenty of time where you can be with them fully while they are talking.
5. Do not stop listening even if you disagree with your children but positively respect their opinions. People will always value those who respect their opinions, even if they disagree.
6. Empathy is the ability to understand what other people are experiencing. Notice what they are feeling, name it and let them know that you get it. By doing this, they will experience firsthand the difference empathy makes.
7. Share your feelings with them but be careful not to dump your own troubles onto them.
8. Let the relationship take priority over pretty much everything. You will always have more influence when they feel connected to you. Their relationship with you will form the foundation for their relationships with the world.
9. All feelings have a reason for being there and its desirable to feel everyone of them. If feelings are pushed down then those feelings will more push for expression. Letting feelings come is the key to letting them go.
10. All feelings have an important reason for showing up such as anger is the clue that something is wrong and gives us the energy to put things right. Sadness makes us step back from the world for a while and reset and recharge and heal, and let others know that we might need some loving one and so on.
11. Attending to the feeling will often give clues about what is needed to find balance. Encourage your child to open up their self awareness and capacity to notice their feelings and become aware of what they need.
12. Punishment never changes anyone for the better. Your children will give you more of what you need and want if their boundaries are kept intact and if they feel respected and valued.

13. A fundamental part of social and emotional intelligence is being able to read and respond to the relationships. Encourage your child, without judgement, to think about their relationship in terms of how they feel in those relationships.
14. Encourage your child to look at his own behaviour with an open heart, but if there is nothing they can change to make the relationship feel better, then its quite clear that the friendship is one that does not deserve them. Permit them to keep the friendship if they want but empower them as the ones who have the ultimate decision about whether or not to stay.
15. Children need confidence to experiment with relating to the world, but are careful not to over-inflate them. Praise their efforts and what they do rather than who they are. The focus should be there on shaping their behaviour.
16. Instead of asking your kids to apologize, ask them how they see the situation and how they think the other people might see the situation. If there is something they have missed, gently point it out.
17. If they are the ones apologizing for something, show them how to do forgiveness.
18. Taking responsibility for something means owing the ability to respond and to put things right. Show them responsibility is all about response-ability.
19. If they confess something they have done, use the opportunity to grow your relationship and your influence by responding in a way that teaches them telling you were the right thing to do and nurture a willingness to come to you again next time.
20. Teaching kids how to calm down will strengthen their resilience from the inside out. Support them in finding a place where they can go when they are overwhelmed, stress or angry and need to regain control. Deep breathing, listening to music is some ways to control our emotions. As no one is free from mistakes, so learn to receive the mistakes of your kids with love and compassion so that they will be more open to seek your guidance and support.

CONCLUSION

The adolescent period of stress and storm can be easily handled by practising the strategies of emotional skills development among adolescents. Schools have been identified as an important place to support emotional health of adolescents. Hence it is the sole responsibility of not only the teachers but also the parents to understand the types of and phases of emotional development of their children and adopt suitable strategies at proper time in order to provide them an emotionally, and mentally healthy life. If it happens then adolescents can be saved from burying themselves in the coffin of stress, frustration and disappointment. As a result the cases of juvenile delinquency, addiction to smoking, alcohol, drug and sex abuse and many more anti-social acts can be checked to a great extent. If the conducive school environment as well as home environment is created to address the sources of distress such as bullying; if the activities enhancing emotional health are included by providing additional time in the school time table and providing requisite materials for the same; if proper guidelines for plan, procedure, training and implementation of life skills education is given priority then that day is not so far when the adolescents will learn to be adaptable to their roles in this constantly changing environment and will be able to enjoy peace and harmony of life.

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