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LIFE SKILLS EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS IN SCHOOLS

Introduction and Guidelines to Facilitate the Development and Implementation of Life Skills Programmes

This document was compiled in 1993 to assist with the further development of life skills education. It has been in great demand since that time, and since it is now being reprinted, the opportunity has been taken to make a few small changes. It should be emphasized however, that the document has not been changed in any substantial way. Its purpose is to outline a framework for life skills programme development, both conceptually and practically. The materials focus on the teaching of life skills to children and adolescents in schools. This document is therefore targeted at those agencies involved in school curriculum development, health education, and the development of school-based health and social interventions. Life skills education is relevant to everyone and the contents of this document, although directed at schools, can be adapted and interpreted to guide the development of life skills education for children that are not in schools, as well as for adult education and as part of community development projects.

The two parts contained in this document (Part 1, Introduction to Life Skills for Psychosocial Competence and Part 2, Guidelines: The Development and Implementation of Life Skills Programmes) may be used in conjunction with another document (WHO/MNH/PSF/93.7B.Rev.1) Training Workshops for the Development and Implementation of Life Skills Education by those who are involved in the setting up of programmes. It should be emphasized that the material in these training workshops is not related to classroom activities and is not intended to help individual teachers who may wish to introduce life skills education into their own teaching programmes; it is primarily to assist the training of those people who will be involved in the development and implementation of life skills programmes at national or subnational level.

This document is being circulated as part of the life skills project of the Programme on Mental Health, WHO, Geneva. The Newsletter 'Skills for Life' is also available. This describes life skills initiatives around the world, as well as the work of WHO and other UN agencies in the support and promotion of life skills education. For more information contact The Life Skills Education Project, The Programme on Mental Health, World Health Organization, 1211 Geneva 27, Switzerland.

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The following people contributed to the development of this document.

Rhona Birrell Weisen, WHO, Geneva
John Orley, WHO, Geneva
Vivienne Evans, TACADE, UK
Jeff Lee, TACADE, UK
Ben Sprunger, Life Skills International, USA
Daniel Pellaux, Mandat Plus Prevention, Switzerland

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Ruby Takanashi, Carnegie Corporation of New York, USA

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Ute Deseniss-Gros, Programme Communication/ Social Mobilization Section, New York
Bruce Dick, Youth Health Promotion, New York
Regina Faul-Doyle, Health Cluster, New York
Anthony Hewett, Programme Communication/ Social Mobilization Section, New York
Lakshman Wickramasinghe, Communication Officer, Uganda
Mohammed Jalloh, Communication Officer, Sierra Leone

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Further copies of this document may be obtained from

Programme on Mental Health
World Health Organization
1211 Geneva 27
Switzerland

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PART ONE

INTRODUCTION TO LIFE SKILLS FOR PSYCHOSOCIAL COMPETENCE

Promoting Psychosocial Competence

Psychosocial competence is a person's ability to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life. It is a person's ability to maintain a state of mental well-being and to demonstrate this in adaptive and positive behaviour while interacting with others, his/her culture and environment.

Psychosocial competence has an important role to play in the promotion of health in its broadest sense; in terms of physical, mental and social well-being. In particular, where health problems are related to behaviour, and where the behaviour is related to an inability to deal effectively with stresses and pressures in life, the enhancement of psychosocial competence could make an important contribution. This is especially important for health promotion at a time when behaviour is more and more implicated as the source of health problems.

The most direct interventions for the promotion of psychosocial competence are those which enhance the person's coping resources, and personal and social competencies. In school-based programmes for children and adolescents, this can be done by the teaching of life skills in a supportive learning environment.

Defining Life Skills

Life skills are abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour, that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life.

Described in this way, skills that can be said to be life skills are innumerable, and the nature and definition of life skills are likely to differ across cultures and settings. However, analysis of the life skills field suggests that there is a core set of skills that are at the heart of skills-based initiatives for the promotion of the health and well-being of children and adolescents. These are listed below:

- Decision making
- Problem solving
- Creative thinking
- Critical thinking
- Effective communication
- Interpersonal relationship skills
- Self-awareness
- Empathy
- Coping with emotions
- Coping with stress

Decision making helps us to deal constructively with decisions about our lives. This can have consequences for health if young people actively make decisions about their actions in relation to health by assessing the different options, and what effects different decisions may have.

Similarly, **problem solving** enables 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.

Creative thinking 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 is an ability to analyse information and experiences in an objective manner. Critical thinking can contribute to health by helping us to recognise and assess the factors that influence attitudes and behaviour, such as values, peer pressure, and the media.

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, but also needs and fears. And it may mean being able to ask for advice and help in a time of need.

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. It may mean keeping good relations with family members, which are an important source of social support. It may also mean being able to end relationships constructively.

Self-awareness includes our recognition of ourselves, of our character, of our strengths and weaknesses, desires and dislikes. Developing self-awareness can help us to recognise 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.

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 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.

Coping with emotions involves recognising emotions in ourselves and others, being aware of how emotions influence behaviour, 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 is about recognising the sources of stress in our lives, recognising 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. Or it may mean learning how to relax, so that tensions created by unavoidable stress do not give rise to health problems.

The life skills described above are dealt with here in so far as they can be taught to young people as abilities that they can acquire through learning and practice. For example, problem solving, as a skill, can be described as a series of steps to go through, such as: 1) define the problem; 2) think of all the different kinds of solutions to the problem; 3) weigh up the advantages and disadvantages of each; 4) chose the most appropriate solution and plan how to realise it. Examples of lessons designed to facilitate life skills acquisition are included in the appendix to this document.

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. The exact content of life skills education must therefore be determined at the country level, or in a more local context. However, described in general terms, life skills are being taught in such a wide variety of countries that they appear to have relevance across cultures.

Conceptualizing the role of life skills in health promotion

□ Complementary life skills can be paired to reveal 5 main life skills "areas", as shown below. For health promotion, teaching skills in each of these areas provides a foundation in generic life skills for psychosocial competence.

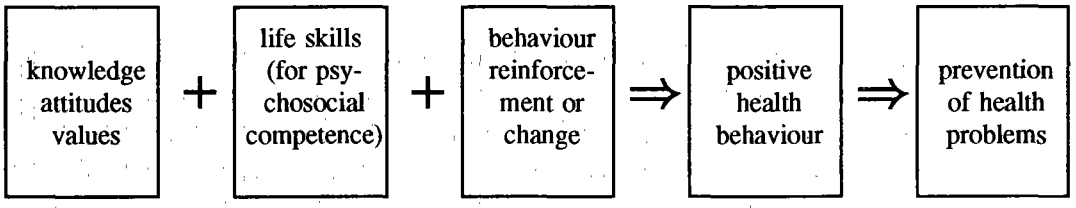
decision making - problem solving	creative thinking - critical thinking	communication - interpersonal relationships	self-awareness - empathy	coping with - emotions stressors

□ The teaching of life skills appears in a wide variety of educational programmes with demonstrable effectiveness, including programmes for the prevention of substance abuse (Botvin et al., 1980, 1984; Pentz, 1983) and adolescent pregnancy (Zabin et al., 1986; Schinke, 1984), the promotion of intelligence (Gonzalez, 1990), and the prevention of bullying (Olweus, 1990). Educational programmes teaching these skills have also been developed for the prevention of AIDS (WHO/GPA, 1994; Scripture Union, undated), for peace education

(Prutzman et al., 1988), and for the promotion of self-confidence and self-esteem (TACADE, 1990). Teaching life skills in this wide range of promotion and prevention programmes demonstrates the common value of life skills for health promotion, beyond their value within any specific programme.

□ Teaching life skills as generic skills in relation to everyday life could form the foundation of life skills education for the promotion of mental well-being, and healthy interaction and behaviour. More problem specific skills, such as assertively dealing with peer pressures to use drugs, to have unprotected sex, or to become involved in vandalism, could be built on this foundation. There are research indications that teaching skills in this way, as part of broad-based life skills programmes, is an effective approach for primary prevention education (Errecart et al., 1991; Perry and Kelder, 1992; Caplan et al., 1992).

□ The model below shows the place of life skills as a link between motivating factors of knowledge, attitudes and values, and positive health behaviour; and in this way contributing to the primary prevention of health problems.



□ Life skills enable individuals to translate knowledge, attitudes and values into actual abilities - ie. "what to do and how to do it". Life skills are abilities that enable individuals to behave in healthy ways, given the desire to do so and given the scope and opportunity to do so. They are not a panacea; "how to do" abilities are not the only factors that affect behaviour. If the model above was placed within a larger, more comprehensive framework, there would be many factors that relate to the motivation and ability to behave in positive ways to prevent health problems. These factors include such things as social support, cultural and environment factors.

□ Effective acquisition and application of life skills can influence the way we feel about ourselves and others, and equally will influence the way we are perceived by others. Life skills contribute to our perceptions of self-efficacy, self-confidence and self-esteem. Life skills therefore play an important role in the promotion of mental well-being. The promotion of mental well-being contributes to our motivation to look after ourselves and others, the prevention of mental disorders, and the prevention of health and behaviour problems.

Promoting the teaching of life skills

In promoting the teaching of life skills, the WHO is promoting the teaching of abilities that are often taken for granted. However, there is growing recognition that with changes in many cultures and lifestyles, many young people are not sufficiently equipped with life skills to help them deal with the increased demands and stresses they experience. They seem to lack the support required to acquire and reinforce life skills. It may be that traditional mechanisms for passing on life skills (e.g. family and cultural factors) are no longer adequate considering the influences that shape young people's development. These include media influence and the effects of growing up in situations of cultural and ethnic diversity. Also the rapid rate of social change, witnessed in many countries, makes the lives of young people, their expectations, values, and opportunities very different from that of their parents.

Life skills for psychosocial competence need to be distinguished from other important skills that we hope young people will acquire as they grow up, such as reading, numeracy, technical and practical "livelihood" skills. These and other skills are usually recognised as abilities that young people should learn, either in schools, at home or in their communities. Life skills are being promoted so that they can gain recognition as essential skills that should be included in the education of young people.

Life Skills Education

For health promotion, life skills education is based on the teaching of generic life skills and includes the practice of skills in relation to major health and social problems. Life skills lessons should be combined with health information, and may also be combined with other approaches, such as programmes designed to effect changes in environmental and social factors which influence the health and development of young people.

The methods used in the teaching of life skills builds upon what is known of how young people learn from their own experiences and from the people around them, from observing how others behave and what consequences arise from behaviour. This is described in the Social Learning Theory developed by Bandura (1977). In Social Learning Theory, learning is considered to be an active acquisition, processing and structuring of experiences.

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 are 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 - 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.

Life skills have already been taught in many schools around the world. Some initiatives are in use in just a few schools, whilst in other countries, life skills programmes have been introduced in a large proportion of schools, and for different age groups. In some countries, there are several important life skills initiatives, originating in different groups in the country, eg. non-governmental organizations, education authorities, and religious groups.

Identifying an optimal strategy for life skills education

The wide range of motives for teaching life skills to children and adolescents include the prevention of drug abuse and teenage pregnancy, the promotion of mental well-being and cooperative learning. For adults, life skills appear in programmes such as communication and empathy skills for medical students and counsellors, problem solving and critical thinking for business managers, and coping with emotions and stressors for people with mental health problems.

Given the wide ranging relevance of life skills, an optimal strategy for the introduction of life skills teaching would be to make it available to all children and adolescents in schools. Life skills teaching promotes the learning of abilities that contribute to positive health behaviour, positive interpersonal relationships, and mental well-being. Ideally, this learning should occur at a young age, before negative patterns of behaviour and interaction have become established.

The school is an appropriate place for the introduction of life skills education because of:

- the role of schools in the socialization of young people;
- access to children and adolescents on a large scale;
- economic efficiencies (uses existing infrastructure);
- experienced teachers already in place;
- high credibility with parents and community members;
- possibilities for short and long term evaluation.

Even in countries where a significant proportion of children do not complete schooling, the introduction of life skills education in schools should be a priority. Life skills education is highly relevant to the daily needs of young people. When it is part of the school curriculum, the indications are that it helps to prevent school drop-out. Furthermore, once experience has been gained in the development and implementation of a life skills programme for schools, this may help with the creation and implementation of programmes for other settings.

Developing life skills programmes

Designing and implementing a life skills programme is only a part of the life skills programme development process. It is equally important to secure long term support and resources for life skills education, and to engage, from the very beginning, all of the potential agencies that would have a role to play in the process of life skills programme development.

Implementing a life skills programme will require the introduction of teaching methods that may be new to teachers, and the success of the programme will depend very much on the availability of in-service training, as well as efforts to include training in participatory learning methods in teacher training colleges.

The introduction of life skills education will require input from the school and education authorities, for teacher training and the development of teaching manuals, as well as for the ongoing support of teaching programmes once they are in place. This investment is worthwhile considering that the potential gains of life skills education are so far reaching. Apart from the impact on child health, there may be other benefits for the school as an institution. For example, evaluative studies of life skills programmes suggest that the methods used can help to improve teacher and pupil relationships (Parsons et al., 1988), and there are indications that life skills lessons are associated with fewer reports of classroom behaviour problems. There are also research indications of improved academic performance as a result of teaching life skills (Weissberg et al., 1989). Other positive effects include improved school attendance (Zabin et al., 1986), less bullying, fewer referrals to specialist support services and better relationships between children and their parents.

A life skills programme will have to be proven worthy of the resources allocated to it. Process and outcome evaluation studies should be carried out, and results shared with all the relevant decision makers that could affect the future of the life skills programme. A programme that has a component of ongoing assessment of its use and impact offers scope for keeping in touch with changing priorities, and is more likely to be modified and maintained over time.

The main aspects of life skills programme development are discussed in more detail in Part 2 of this document.

The document, Training Workshops for the Development and Implementation of Life Skills Programmes (WHO/MNH/PSF/93.7B.Rev.1) provides material that has been designed to assist the process of life skills programme development. Active, experiential and group work methods form the basis of the activities described in the training workshops and the accompanying trainer's guide.

The document Life Skills Education: Planning for Research (MNH/PSF/96.2.Rev.1) provides a concise review of the research literature related to life skills education, and provides more information to guide the use of research as an integral part of the process of life skills programme development and implementation.

Well designed, tested and delivered life skills programmes can achieve much in helping children and adolescents become more responsible, healthy and resilient both during childhood and as adults.

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PART TWO

GUIDELINES: THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF LIFE SKILLS PROGRAMMES

DEVELOPING A LIFE SKILLS SUPPORT INFRASTRUCTURE

Establishing a life skills initiative at national or sub-national level requires an infrastructure capable of developing a life skills programme of widespread relevance and acceptability, as well as managing the implementation and evaluation of the programme over time. This infrastructure may take the form of two bodies, one to manage the technical tasks of programme design, implementation and evaluation, the other to advise and supervise this process. These may be called, for example, the Life Skills Development Group and the Life Skills Advisory Panel, respectively.

The initiative for forming these groups may come from currently established agencies that have responsibility for health education (for example, a school curriculum development group or health education authority) or responsibility for specific aspects of preventive health education or interventions (for example, a drug abuse control council, AIDS prevention agency etc.). The groups, as described here, are not necessarily new structures, since they may involve people that already work together on other areas, and may be brought together using an established forum.

The Life Skills Development Group

A Life Skills Development Group may be formed for the purpose of working on the development, implementation and evaluation of a life skills programme.

The coordinator of this group, the "project manager", is likely to have responsibilities for school (health) curriculum development, or a role in planning and developing school curriculum materials or school-based health and social interventions. The project manager should be in a position to establish links with government agencies, that should be mobilized in support of the life skills initiative.

Members of the Life Skills Development Group might include people that hold posts which entitle them to decision making responsibilities over the content of school-based interventions, or represent established institutions with recognized authority in this field. They would be expected to have expertise in curriculum development or school-based interventions, and should have familiarity or expertise in the design of educational activities that matches the learning capabilities of the age groups targeted for life skills education. However, it should not be limited to these individuals. The contributions of other child and youth experts is helpful, for programme design and later, during the implementation stages.

The Life Skills Development Group should be selected in order to form a multidsiciplinary group, and may include professionals from the following domains:

- **school curriculum development**
- **health education**
- **prevention education**
- **public health**
- **teacher training**
- **developmental and/or educational psychology**
- **social services**

For the development of a broad-based life skills programme, the multidisciplinary composition of this group should also be supportive of the generic goals and concepts of life skills education as described in Part 1 of this document.

The principal tasks of a Life Skills Development Group include:

- formulation of objectives for life skills education;
- formulation of strategies for life skills programme development;
- management of resources for life skills education;
- the design of life skills programme teaching materials;
- the development of training sessions for life skills trainers and educators/teachers;
- pilot-testing a draft version of the life skills programme;
- making plans for the implementation of the life skills programme;
- maintenance of the life skills programme once it is in place.

The tasks are described in the next section of these guidelines, together with points that may serve to guide decision making.

Training the Life Skills Development Group

The Life Skills Development Group will need to be trained in the theoretical basis, objectives and methods of life skills education, as well as in how to design and evaluate life skills programmes. This training could be based on the training workshops described in the document Training Workshops for the Development and Implementation of Life Skills Programmes (WHO/MNH/PSF/93.7B.Rev.1).

The Life Skills Development Group can to some extent be self-trained on the basis of the workshops, and can use the same workshops to provide training or briefing sessions for the life skills advisory group, and for the training of trainers. Ideally, the training of the Life Skills Development Group should be assisted by a trainer with expertise in the area of life skills education. A life skills consultant from another country may be asked to assist this process. However, if resources are not available to cover the services of a consultant, it may be relevant to bring in the help of people with related experience. For example, attempts

could be made to establish links with professional groups currently using active learning methods, and which teach at least one of the life skills areas described in Part 1.

The Life Skills Advisory Panel

Identifying a Life Skills Advisory Panel is an important part of the strategy for gaining support, resources and commitment to life skills education. Such a "panel" would be selected to include relevant opinion leaders and agencies that could act as promoters of the major aims and objectives for the development of life skills education. An advisory panel can play an important role in supporting life skills education, including guiding policy and the decision making process. If problems arise, this group can also provide backing which might be necessary for the very survival of an innovative initiative such as life skills education, which may be misunderstood and criticised. Endorsement from respected individuals and agencies can help dispel criticism as well as give credibility to the effort.

The composition of the Life Skills Advisory Panel might include representatives of:

- **education authorities;**
- **health authorities;**
- **social services;**
- **relevant departments of universities and colleges;**
- **youth organizations;**
- **minority groups;**
- **non-governmental organizations;**
- **police;**
- **religious institutions;**
- **media;**
- **popular personalities;**
- **charities;**
- **public sector agencies - including potential sponsors from business and industry;**
- **parents and teachers associations;**
- **teachers' unions;**
- **international agencies working in the country.**

Members of an advisory panel would need to be convinced of the relevance of life skills education in relation to the country's needs and priorities, so it may be necessary to provide training or briefing sessions. Such training could be developed from the relevant workshops provided in the document Training Workshops for the Development and Implementation of Life Skills Programmes (WHO/MNH/PSF/93.7B.Rev.1).

The project manager of the Life Skills Development Group could be instrumental in establishing the Life Skills Advisory Panel, whose members would be consulted as the Life Skills Development Group formulates and implements its plans.

FORMULATING OBJECTIVES AND A STRATEGY FOR LIFE SKILLS PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT

Formulation of objectives for life skills education

Objectives for life skills education should be based on a needs assessment.

A needs assessment will help identify the most relevant prevention and promotion objectives for life skills education. As far as possible, the needs assessment should make use of existing reports and statistics. Existing statistics, describing the prevalence of particular problems, can help to put force behind new initiatives which are designed to have implications for the prevention of those problems.

In relation to life skills education, relevant statistics include the incidence of health and social problems that are related to mental well-being and behaviour. These include:

- extent and type of substance use and abuse;
- HIV/AIDS prevalence;
- pregnancy rates in school children;
- teenage suicide rates;
- incidence of childhood psychiatric disorder and psychological problems;
- extent of violence in schools.

The formulation of objectives of a life skills programme should also include a review of education and/or health policy, and where possible the Life Skills Development Group should try to pursue the development of life skills education within existing government policy and priorities. Where existing policy is inadequate, the life skills development group, working with or through the advisory panel, will need to present the case for necessary policy changes.

The objectives for life skills education should be placed within a rationale and conceptual framework for the place of life skills in health promotion (see Part 1 of this document). It can also help to relate the objectives of life skills education to already established objectives, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 29):

"... the education of the child shall be directed to the development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential; ... the preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of the sexes, and friendship among all peoples...".

To increase acceptability and feasibility of the life skills programme, objectives should take into account the realities of the religious, cultural, political and socio-economic conditions.

Two questions that need to be addressed early on are: What life skills are to be taught? And, for which groups and ages?

i) What skills to teach?

For a broad-based foundation in life skills the following were suggested in Part 1, as complementary life skills for the enhancement of psychosocial competence.

decision making - problem solving	creative thinking - critical thinking	communication - interpersonal relationships	self-awareness - empathy	coping with - emotions and stressors

The Life Skills Development Group will need to determine the exact nature of the skills to be taught, and to determine the specific applications of life skills that will need to be taught to achieve primary prevention and health promotion objectives. (Refer to the table on page 22, and to the Appendix, for example lesson titles and sequence).

ii) What is the target group of the life skills programme?

If a life skills programme is to be developed for the promotion of health and well-being, it should ideally be targeted at all children and adolescents, as a positive response to health needs, rather than as an intervention aimed only at those already at risk or who already have health problems.

If the plans are that the life skills programme should eventually be implemented wide-scale in a country, then the original programme is likely to be developed first for the most dominant, majority language and culture in the country. This may mean that minority groups will not be reached, especially if there are no representatives from such groups in the Life Skills Advisory Panel or Development Group. Plans should be made for programme adaptation, or life skills programme development, for such groups once a programme has been implemented and is being maintained.

Life skills programmes can be developed for all ages of children and adolescents in school. Experience gained in countries where life skills programmes have been developed suggests 6-16 years as an important age range for life skills learning. However, the age groups to be targeted are likely to be determined by education policy and the resources available, as well as by the age at which children are most likely to be in school. It will be necessary to weigh up the value of life skills education to different age groups, to help select who it is for and for how many year groups. Given the role of life skills in the promotion of positive health behaviour, it is worthwhile ensuring that life skills programmes are available in the pre-adolescent or early adolescent years, since young people of this age group seem to be most vulnerable to behaviour-related health problems.

Formulation of a strategy for life skills programme development

One of the main questions about strategy will be whether to develop a life skills programme or to adapt one that is already being used in the country or elsewhere.

> The document The Development and Dissemination of Life Skills Education: An Overview (MNH/PSF/94.7) provides brief case studies of the development and adaptation of life skills programmes in different countries. It also includes a short annotated list of examples of life skills education resource materials.

It may be useful to obtain copies of several life skills programmes, and to examine them before deciding whether programme adaptation is a feasible and appropriate solution. Even where the best strategy is considered to be the design of a life skills programme, the work may be facilitated by reviewing life skills programmes to generate ideas for style and content. Also, actual implementation of a life skills programme developed elsewhere can, in the short term, help local groups gain valuable experience in life skills education, even if the eventual goal is to develop rather than adapt a programme.

The ability to achieve cultural relevancy and linguistic integrity in adapting a life skills programme is a primary factor in determining whether programme adaptation is feasible. Cost is another important factor. Programme adaptation is not necessarily cheaper than programme development, when licence fees and royalties are added to the adaptation costs. Furthermore, programme adaptation can take as long as programme development.

> Experience suggests that the process of life skills development or adaptation can take from 2 to 4 years to complete.

Three main steps in the adaptation process are briefly described below:

i) Language translation

This may be necessary even if a programme is written in the "same" language. So many expressions are culture specific, and may have no meaning in other countries or regions.

ii) A reverse language translation

The translated version of the materials is translated back into the original language. This is done to ensure that what has been translated from the original does not change the basic concepts and content of the programme. There is often no direct translation for a word or concept, and when it is translated it can take on a new meaning that was not intended by the programme developers.

iii) Cultural adaptation

At this stage, attention would be directed at the content of the programme. The skills being taught would need to be examined for relevance and appropriateness, as would each of the activities used to facilitate life skills acquisition. Careful attention should be given to include only the most culturally appropriate content. Other aspects of the programme may need to be re-written to develop culturally sensitive activities.

Whether a life skills programme is to be adapted or designed, the steps for programme development outlined in these guidelines are relevant, and may form the basis of a more detailed strategy.

Management of resources for life skills education

The objectives and strategy for life skills programme development, training, implementation, and maintenance should all be formulated in ways that can be supported with financial resources available within the country.

Although it is impossible to give an estimation of the costs here, a checklist of likely expenses is listed below:

- Costs of producing life skills materials, including payment of writers and illustrators, and costs of printing. It can be helpful to choose binding and paper quality to suit climatic conditions: for example, plastic coated paper, although more expensive, has been used for some life skills programmes to ensure durability of the materials.

- Costs of distributing life skills materials.

- Costs of teacher training, including trainers' fees, and travel expenses for teachers and trainers attendance at workshops.

- Costs of a Life Skills Advisory Panel and Life Skills Development Group are likely to include such things as travel to meetings, food and lodging during meetings, secretarial support and stationary.

- Costs of consultants for initial training. Although involving life skills consultants can be more expensive in the early stages, it may help to reduce overall costs by helping to organize and implement the initiative more effectively and efficiently and so avoiding expensive mistakes.

- Promotion costs for getting the programme launched and on-going publicity for the programme, including costs of providing samples of the programme materials to stimulate interest.

- Costs of researchers to carry out the pilot test and subsequent evaluations.

- Costs of review and revision of the life skills materials and the training.

It may be possible to recover the costs of programme development from the sale of life skills materials.

Attracting resources for a life skills education initiative: some suggestions

- Form partnerships with agencies that should support the development of life skills education.

- Carry out publicity campaigns to encourage popular support and positive expectations of life skills education.

- Apply for funds from relevant non-governmental and international organizations, charities and foundations, as well as from local authorities and businesses (including banks and insurance companies).

- Publish reports that describe the project objectives, the scale of dissemination, pilot test findings, and progress updates.

DESIGNING LIFE SKILLS PROGRAMME MATERIALS

Designing life skills lessons

The acquisition of skills is based on learning through active participation. Life skills lessons need to be designed to allow opportunities for practice of skills in a supportive learning environment.

Refer to the Appendix for short descriptions of life skills lessons.

Life skills lessons are both active and experiential. In passive learning, the teacher passes on knowledge and the learner is the recipient of information (as in didactic teaching). Active learning, however, engages the teacher and pupil in a dynamic process of learning by using methods such as brainstorming, group discussion and debates. Experiental learning is based on actual practice of what is being taught, for example, using games and role play. Life skills lessons use such active and experiental methods, and should also include homework assignments that encourage pupils to extend their analysis and practice of life skills to their lives at home and in their communities. Traditional children's games, often used in life skills lessons, offer one good example of how life skills are learned through doing, and are taught using activities that can be continued outside the classroom. For example, games like being led blindfold around a room are used to teach trust, and whispering games, where a message is whispered from person to person, are used to teach listening skills.

Two methods that are frequently used in life skills lessons - brainstorming and role play - are described below.

Brainstorming is a creative technique for generating ideas and suggestions on a particular subject. Any topic can be explored using brainstorming. A question may be asked or an issue raised, and every one in the group is asked to give suggestions about it in very simple terms, ideally with one word or a short phrase. In brainstorming, people just call out what they think, there should be no need to go round the group one by one. All suggestions would be listed for the whole group to see. Brainstorming gives an opportunity for everyone's ideas to be valued and accepted without criticism. Brainstorming can be a good technique for the life skills teacher to learn from the children how much they understand about a subject and to see how they describe it in their own terms. It is also a very effective way of hearing the ideas from the whole group in a limited period of time. Later in the lesson, the various brainstorm ideas can be assessed in relation to the concepts being taught.

Role play is the acting out of a scenario, either based on text or based on example situations described by the teacher or students. In role play, various aspects of the same situation can be tried out, and the students involved can be given a chance to try out the life skills they are being taught. Role play is perhaps the most important method in life skills teaching, since the students involved can experience for themselves the use of a new skill in different situations. Role play can be of considerable value for dealing with sensitive issues that may cause anxiety in real encounters. The learner can observe and practice ways of behaving in a safe, controlled environment before facing real situations.

Evidently, these activities normally presume that the students are working together in groups or pairs, which is often not the case in many school classrooms. Effective work in groups will depend upon the training of life skills educators in group work methods and as group leaders. For example, for effective groupwork it can be helpful to establish rules for group participation, and to assign people to roles within the group (e.g. timekeeper and reporter) so that everyone is considered responsible for the activities of the group. A group leader will need to give clear instructions, and will need to know how to deal with people who are not actively contributing to the group activities, as well as how to split large groups into small ones of 4 or 5, or into pairs.

Processing questions can be used to structure life skills lessons and to maintain student involvement and reflection on what is being taught. Three processing questions are:

What? What is the lesson about?

So What? What have I learnt from the lesson? What thoughts and feelings did the lesson stimulate?

Now What? What can I do with what I learned/experienced? How can I apply it to my everyday life?

The training workshops described in the document Training Workshops for the Development and Implementation of Life Skills Programmes (WHO/MNH/PSF/93.7B.Rev.1) are based on the methods that are used in life skills education. Participating in these workshops can help those designing life skills lessons to become familiar with the methods used.

Designing a life skills education programme

Designing actual life skills lesson activities is usually only one part of life skills programme design. For a broad-based life skills programme, designed to promote psychosocial competence, and to achieve health promotion and prevention objectives, the life skills lessons would need to be designed as part of a sequential and unified programme. To some extent, the life skills lessons would be designed to be carried out in a particular order, with later life skills activities designed to build on the skills lessons provided earlier in the programme. For example, the following model describes three basic levels of life skills lessons, which can be taught in sequence, in order to create a life skills education programme.

Level 1 The teaching of basic components of core life skills, practised in relation to common everyday situations.

Level 2 The application of life skills to relevant themes that are connected to various health and social problems.

Level 3 The application of skills in relation to specific risk situations that can give rise to health and social problems.

An example outline of a life skills education programme, based on titles of life skills lessons covering these three levels, is illustrated below. The model is fictional, and is only intended to illustrate how a life skills programme can be put together to cover a broad-based foundation in life skills. This can be built on so that students have the opportunity to practice the skills relevant to important health issues. The example shows 30 life skills lessons taught over a period of 3 years.

See Appendix for examples of lessons titles and sequence of life skills programmes.

	Year 1 (Level 1)	Year 2 (Level 2)	Year 3 (Level 3)
Self-awareness	Learning about "me as a special person"	Self-control	My rights and responsibilities
Empathy	Understanding how people are alike and how we differ, and learning to appreciate the differences between people	Avoiding prejudice and discrimination of people who differ	Caring of people with AIDS
Interpersonal relationship skills	Learning to value relationships with friends and family	Forming new relationships and surviving loss of friendships	Seeking support and advice from others in a time of need
Communication	Basic verbal and non-verbal communication skills	Assertive communication in the face of peer pressure	Using assertiveness to resist pressure to do potentially health damaging activities (e.g. unprotected sex)
Critical thinking	Learning the basic processes in critical thinking	Making objective judgements about choices and risks	Resisting media influence on attitudes towards smoking and alcohol
Creative thinking	Developing capacities to think in creative ways	Generating new ideas about things that are taken for granted	Adapting to changing social circumstances
Decision making	Learning basic steps for decision making	Making difficult decisions	Decision making about important life plans
Problem solving	Basic steps for problem solving	Generating solutions to difficult problems or dilemmas	Conflict resolution
Coping with stress	Identifying sources of stress	Methods for coping in stressful situations	Coping in situations of adversity
Coping with emotions	Recognition of the expression of different emotions	Understanding how emotions affect the way we behave	Coping with emotional distress

Designing a life skills programme for flexible implementation

The place of life skills teaching in the school curriculum can vary greatly. Life skills have been taught in schools in the context of various educational initiatives, eg. as a part of comprehensive school health education, life planning education, and mental health promotion. When the life skills programme is included, as a part of the school curriculum it may be referred to as "integrated". Life skills have also been taught within the teaching of academic subjects, such as the teaching of communication skills in the context of language classes. Taught in this way life skills education is often said to be "infused" into the existing curriculum. Life skills education may also be implemented as an extra-curricular activity.

☐ If the life skills programme can be designed so that it can be both infused into other subjects and integrated either as a new subject, or within an existing subject, this offers greater potential for programme success.

☐ The materials should be appropriate for children and adolescents of ethnic minority groups. Programme developers should pay attention to language usage (e.g. avoid unnecessary colloquial expressions) and use culture-free illustrations, as far as possible.

☐ Producing the life skills programme as a loose leaf binder, or putting the lessons on separate cards can be very practical, allowing the teacher to take out the lesson materials he/she requires whilst facilitating the lessons.

An overview of a life skills teaching manual

The most important material of the life skills programme is likely to be a teaching manual, which provides detailed descriptions of each lesson. The teaching manual should also include the following:

. an introduction to life skills education - describing the rationale, theory, values, and methodology;

. activities to support the life skills lessons - for example, warm-up activities to help the students feel more comfortable working in groups;

. activities that facilitate the development of life skills, that the children can do at home and with their families;

. activities that facilitate the development of life skills, that may be carried out with friends or in community projects.

Since life skills education will be new for most teachers and trainers, the format must be clear and concise, so that users can easily understand the approach, pedagogy and the structure of the sessions described. For example, each of the skills lessons could be set out using the same format, as below.

- Lesson purpose and goal
- Learning objectives
- Listing and explanation of materials needed for the lesson
- Background information, helpful hints, and how the lesson is related to other lessons or to the national curriculum
- Lesson activities
    a. exploring and discovering
    b. connecting new concepts and skills
    c. practice new skills
    d. apply skills to life situations
- Evaluation (processing questions)
- Homework assignments
- Additional resources and activities related to the lesson

Life skills programme materials to accompany the teaching manual

Life skills programmes often include a student workbook, for the child or adolescent to use in conjunction with the skills lessons. Also, students are often asked to write about their feelings and what they have learnt in their own personal journals. If these additional materials are not available or affordable, all materials can be incorporated within the teaching manual, and when required, reproduced for the children by the teacher on the board, or other such visual display facilities.

Other support materials might include:

- An introduction to life skills education for parents, describing the rationale and objectives of life skills education, and providing suggestions of activities that they can do with their children at home.

- A guide to assist teachers' work with parents. This might include an agenda for meetings with parents, and suggestions for ways that teachers can encourage parental support for their child's or children's acquisition and practice of life skills.

- An introduction to life skills education for school principals, emphasizing the potential benefits of life skills education for the institutional goals of the school, as well as the need for review periods and on-going training for teachers once the programme is implemented.

- A leaflet describing life skills education for other teachers and for school health personnel, school social workers etc., and for community members that should be informed of the content and objectives of life skills education.

TRAINING OF LIFE SKILLS TRAINERS

A training course for life skills trainers can be developed on the basis of the workshops provided in the document Training Workshops for the Development and Implementation of Life Skills Programmes (WHO/MNH/PSF/93.7B.Rev.1).

Trained trainers could then use or adapt the training workshops as the basis for the training of teachers or other life skills educators.

A cascade strategy for disseminating the training is used in many countries. This is to say that people that take part in training sessions then go on to train others using the same, or a similar, training schedule. This model is advocated in so far as trained trainers can go on to train other teacher trainers, and so increase the availability of training resources. Teachers/life skills educators should go through training sessions with a trained trainer. Care has to be taken however, to maintain the quality of the training at all levels.

The training workshops, outlined in the document WHO/MNH/PSF/93.7B.Rev.1, are organized as four courses and cover the following workshop topics:

Course I
- **The Nature and Purpose of Life Skills Education**
- **The School Context for Life Skills Education**
- **Implementing a National/Regional/Local Strategy for Life Skills Education**
- **Building a Coalition for Life Skills Education**

Course II
- **Why Work in Groups?**
- **Key Skills in Training- Part 1**
- **Key Skills in Training- Part 2**

Course III
- **Life Skills Lesson Methods and Design**
- **Review of Resources Materials for Life Skills Education**
- **Strategies for Developing Teaching Materials - 1**
- **Strategies for Developing Teaching Materials - 2**
- **Assessment and Evaluation in Life Skills Education**

Course IV
- **The Community Contribution to Life Skills Education**
- **Developing Parenting Skills to Support Life Skills Education**

Training on the basis of participatory learning in groups

Active participatory learning in groups is central to life skills teaching; it is also the basis for the training of life skills trainers.

From the experience gained in the training of life skills trainers and teachers, the indications are that training usually requires intensive workshops, over, for example, a 3 day period. There should also be opportunities for follow-up training sessions.

During childhood and adolescence, as in adulthood, much social interaction occurs in groups. This can be capitalized upon, and used in a structured way to provide a situation in which members can learn, share experiences and practice skills together.

The role of the trainer is to facilitate this participatory learning of the group members, rather than conduct lectures in a didactic style.

Participatory learning:

- builds on the experience, opinions and knowledge of group members;
- provides a creative context for exploring possibilities and defining options;
- provides a source of mutual comfort and security which is important for the learning and decision making process.

It is recognized that there are advantages of working in groups, with adults and with young people because group work:

- increases participants' perceptions of themselves and others;
- promotes co-operation rather than competition;
- provides opportunities for group members and their trainers/teachers to recognize and value individual skills and enhance self-esteem;
- enables participants to get to know each other better and extend relationships;
- promotes listening and communication;
- facilitates dealing with sensitive issues;
- appears to promote tolerance and understanding of individuals and their needs;
- encourages innovation and creativity.

The place and importance of participatory learning in teacher training draws some of its influence from adult learning theory and from research into teacher in-service training, which suggests the following:

- The adult learner has accumulated a reservoir of experience that is a substantial resource in the learning process. The experience of the participants must be used and built on.

- Lecturing adult professionals has little effect on their actual work practice. Even lecturing, followed by general discussion does not tend to have much influence on practice.

- There are indications that if teachers are asked to perform practical tasks during in-service training, and if they are explicitly asked to try out new activities in their classroom, this heightens the chance of the in-service training having an effect on teaching methods.

The Trainer's Guide in document WHO/MNH/PSF/93.7B.Rev.1, provides more background information for trainers, with examples of practical exercises and guidance to facilitate participatory training in groups.

PILOT TESTING/EVALUATING A LIFE SKILLS PROGRAMME AND TRAINING

Once life skills programme materials and training have been developed, a small-scale pilot test is required, during which the life skills programme can be assessed and necessary revisions made before the materials are produced and distributed on a larger scale.

Pilot test evaluation is as important as developing the programme materials, because once developed, if there is no evaluation, there may be little to show that the programme has the potential to achieve what is expected of it. With limited resources available, few agencies are going to spend time and money on a new initiative unless they have some proof of its practical value. Also, mistakes or gaps in the materials may only be noticed when the training schedule is actually put into practice with teachers or when the teacher's manual is used to guide lessons. This sort of problem can be anticipated, and prepared for from the beginning with a plan to pilot test the materials. Furthermore, the pilot test evaluation can serve as an example of ways in which the life skills programme can be assessed in the longer term, and hence serve as a model for future evaluation.

Evaluation tools used in the evaluation of life skills programmes include: questionnaires given to pupils, teachers and trainers; individual and group interviews; and assessment through observation, e.g. of the teacher conducting a life skills class.

The document, Life Skills Education: Planning for Research (MNH/PSF/96.2.Rev.1) provides further information about evaluation of a life skills programme. Programme evaluation is described as part of a plan for research as an integral part of life skills education, development, implementation and maintenance. The appendices to the document provide examples of research related to life skills education and descriptions of instruments used in life skills programme evaluation.

The number and type of schools that should be included in the pilot test depends on the overall scale of the planned implementation of the life skills programme.

If the life skills programme is destined for wide-scale implementation in a country, during the pilot test schools should be selected to include a representative sample of urban and rural schools, as well as a sample of the different types of schools (for example: private, public, single sex schools, religion or culture based schools). To be sure of meaningful results of the pilot test, a minimum of 8-12 schools, involving at least 2 teachers and 50 pupils from each school, is likely to be required.

In pilot testing a programme, the principle question will be what to evaluate. What are the indicators of life skills programme effectiveness?

What to evaluate?

Evaluation questions that might be asked include process evaluation questions and outcome evaluation questions, examples of which are listed below.

Process evaluation questions

- Is the programme implemented as expected?
- How well does the programme fit the socio-political, socio-economic and cultural climate?
- How do teachers, trainers, and the young people themselves perceive the life skills programme?
- How do parents and community leaders perceive the programme?
- How "user friendly", i.e. easy to use, are the materials and training?
- Are the programme contents, and the concepts behind it, understood by the users ("users" could be the trainers, teachers and students)?
- What is the potential relevance of the programme to different ethnic groups in the country?
- Do participants enjoy the life skills programme?
- Does it seem relevant to the user's needs?

Outcome evaluation questions

- Does the programme achieve what it sets out to achieve?

  i.e.
  - do the children learn life skills?
  - are there any indications of changes in health-related behaviour?
  - are their changes in indicators of mental well-being, eg. improved self-esteem and self-confidence?

- Does the programme bring about other changes? Apart from the acquisition of life skills and changes in health-related behaviour, other indicators of life skills programme effectiveness include:

- improvements in teacher-pupil relationships;
- improved academic performance;
- reduction in school drop-out;
- improved school-family links.

Pilot test data may be compiled as a report to illustrate the value and effectiveness of the life skills programme, and the programme's potential. Recording the results in this way could be important for promoting the programme, or validating it if the usefulness of life skills education is challenged. Such a report could be distributed along with the training and teaching manual at the phase of wider dissemination of the programme.

Evaluating/pilot testing the teacher training

All participants on training courses can be given an evaluation form (see the example below). Feedback from each training course should be recorded, and future should be revised as a result of such feedback.

EVALUATION SHEET

Please circle one number for each of the following questions.

		very much		somewhat		very little
1.	Did you find the workshop(s) interesting	5	4	3	2	1
2.	Did you find the workshop(s) valuable?	5	4	3	2	1

Please write in your reply.

3. Which part of the workshop(s) did you find the most enjoyable, and why?
4. Which part of the workshop(s) did you find the least enjoyable and why?
5. What have you learned that will be of most help to you?
6. What additional training do you need?

IMPLEMENTING A LIFE SKILLS PROGRAMME

Following the pilot test phase, including any necessary revisions of the training and life skills materials, dissemination and implementation of the life skills programme can begin.

The financial resources available for printing, distribution and training will be an important factor in determining the rate and scale of implementation of the life skills programme. If plans are made for wide scale implementation in a country, the rate and scale of implementation will also be determined by the cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity. Programme implementation in countries with a relatively homogeneous population may be faster and easier. Countries with greater diversity may find it necessary to set priorities for making adaptations for different ethnic and linguistic populations.

Minimum criteria for implementing a life skills programme

Although these guidelines focus on the implementation of life skills programmes in schools, there may be plans for use of the programme in settings other than schools. If this is the case, or indeed if there is concern as to the appropriateness of school settings in a particular location, it is worth considering the following minimum criteria that should be met for life skills education to be effective, as below.

☐ The teaching of life skills requires a learning environment in which a teacher/group leader can organize active and experiential learning activities.

☐ It is important that the teacher/group leader has had training in active and experiential teaching methods, and in facilitating the learning of life skills. He/she should be equipped with a teaching manual that describes life skills lessons.

☐ The life skills activities should, ideally, be led by a teacher/group leader that the group can work with over a period of time, e.g. over a one-year period.

☐ The teacher/group leader should be sensitive to the capabilities and understanding of those taking part in the life skills programme, and be able to adapt life skills lessons accordingly.

☐ The life skills teaching should have continuity and sequence over time, ie. life skills lessons should, to some extent, relate to and build upon previous lessons. One-off life skills lessons are unlikely to be effective.

The focus on the school in this document partly reflects these minimum criteria, since in most countries, the school is the setting that is most likely to meet these criteria. The most likely person to be able to play the role of a life skills educator is a trained teacher, although a school psychologist, social worker, or guidance counsellor could also be trained as a life skills educator.

Life skills programmes are best implemented by teachers or life skills educators that have taken part in life skills education training sessions, and it may be appropriate to limit distribution of the life skills teaching resource to teachers that have taken part in training sessions. To this end, it may be best to deliver the life skills programme materials to training centres, rather than directly to schools.

Monitoring the distribution of the life skills materials and training may be of value as an indicator of the success of the life skills initiative, and such information may be of help in securing future financial resources. Inventory systems are therefore useful, to gather information on the destinations of the life skills education programme materials and training courses, and to keep track of the scale of implementation.

A dissemination strategy: Life Skills Coordinators

The following outlines a number of guidelines regarding the use of coordinators to facilitate the dissemination of life skills education.

1. A network of coordinators at local or regional level (depending on the geography of the country) should be set up, who would assist in the dissemination of programme materials and training.

2. Regional level coordinators would be trained as "trainers of trainers". Local level coordinators would be trained as teacher trainers.

3. Life skills coordinators would receive support and further training together with other local or regional coordinators.

4. Funding will be necessary for the posts of local and regional life skills coordinators. In many countries this has been provided by local or national governments - thus stressing the importance of involving key senior governmental officials in the development of life skills education.

5. The experience in many countries is that the appointment of local coordinators is the best strategy to ensure implementation and further development of life skills education. There need to be people "on the ground" who will take on the day to day management tasks, cultivate networks and offer encouragement and support. These coordinators can offer the Training Workshops (WHO/MNH/PSF/93.7B.Rev.1) at school and local level.

6. Training in working with parents and involving the community should be offered as part of the training of life skills coordinators.

MAINTENANCE OF A LIFE SKILLS PROGRAMME

Once a life skills programme has been developed and implemented, the Life Skills Development Group should ensure its longer term function in order to manage the longer term implementation and maintenance of the programme. Otherwise, the Life Skills Development Group should ensure that a relevant agency takes on this responsibility.

Incorporating review periods

Systematic review of the use of the life skills programme will be an essential part of ensuring its long term value. Even when a programme is securely in place and running well, it will continue to require ongoing assessment and revision, to ensure that the life skills programme continues to meet the needs of young people.

The information generated in a review of programme implementation should be recorded and included in periodic progress reports.

Follow-up training for teachers

Follow-up training sessions should be provided, if possible, even if the programme and training is not changed as a result of the review periods. Teachers will require follow-up training sessions to guide them in the longer term use of the programme, and to provide them with an opportunity for raising questions about its content and methods.

To ensure the long term availability of the teacher training sessions, it may be helpful to institutionalise the training, for example, by trying to make it available in teacher training colleges.

Ongoing funding and support of the life skills programme

The Life Skills Coordinator in each district would be responsible for actively promoting the programme, and ensuring that relevant groups and agencies (local authorities, parents' and teachers' groups, businesses, charities, etc.) are encouraged to provide support and funding for the programme in the longer term. To this end, the Life Skills Coordinator would have an overview of the life skills "network" in his/her location, and should encourage relevant people to support life skills education, for example, by inviting them to planning meetings or by making progress reports available to them.

For the maintenance of a life skills programme over time, the Life Skills Coordinator could facilitate the involvement of children and adolescents in community projects, and projects to improve the school environment and school "climate" (or atmosphere) in ways that support the objectives and ethos of life skills education. He/she could also facilitate communication between parents and teachers.

Programme adaptation

As the programme begins to be used on a wider scale, the programme is more likely to be used by ethnic or cultural groups other than the target population for whom it was initially designed. If this happens, the relevance of the life skills activities may be gradually diluted and programme effectiveness reduced. As a part of programme maintenance, it is therefore important to consider making adaptations of the programme, as necessary.

APPENDIX

SAMPLE LIFE SKILLS LESSONS AND LIFE SKILLS PROGRAMME LESSON TITLES AND SEQUENCE

The sample lessons described here are based on lessons from life skills programmes used in schools in various countries. They represent only a small part of programmes that they were taken from, and the lesson descriptions have been abbreviated, so it would not be appropriate to copy them. They are to illustrate what life skills lessons are like, and to show the variety of ways in which life skills can be taught using active and experiential teaching methods.

The examples of life skills programme lesson titles and sequence illustrate the ways in which lessons have been put together to create three prevention education programmes based on life skills.

SAMPLE LIFE SKILLS LESSONS

"Steps to solutions and four questions for problem solvers"

The lesson is based on four steps to problem solving, with activities designed to help students work through each step.

1. What is the problem - what happened?

A short role play is used to show an argument, and the students are asked to define what the problem is, without making judgments about who is right or wrong. The group is asked to consider what effect defining a problem has on the way we perceive it.

The group is asked to write a short play, showing an argument developing and taking place, followed by a definition of the problem.

Problems that the children experience are introduced as examples of problems for the class to work on together.

2. How does it feel?

A quarrel is illustrated using role play (alternatively the role play of step 1 is described). The group then considers each person in the role play in turn, and they write down the feelings each person may have had, without judging how justified the feeling was.

3. Option building

The students brainstorm to show how many possible courses of action could be taken to solve the problem.

The group looks at the list of feelings generated at step 2 and suggests what could be done to meet the needs each feeling represents. Once something has been suggested for each feeling, and for each person in the problem scenario, the list of options is compared to the original problem situation, and the group put forward suggestions for an appropriate solution.

4. Goal setting

Finally, a plan is drawn up, composed of small steps that each person involved in the argument could take to bring about a solution.

FROM: *Ways and Means: An Approach to Problem Solving*
(1988) The Handbook of the Kingston Friends Workshop Group,
Kingston Polytechnic, UK.

"Making decisions step by step"

The students are asked to explore the advantages and disadvantages of different ways of making decisions, such as:

- by impulse;
- by procrastinating, or "putting off" making a decision;
- by not deciding;
- by letting others make decisions for us;
- by evaluating all choices and then deciding.

The teacher then tells the group that the last way - evaluating different aspects of the situation - is the best process to use when making an important decision. And the following model for decision making is presented.

Step 1 Name the choices and alternatives involved in your decision

Step 2 Gather information about the decision (considering values, goals, and list what facts you need to know)

Step 3 List the advantages and disadvantages of each choice

Step 4 Make your decision and list your reasons for this choice

The students go through the model for example decision making dilemmas situations, first together and then in small groups. Then the students compare how the different groups handled the same dilemma. The teacher asks if anyone wants to share a real dilemma that the group could try to look at using the decision making steps.

The following questions are raised.

1. Has anyone in the group ever made a decision that didn't turn out well? Would the decision making model have helped? How? Which step?

2. How do you know if you have all the facts you need to make a decision? Who could you talk to?

3. Do you think you could really use this model?

FROM: ***Life Planning Education: A Youth Development Program***
(1985) The Center for Population Options, Washington, D.C., USA.

"Do your own think: Critical thinking skills"

The teacher provides examples which contrast critical and "un-critical thinking, and introduces the critical thinking steps, as below.

1. Choose a subject to examine.
2. Ask questions about the subject.
3. Gather information to get answers to your questions.
4. Review the information.
5. Determine how you will react.

The teacher uses one of the examples given earlier to go through the critical thinking steps. Then the students work in pairs through a worksheet on which the students have to show their use of the critical thinking steps.

The teacher asks the students to consider why it is so important to understand and use critical thinking skills in making decisions, and to think about areas in their lives when these skills can be applied.

A worksheet with examples of other situations in which the students can practice applying the critical thinking steps is given as a homework assignment, and the students are asked to write about a time when they could have done something differently, if they had only asked a few critical questions beforehand.

FROM: ***Skills for Adolescence: Curriculum Guide: A Programme for Ages 11-14*** (1986) Quest International, USA. (TACADE version, printed in the UK).

"Communication Skills"

As an introduction, the students engage in an activity in which one student whispers a message to another, and this is then whispered from person to person until it has gone around the whole class. At the end, the students compare the final message to the original, to see if it has changed.

Students are asked to define communication, and under what conditions effective communication is said to have taken place. The teacher tells the students that communication can be verbal and non-verbal, and asks the students to say what they think is meant by verbal and non-verbal communication. The teacher is ready with definitions to help the students if they cannot think of any.

The teacher suggests that effective communication is when verbal and non-verbal communication are the same: difficulties arise when words contradict our nonverbal behaviour. The teacher asks students for examples of this, and may provide some to help, like:

"I always have plenty of time to talk to students after school" - and as this is said the teacher glances at his/her watch and nervously begins packing his/her briefcase.

Three students are given cards with the words "angry", "nervous", and "content" written on them. Each student uses non-verbal behaviour to communicate the emotion on the card. The rest of the class takes turns to guess the emotion that is being expressed.

Students are asked to give examples of a misunderstanding in communication that they have experienced, and to think about how it might have been avoided. A role play is made up to illustrate one or more of the situations given as examples by the students. The group is asked how the misunderstanding could have been avoided, and the suggestions are incorporated in a new role play of the situation.

To illustrate the value of asking questions to clarify what is being said, the teacher uses the following activity:

One student is asked to describe a figure containing different geometric shapes to the rest of the class, who are to draw it without asking questions about it. Two of the students then show what shape they thought was being described. The student describes the figure again, this time the others can ask questions. Two of the students show their drawings and these are compared to the original, to see if this time it was easier to understand what was being described.

FROM: ***Life Skills Training: Promoting Health and Personal Development: Teacher's Manual***
G. J. Botvin (1989) Cornell University Medical College, USA.

"Appreciating Family and Friends"

The teacher explains that when something is important to us, we say we value it. He/she asks the students to think of something that they said they valued, yet did not take care of. The teacher then explains that we sometimes do the same in our relationships with family and friends.

Students are asked -

. What do you do to show that you value a friendship or a family relationship?
. What makes you feel that someone does not value your relationship with him or her?

(Answers are put on the board for all to see).

Students are divided into groups of three or four, and they are asked to consider different scenarios that illustrates a bothersome quality that someone has. Students are asked to think about the scenarios using several questions:

. What are the positive qualities of the person?
. What quality is causing the conflict?
. Is this necessarily a bad quality? When might it be a useful quality?
. If you were in this situation, how would you handle this problem in a positive way?
. Why do you think this quality bothers the person in the scenario so much?

Each group presents their scenario to the class, and describe what they would do to resolve the relationship problem.

As a homework assignment, students are asked to describe ways in which they show that they care for and value their family and friends, and for up to four people, they are to write about one additional thing they could do to further demonstrate their appreciation for that person.

FROM: ***Teenage Health Teaching Modules: Strengthening Relationships with Family and Friends***
(1991) Education Development Center, Inc.Newton, MA., USA.

"The Uniqueness of Me"

The teacher asks the children to write their names on a large sheet, and to say what it means and how they feel about their names.

In pairs, the children discuss their characteristics eg. physical characteristics, skills, achievements, and also things they would like to be able to do.

Older children are asked to stick a picture of themselves into a circle drawn on a large sheet of paper. In other circles drawn around this central circle, the headings include: my special things, my special people, what I can do, my favourite foods, etc.

Younger children are asked to paint self-portraits and label it with their name. On scrap paper the children are asked to draw things, people and places that are special to them, and to stick these around the edge of the self-portrait.

The children are then asked whether they enjoyed the activity, and what they have learnt about themselves. They are asked to finish the statement: "Something I discovered about myself which makes me feel good is....."

As an activity to do at home, the children are asked to complete the statement "I am glad that I am me because....."., and they are to ask family members to contribute three positive comments for inclusion.

FROM: ***Skills for the Primary School Child: Promoting the Protection of Children*** (1990) TACADE Salford, UK.

"The Way I Feel"

To start, the teacher asks the group to brainstorm the variety of feelings they know of. These are listed, and the group discusses the list and classifies the different feelings (eg. as mild or strong, positive or negative etc.).

The group writes down which of the feelings they have experienced, and a different list for those they have not.

Students look at drawings of facial expressions and they are asked to think about what feelings are being expressed. They then compare their reactions with other children in small groups.

The students look at different pictures, eg. of a girl waving goodbye as a bus leaves, and imagine a story that describes the picture, and the feelings of the people involved.

Students watch a short film (or hear a short story) and then discuss the mood and atmosphere that is created in the piece, the feelings portrayed by the characters, and the effects these feelings can have on others.

Students are asked to mime a feeling and let others guess what it is. They then role play a situation to see how feelings may affect how we behave.

FROM: ***Peacemaker: Module One of a Post Primary Peace Programme: Teacher's Book and Students' Worksheets.***
(1988) The Joint Peace Programme of the Irish Commission for Justice and Peace and The Irish Council of Churches.

"Coping with Stress"

A situation is role played in front of the students who are asked to look for verbal and non-verbal cues of stress.

A bully is trying to get another student to smoke drugs. The student doesn't want to, but doesn't know how to deal with the situation. He reacts by stuttering, fiddling with his clothes, and avoids looking at the bully.

The role play then changes and the young boy is being interviewed about the situation, to tell the group about the other cues of stress that were not apparent to the group. He says he was sweating a little, his stomach hurt, his heart was pounding, and he was breathing faster than normal. In the role play, he is then reassured that lots of people feel that way when they are in a difficult situation.

The students are asked to think about a stressful situation they were in, and which they would like to cope with better if that situation came up again. They are asked to imagine the situation with their eyes closed, and to remain calm. Then they are to think of a time when they did well in that kind of situation and how good they felt to have coped. They are asked to think how they might improve on the way they handle the situation in the future, and rehearse this in their mind, before slowly opening their eyes.

Students are then introduced to the value of saying positive things to themselves during a stressful situation. Students are told to prepare for a situation by saying to themselves that they can do it. They are encouraged to cope by talking themselves through a situation by giving calm and positive instructions, focusing on what is going well, and to praise themselves after the situation for the things they did well, however big or small.

FROM: ***Coping with Junior High: A Manual for Stress Management and Preventive Intervention***
S. P. Schinke and M.Y. Babel (1987) Colombia University School of Social Work, New York, USA.

LIFE SKILL LESSON TITLES AND SEQUENCE

The following are examples of lesson titles and sequence of life skills programmes designed for the prevention of substance abuse.

Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E), Ohio, USA.

One lesson is presented each week throughout a grade school semester.

1. Personal Safety Practice
2. Drug Use and Misuse
3. Consequences
4. Resiting Pressures to Use Drugs
5. Resistance Techniques
6. Building Self-Esteem
7. Assertiveness: A Response Style
8. Managing Stress Without Taking Drugs
9. Media Influences On Drug Use
10. Decision Making and Risk Taking
11. Alternatives To Drug Use
12. Role Modelling
13. Forming a Support System
14. Resisting Gang Pressure
15. DARE Summary
16. Taking A Stand
17. Culmination

UNESCO and Government of Ghana Life Skills Alcohol and Drug Prevention Programme (School and Youth Agency Curriculum Model)

- produced in consultation with Life Skills International, USA.

First Term: Me as a Special Person (9 weeks)

1. I Am Unique
2. From Child to Adult
3. Getting Along With Others
4. Communicating and Listening
5. Making Friends
6. Sustaining and Surviving Loss of Friends
7. Male/Female Relationships
8. Stress Management
9. Coping Skills

Second Term: Me as a Social Person (9 weeks)

1. Critical Thinking Skills
2. Decision Making
3. Taking Responsibility for me
4. Negotiating Skills
5. Goal Setting Skills
6. Study Skills
7. Study Skills
8. Summing Up

Third Term: Taking Care of Myself (9 weeks)

1. Drugs from Good to Bad
2. Drug Use and Misuse
3. Alcohol: Use and Abuse
4. Tobacco
5. Marijuana and other Illegal Drugs
6. Assertiveness skills
7. Risk Behaviour and Characteristics of Users
8. It is Okay to be Drug Free
9. Taking Care of Myself Resistance Skills/Assertive skills /Goal Setting
10. Continuation of 9.
11. Commitment

Life Skills and Positive Prevention Programme
(Russian Programme)

- produced in consultation with Life Skills International, USA.

1. Getting Started
2. Establishing Rules for our Group
3. Listening Skills
4. Various Forms of Communication
5. How to Start and Stop Conversations
6. Aggressive Behaviour and Assertive Behaviour
7. Types of Group Pressure
8. How to Say "No"
9. Gaining Self-confidence
10. Coping with Stress
11. Coping with Anger
12. Responding to Criticism
13. Criticising and Praising
14. Critical Thinking Skills
15. Decision Making Skills
16. Stages of Problem Solving
17. Coping with Conflict
18. Negotiating Skills
19. I'm Unique
20. Teenager: A Child or an Adult?
21. How to Start Friendships
22. Sustaining Friendships
23. How to End Harmful Friendships
24. Relationships with Members of the Opposite Sex
25. Relating with Adults
26. What are Drugs?
27. Good and Bad Uses of Drugs
28. Drug Misuse and Abuse
29. Tobacco
30. Alcohol
31. Drugs and Other Toxic Substances
32. Behaviours of Drug Users
33. It's Okay to be Drug Free
34. How to be a Responsible Person and Say "No" to Drugs.

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