LIFE SKILL EDUCATION

V SEMESTER

(UG-CCSS-SDE)

OPEN COURSE

(For candidates with core course other than Sociology)

(2011 ADMISSION)

UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT

SCHOOL OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

Calicut University, P.O. Malappuram, Kerala, India-673 635

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MODULE – I

INTRODUCTION TO LIFE SKILL EDUCATION

Definition of Life skills

A skill is a learned ability. Life Skills are those competencies that assist people in functioning well in the environments in which they live. Life skills have been defined by the World Health Organisation as "the abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life". UNICEF defines life skills as "a behaviour change or behaviour development approach designed to address a balance of three areas: knowledge, attitude and skills".

Life skills include psychosocial abilities and interpersonal skills that help people take decisions, solve problems, think critically, communicate effectively, build healthy relationships, empathize with others, and cope with the stress and strain of life in a healthy and productive manner. Essentially, there are two kinds of skills - those related to thinking called "thinking skills" and skills related to dealing with others called "social skills". While thinking skills relate to the personal level, social skills include interpersonal skills. It is the combination of these two types of skills that are needed for achieving assertive behaviour and negotiating effectively.

Components of life skills

The Ten core Life Skills as laid down by WHO are:

1. Self-awareness

 2. Empathy

3. Critical thinking

4. Creative thinking

5. Decision making

6. Problem Solving

7. Effective communication

8. Interpersonal relationship

9. Coping with stress

10. Coping with emotion

Self-awareness includes recognition of 'self'and identifying our strengths and weaknesses, desires and dislikes. Developing self-awareness can help us to recognise when we are stressed or under pressure. It is often a prerequisite to effective communication and interpersonal relations, as well as for developing empathy with others.

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

Critical thinking is an ability to analyze information and experiences in an objective manner. Critical thinking helps us to recognise and assess the factors that influence attitudes and behaviour.

Creative thinking is a novel way of seeing or doing things that generates new ideas, has a shifting perspective conceives something new and builds on other ideas.

Decision making helps us to take appropriate decisions about our lives. It can teach people how to actively make decisions and what effects these different decisions are likely to have.

Problem solving helps us to deal constructively with problems in our lives.

Interpersonal relationship skills help us to establish a rapport with the people whom we interact with. This includes being able to make and keep friendly relationships, maintain good relations with family members, and also being able to end relationships constructively.

Effective communication means that we are able to express ourselves, both verbally and non-verbally, so that our ideas are effectively transmitted to others.

Coping with stress means recognising the sources of stress in our lives, recognizing how this affects us, and acting in ways that help us control our levels of stress, by changing our environment or lifestyle and learning how to relax.

Coping with emotions means involving recognising emotions within us and others, being aware of how emotions influence behaviour and being able to respond to emotions appropriately.

Need for Life skill training

Life skills as an approach is designed to enhance efforts to positively develop or change behaviour related to healthy functioning in society. This focus on behaviour change distinguishes life skills from other approaches. Another distinguishing factor of the life skills approach is the existence of a balance of three components: (i) Knowledge or information, (ii) Attitudes and values and (iii) Skills as the most effective method of developing or changing behaviors. This skill component consists of interpersonal and psycho-social skills such as assertion, negotiation, decision making, empathy building, values clarification, stress and coping skills. Whereas information acquisition strategies might focus mainly on the knowledge component, the life skills approach encompasses and balances all three of these components, namely Knowledge, Attitudes and Skills.

Practical experience shows that behaviour is substantially more difficult to change and requires more intensive approaches than knowledge and attitude change. The goal of the life skills approach is to promote healthy, sociable behaviour and to prevent or reduce risk behaviours, as well as make an impact on knowledge and attitudinal components.

Life Skill a Life Course approach

(a) Critical thinking skills

Critical thinking is the ability to think clearly and rationally. It includes the ability to engage in reflective and independent thinking. Someone with critical thinking skills is able to do the following:

- understand the logical connections between ideas

- identify, construct and evaluate arguments

- detect inconsistencies and common mistakes in reasoning

- solve problems systematically

- identify the relevance and importance of ideas

- reflect on the justification of one's own beliefs and values

Critical thinking is not a matter of accumulating information. A person with a good memory and who knows a lot of facts is not necessarily good at critical thinking. A critical thinker is able to deduce consequences from what he knows, and he knows how to make use of information to solve problems, and to seek relevant sources of information to inform himself.

Critical thinking should not be confused with being argumentative or being critical of other people. Although critical thinking skills can be used in exposing fallacies and bad reasoning, critical thinking can also play an important role in cooperative reasoning and constructive tasks. Critical thinking can help us acquire knowledge, improve our theories, and strengthen arguments. We can use critical thinking to enhance work processes and improve social institutions.

Critical thinking is also regarded as intellectually engaged, skillful, and responsible thinking that facilitates good judgment because it requires the application of assumptions, knowledge, competence, and the ability to challenge one's own thinking. Critical thinking requires the use of self-correction and monitoring to judge the rationality of thinking as well as reflexivity. When using critical thinking, individuals evaluate the quality of that thinking. Critical thinking process requires active argumentation, initiative, reasoning, envisioning and analyzing complex alternatives, and making judgments.

Critical thinkers demonstrate particular attributes. Critical thinkers tend to:

(1)   Be capable of taking a position or changing a position as evidence dictates

(2)   Remain relevant to the point

(3)   Seek information as well as precision in information

(4)   Be open minded

(5)   Take the entire situation into account

(6)   Keep the original problem in mind

(7)   Search for reasons

(8)   Deal with the components of a complex problem in an orderly manner

(9)   Seek a clear statement of the problem

(10)   Look for options

(11)   Exhibit sensitivity to others' feelings and depth of knowledge

(12)   Use credible sources

Critical thinkers use these skills appropriately and usually without prompting. They are generally predisposed to think critically and to evaluate the outcome of their thought processes.

(b) Decision making skills

Decision Making is the act of choosing between two or more courses of action. Decision making can be broken down into the following steps:

- Objectives must first be established
- Objectives must be classified and placed in order of importance
- Alternative actions must be developed
- The alternative must be evaluated against all the objectives
- The alternative that is able to achieve all the objectives is the tentative decision
- The tentative decision is evaluated for more possible consequences
- The decision is implemented.

(c) Interpersonal/ communication skills

Interpersonal skills are the life skills we use every day to communicate and interact with other people, both individually and in groups. People who have worked on developing strong interpersonal skills are usually more successful. Interpersonal communication is the process by which people exchange information, feelings, and meaning through verbal and non-verbal messages: it is face-to-face communication. Interpersonal communication is not just about what is actually said - the language used - but how it is said and the non-verbal messages sent through tone of voice, facial expressions, gestures and body language.

Most of us engage in some form of interpersonal communication on a regular basis. How well we communicate with others is a measure of our interpersonal skills. Interpersonal communication is a key life skill and can be used to:

- Give and collect information.
- Influence the attitudes and behaviour of others.
- Form contacts and maintain relationships.
- Make sense of the world and our experiences in it.
- Express personal needs and understand the needs of others.
- Give and receive emotional support.
- Make decisions and solve problems.
- Anticipate and predict behaviour.
- Regulate power.

(d) Coping and Self management skills

It refers to skills to increase the internal locus of control, so that the individual believes that they can make a difference in the world and affect change. Self esteem, self-awareness, self-evaluation skills and the ability to set goals are also part of the more general category of self-management skills. Anger, grief and anxiety must all be dealt with, and the individual learns to cope loss or trauma. Stress and time management are key, as are positive thinking and relaxation techniques.

Everybody is exposed to stressful situations, both positive and negative. Stress is an integral element in the lives of all creatures, and it plays an important role in survival. Stress can have negative effects on our physical and emotional health. We all develop defense mechanisms to avoid or lessen psychological pain. Coping skills are ways in which we learn to deal with various stressors. Each person copes with stress differently. Over time, we all construct coping strategies that are appropriate for us.

The first step when confronted with a stressful situation is to remove our self physically from the stressor. Doing this will give you time away from the stressor to process how you feel. Once you are away from the stressor, take some deep breaths, sit down, and allow yourself to feel. Feel whatever feelings come to you—do not suppress them.

Self-Management is the ability to manage personal reactions to responsibilities and challenges in work and life. This involves managing time and adapting to changing situations. It requires a reflection on your experiences and their effect on the physical and mental state. Self-Management requires the background skills of. Self management is an essential skill for an effective manager. Self management skills include being

- Analytical

- Calm

- Imaginative

- Resourceful

- Well-organized

Having a clear understanding of your thought and, behavior patterns helps you understand other people. This ability to empathize facilitates better personal and professional relationships.

MODULE II

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Communication is a process by which meaning is assigned and conveyed in an attempt to create shared understanding. This process requires a wide range of skills in interpersonal transactions, listening, observing, speaking, questioning, analyzing and evaluating. It is through communication that social relationships are built.

Definition

In society, we all interact with messages. Without interactions, a society cannot survive. Social interaction is always through messages. So we can also define communication as *"a social interaction through messages."* Communication is a process whereby information is enclosed in a package and is channeled and imparted by a sender to a receiver via some medium. The receiver then decodes the message and gives the sender a feedback. All forms of communication require a sender, a message, and an intended recipient; however the receiver need not be present or aware of the sender's intent to communicate at the time of communication in order for the act of communication to occur. Communication requires that all parties have an area of communicative commonality. There are verbal means using language and there are nonverbal means, such as body language, sign language and eye contact, through media, i.e., pictures, graphics and sound, and writing.

In a simple model of communication, information is sent in some form as spoken language from sender to a receiver. This common conception simply views communication as a means of sending and receiving information. According to this view, communication consists of the following elements:

1. A sender, who produces a message.
2. A message, which contains the information to be transmitted
3. A channel, to which signals are adapted for transmission
4. A receiver, who 'decodes' or reconstructs the message from the signal.
5. A feedback, which is the response towards the received information

I. The Sender

The following aspects of the sender influences the process of communication

- Sender's Communication Skills
- Sender's Attitudes
- Sender's Knowledge Level
- Sender's Social Position
- Sender's Culture
- Feedback received by Sender

The **sender's communication skills** involve listening, speaking, writing, reading, nonverbal communication, thinking, and reasoning.

The **sender's attitudes** are defined as one's generalized tendency to feel one way or another about something.

Sender's knowledge level refers to the information level of the sender regarding the matter which is communicated.

Sender's social position is the rank and level at which the sender is placed in the society.

Sender's culture which is the sum total of all the capab ilities that the sender acquires as part of group life.

II. The Message

The message has three components:

a) **Content** which is simply communicating what you desire to communicate.

b) **Context** which involves adapting your presentation of the content to your audience.

c) **Treatment** which is the arrangement or ordering of the content by the speaker.

III. The Receiver

The receiver of the information has to use the same skill set as the sender. Communication skills, attitudes, knowledge level, social positions, culture, and feedback are all important. Also if the receiver perceives the sender as credible, objective, and having expertise in the topic being discussed, then the receiver is more likely to accept the message being sent. The goal of communication is for the receiver to accept an accurate message from the sender.

IV. Channels

There are two types of channels for communication

a) **Sensory channels** based on the five senses of sight, sound, touch, smell, and taste. The sender is more likely to gain the receiver's attention if the sender uses two or more sensory channels to send information.

b) **Institutional channels** are the methods to transmit information, i.e. face-to-face communication, printed materials, and electronic media etc. Each institutional medium requires one or more of the sensory channels to carry the message from the sender to the receiver.

c) **Feedback**

Feedback allows us to determine the effectiveness of the communication. It includes verbal and nonverbal responses to another person's message. There are five main types of feedback:

- **Evaluative:** Making a judgment about the worth, goodness, or appropriateness of the other person's statement.

- **Interpretive:** Attempting to explain what the other person's statement means.

- **Supportive:** Attempting to assist the other communicator.

- **Probing:** Attempting to gain additional information or clarify a point.

- **Understanding:** Attempting to discover what the other communicator means.

Types of Communication

Based on the channels, purpose, style and other factors, there are various types of communication.

Types of communication based on the communication channels used are:

1. Verbal Communication
2. Nonverbal Communication

Verbal Communication

Verbal communication is the form of communication in which message is transmitted verbally. When we talk to others, we assume that others understand what we are saying because we know what we are saying. But when people use their own attitude, perception, emotions and thought about the matter which is communicated, it creates barrier in delivering the right meaning. So in order to deliver the right message, you must think from your receiver's point of view.

Verbal communication is further divided in to

o Oral communication
o Written Communication

Oral Communication

In oral communication spoken words are used. It includes face to face conversations, speech, telephonic conversation, video, radio, television, voice over internet. In oral communication, communication is influence by pitch, volume, speed and clarity of speaking.

Written communication

In written communication, written signs or symbols are used to communicate. A written message may be printed or hand written. In written communication message can be transmitted via email, letter, report, memo etc. message in written communication is influenced by the vocabulary and grammar used, writing style, precision and clarity of the language used. Written communication is most common form of communication being used in business. So it is considered core among business skills.

Nonverbal Communication

Nonverbal communication is the sending or receiving of wordless messages. We can say that communication other than oral written, such as gestures, body language, posture, tone of voice or facial expressions, is called nonverbal communication. Nonverbal communication is all about the body language of speaker.

Nonverbal communication helps receiver in interpreting the message received. Often, nonverbal signals reflect the situation more accurately than verbal messages. Sometimes nonverbal response contradicts verbal communication and hence affects the effectiveness of message.

Nonverbal communication has the following three elements;

- Appearance of the speaker and surroundings
- Body Language
- Sounds

Based on purpose and style; there are two main categories of communication and they both bears their own characteristics. Communication types based on style and purpose are;

Formal Communication

In formal communication, certain rules, conventions and principles are followed while communicating message. Formal communication occurs in formal and official style. In formal communication, use of slang and foul language is avoided and correct pronunciation is required. Hierarchy of authority needs to be followed in formal communication.

Informal Communication

Informal communication is done using channels that are in contrast with formal communication channels. It is a communication for societal affiliations of members in an organisation and face to face discussions. It happens among friends and family. In informal communication use of slang words, foul language is not restricted. Usually informal communication is done orally and using gestures.

Components- Verbal and Non Verbal Communication

All forms of communication can be categorized as either verbal or nonverbal. In turn, both verbal and nonverbal communication can be subdivided into either vocal or non vocal. Much of the communication that takes place between people is verbal; that is, it is based on language.

Nonverbal communication involves those nonverbal stimuli in a communication that are generated by both the speaker and his or her environment and that have potential message value for the source or receiver. Basically it is sending and receiving messages in a variety of ways without the use of words. It is both intentional and unintentional. It includes

- touch
- glance
- eye contact
- gestures
- facial expression intonation
- dress
- posture

Effective interpersonal communication

Effective communication helps us better understand a person or situation and enables us to resolve differences, build trust and respect, and create environments where creative ideas, problem solving, affection, and caring can flourish. Much of what we try to communicate to others and

what others try to communicate to us gets misunderstood, which can cause conflict and frustration in personal and professional relationships. By learning effective communication skills, we can better connect with your spouse, kids, friends, and coworkers.

Effective communication is about more than just exchanging information; it is about understanding the emotion behind the information. Effective communication can improve relationships at home, work, and in social situations by deepening your connections to others and improving teamwork, decision-making, and problem solving. It enables you to communicate even negative or difficult messages without creating conflict or destroying trust. Effective communication combines a set of skills including nonverbal communication, attentive listening, the ability to manage stress in the moment, and the capacity to recognize and understand your own emotions and those of the person you're communicating with.

Listening

Listening is one of the most important aspects of effective communication. Successful listening means not just understanding the words or the information being communicated, but also understanding how the speaker feels about what they're communicating.

Effective listening can:

- **Make the speaker feel heard and understood** which can help build a stronger, deeper connection between you.

- **Create an environment where everyone feels safe** to express ideas, opinions, and feelings, or plan and problem solve in creative ways.

- **Save time** by helping clarify information, avoid conflicts and misunderstandings.

- **Relieve negative emotions.** When emotions are running high, if the speaker feels that he or she has been truly heard, it can help to calm them down, relieve negative feelings, and allow for real understanding or problem solving to begin.

Tips for effective listening

- **Focus fully on the speaker,** his or her body language, and other nonverbal cues. Try repeating the words of the speaker over and over and stay focused.

- **Avoid interrupting** or trying to redirect the conversation to your concerns. Listening is not the same as waiting for your turn to talk. You can't concentrate on what someone's saying if you're forming what you're going to say next. Often, the speaker can read your facial expressions and know that your mind's elsewhere.

- **Avoid seeming judgmental.** In order to communicate effectively with someone, you don't have to like them or agree with their ideas, values, or opinions. However, you do need to set aside your judgment and withhold blame and criticism in order to fully understand a person.

- **Show your interest** in what's being said. Nod occasionally, smile at the person, and make sure your posture is open and inviting. Encourage the speaker to continue with small verbal comments.

When we communicate things that we have interest in, we do so mainly using nonverbal sign. Non verbal communication, or body language, includes facial expressions, body movement and gestures, eye contact, posture, the tone of the voice, and even muscle tension and breathing. The way a person looks, listens, moves, and reacts tells more than when words are used.

Tips for improving nonverbal communication

- **Practice observing people.** Observing how others use body language can teach to receive and use nonverbal signals when conversing with others.

- **Be aware of individual differences.** People from different countries and cultures tend to use different nonverbal communication gestures, so it's important to take age, culture, religion, gender, and emotional state into account when reading body language signals.

- **Look at nonverbal communication signals as a group.** Don't read too much into a single gesture or nonverbal cue. Consider all of the nonverbal signals you receive, from eye contact to tone of voice to body language.

- **Use nonverbal signals that match up with your words.** Nonverbal communication should reinforce what is being said, not contradict it.

- **Adjust the nonverbal signals according to the context.** The tone of voice should be different in different contexts. Also the emotional state and cultural background of the interacting person should be taken into account.

- **Use body language to convey positive feelings** even when you're not actually experiencing them. It will make you feel more self-confident and help to put the other person at ease.

Public Speaking

The art of speaking publicly can be shaped through confidence and practice. Knowing what to do when is the key. It should look natural and easy, flow subtly and not seem mechanical.

Public speaking is the process of speaking to group of people in a structured, deliberate manner to inform, influence or entertain the listeners. In public speaking, there are five basic elements –   i) Who is saying

ii) What is said

iii) To whom it is said

iv) What medium is used

v) What are the effects

Good orators should be able to change the emotions of their listeners, not just inform them. Interpersonal communication and public speaking have several aims like motivating, leadership development, personal development, large group communication and mass communication. Public speaking can be a powerful tool to use for purposes such as motivation, influence, persuasion, informing, translation or simply entertaining.

Tips for effective public speaking

1. **Have knowledge about the topic which you are talking about**: Talk about something which you are interested in. Collect as much information about it as possible. Use stories and examples in your talk.

2. **Practice your talk**: Rehearse your speech in its entirety. Practice with a timer and allow time for the unexpected.

3. **Know the audience**: Try to create a rapport with the audience. It's easier to speak to a group of friends than to strangers.

4. **Know the stage**: Arrive early, walk around the speaking area and practice using the microphone and any visual aids.

5. **Relax**: Begin by addressing the audience. It gives time to calm yourselves. Transform nervousness into enthusiasm.

6. **Don't apologize**: Don't apologize for any nervousness or problem-the audience probably never noticed it.

7. **Concentrate on the message-not the medium**: Focus your attention on your message and your audience and forget all your anxieties and nervousness.

8. **Reflect confidence**: Your speech should represent you as an authority and as a person. Experience builds confidence, which is the key to effective speaking.

Dress appropriately for the occasion. Look pleasant, enthusiastic, confident and proud. Appear relaxed, even if you feel nervous. Speak clearly and show appropriate emotions and feelings relevant to your topic. Establish rapport with your audience. Speak loud enough so that your voice reaches the back of the room. Vary the tone of your voice and dramatize if necessary. If a microphone is available, adjust and adapt your voice accordingly.

Appropriate body language adds to the effectiveness of the talk. Use audio-visual aids or if necessary. Master the use of presentation software such as power point well before your presentation. Speak with conviction as if you really believe in what you are saying. Persuade your audience effectively. The material you present orally should have a logical progression. It should start from introduction and proceed to the body with strong supporting arguments, accurate and up-to-date information and reach at the conclusion. Maintain sincere eye contact with your audience. Use your eye contact to make everyone in your audience feel involved. Be ready for the feedback from the audience. Always be prepared for the unexpected. Keep the audience interested in your presentation by using humorous stories and examples. If you are using audio-visual aids in your presentation, be well prepared. Give handouts at the appropriate time.

The most important aspect of a talk is to know when to stop talking. Do not extend your speech for a long time. End your presentation with an interesting remark or a punch line. Leave your listeners with a positive note and a sense of completion. Thank the audience.

Interview Facing

An interview is also a type of communication. It mainly consists of the interviewer and the interviewee. The interviewer asks questions to the interviewee. A job interview is a process in which a potential employee is evaluated by an employer for potential employment. The interview is usually preceded by the evaluation of submitted resumes from interested candidates, from whom a small number of candidates are called for interviews.

A typical job interview has a single candidate meeting with one or more number of persons representing the employer. In most of the job interviews, the interviewers ask the candidates questions about their past jobs, personality, work style and other factors relevant to the job. The candidate will usually be given a chance to ask any questions at the end of the interview. These questions are encouraged as they allow the interviewee to acquire more information about the job and the company, as well as demonstrate the candidate's strong interest in them.

Tips for successful interview

1. Be on time.

2. Learn as much as you can about the company's mission, objectives, goals and future plans.

3. Bring resumes

4. Dress in a clean conservative manner

5. Don't make jokes

6. Don't talk bad about your previous boss

7. Don't play with your face/hair

8. Have good eye contact

9. Talk about goals

10. Have achievements

11. Be able to express why you want to work in that field/industry and what you do to further your knowledge.

12. At the end of the job interview make sure you have some questions to ask.

13. Send a thank you note

Group Discussion

The term suggests a discussion among a group of persons. The group will usually have 8 to 12 members who will express their views on a topic of current issue. Within a time limit of 20 to 30 minutes, the abilities of the members of the group are measured. Group discussion is a very important round in any selection process. The selection committee conducts GD to measure whether the candidate has certain personality traits and or skills that it desires in its members. Some of the qualities measured through a Group discussion are:

- Ability to work in a team .

- Communication skills.

- Leadership skills.

- Reasoning ability.

- Initiativeness.

- Assertiveness.

- Creativity.

- Flexibility.

- Ability to think and act independently.

Prerequisites of a group discussion

A group discussion requires the following components

- Topic given by panelists.

- Planning and preparation.

- Knowledge with self-confidence.

- Communication skills

- Presentation skills

- Body language and personal appearance.

- Cool and composed nature

- Listening skills.

- Co-operation.

Tips for effective participation in group discussion

1) The first thing is that the panel should notice you. Merely making a meaningful contribution and helping the group arrive at a consensus is not enough. You must ensure that the group hears you. You need to be assertive. It depends on you how you guide the group in the right direction. This gives you the chance to showcase your leadership skills. Most importantly, you have to make your chances. Many group discussion participants often complain that they did not get a chance to speak. The fact is that in no group discussion will you get a chance to speak. There is nothing more unacceptable in a GD than keeping one's mouth shut or just murmuring things which are inaudible.

2) The second most essential thing is that your contribution to the group should be meaningful. For that you need to have a good knowledge base. You should be able to think logically and hence put forth you ideas cohesively. The quality of what you said is more valuable than the quantity. It doesn't help if you shout at the top of your voice and speak at great length, what matters most is what you speak and how it creates an impact on the group as well as the evaluators.

3) The last most important thing is that you must be clearly seen to be attempting to build a consensus. This shows your ability to work in a team, your ability to adjust yourself in new surroundings and help others in your team to reach a definite conclusion amidst difference of opinions. After all this is what all group discussions aim at: to be able to discuss and arrive at a consensus.

To effectively participate in a group discussion, the following aspects should be taken care of.

a) Be Yourself: be as natural as possible and don't try to be someone you are not.

b) Take time to organize your thought. Don't suddenly jump to any conclusion. Think before you speak so that you don't speak anything irrelevant to the topic being discussed.

c) Don't make the mistake of looking at the panel while you are speaking. Always look at your group members while you are speaking.

d) Try to find clarification if you have any doubts regarding the subject, before the discussion commences.

e) Use appropriate body language

f) Be assertive, speak yourself and let others speak as well.

g) Maintain objectivity.

h) Show your leadership skill. Motivate the other members of the team to speak.

Tips to make group discussion effective

- Make original points and support them by substantial reasoning.

- Listen to the other participants actively and carefully.

- Whatever you say must be with a logical flow and validate it with an example as far as possible.

- Make only accurate statements.

- Modulate the volume, pitch and tone.

- Be considerate to the feelings of the others.

- Try to get your turn.

- Be an active and dynamic participant by listening.

- Talk with confidence and self-assurance.

Things to avoid in group discussion

- Don't be shy or nervous

- Don't interrupt another participant before his argument is over.

- Don't speak in favour

- Don't change opinions.

- Don't make fun of any participant even if his arguments are funny.

- Don't engage yourself in sub-group conversation.

- Don't repeat and use irrelevant materials.

MODULE III

CAREER PLANNING

Choosing a Career

Career refers to the progress and actions taken by a person throughout a lifetime, especially related to that person's occupations. A career is often composed of the jobs held, titles earned and work accomplished over a long period of time, rather than just referring to one position. Choosing a Career is a crucial step in a person's life. The decision of a career requires much care and thought. Selecting a Career is a process which involves different steps. Some of the important steps to be followed in choosing a Career includes Career Planning, Career management etc.

Career Planning

Career planning may be defined as "A goal that you desire to achieve in a selected field or occupation with a well thought out plan to get you there."

A career goal helps you focus and make decisions on what you want to do for a living. It directs you, motivates you and helps you to accomplish what you want. A career goal helps you focus and make decisions on what you want to do for a living. A career goal can be a specific job—such as a clerk or teacher—or a career goal can be a particular field you want to work in, such as transportation or education.

A career goal may help you discover your talent, skills and abilities and possibilities that you wouldn't have thought of. Many possibilities exist with any career you choose. Having a career goal can guide you to doing what you want to do in your life—rather than just aimlessly drifting from job to job. Once you choose a career, it would be helpful to think strategically about the steps needed to accomplish the goal.

With every goal there is an anticipated desired outcome called expectation. Our expectations help keep us motivated. When we realize our goal, we often feel joy and satisfaction. Career planning is simply goal planning with the intention of setting goals for jobs and career. Career planning is getting information, and with that information, you make a goal, and then plan the steps needed to obtain that goal.

Career planning is not planning for a field on a one-time basis, but it's a continuing process; in fact, it is a lifetime process. As we grow up, our interests and needs also change. Career planning also changes accordingly. Career planning is estimating, predicting and calculating all the steps necessary to achieving your goals. The career planning process can be divided into six steps:

1. Self-Assessment
2. Career Exploration
3. Targeting
4. Career Preparation
5. Marketing Yourself
6. Career Management

Having a career plan keeps you focused and motivated. It helps you to anticipate problems and barriers that may come and what you can do to avoid the problem or barrier, solve it

and continue on, or it may point out your deficiency or weakness so you can get the skills or resource needed to deal with the potential barrier. Career planning will give you confidence that you are in charge of your career and life and you have the power to decide, act, and do what you want to accomplish your goals.

Need and importance of Career Guidance

Career guidance refers to services and activities intended to assist individuals, of any age and at any point throughout their lives, to make educational, training and occupational choices and to manage their careers. Such services may be found in schools, universities and colleges, in training institutions, in public employment services, in the workplace, in the voluntary or community sector and in the private sector. The activities may take place on an individual or group basis, and may be face-to-face or at a distance. They include providing career information, counseling interviews, career education programmes, work search programmes etc.

Career guidance centres

Career guidance centres help to assess people's interests, personality, values and skills, and also help them explore career options and research graduate and professional schools. Career counseling provides one-on-one or group professional assistance in exploration and decision making tasks related to choosing a major/occupation, or further professional training. The field is vast and includes career placement, career planning, learning strategies and student development. One of the major functions of Career guidance centres is to provide information and guidance on Career opportunities. Some of the major sources of Career information are Job Fair, Career Magazines, Computerised job Search etc.

Sources of career information

Job Fair

A job fair is also referred commonly as a career fair or career expo. It is a fair or exposition for employers, recruiters and schools to meet with prospective job seekers. Expos usually include company or organization tables or booths where resumes can be collected and business cards can be exchanged. In the college setting, job fairs are commonly used for entry level job recruiting. Often sponsored by career centers, job fairs provide a convenient location for students to meet employers and perform first interviews. Electronic job fairs offer the same convenience online.

Job fairs are good places to meet many company representatives from corporations of all industries and sizes during a short period of time. Every job fair has a set of similar, basic elements or processes that require your attention. Job fair networking can be generally described as the process of interacting with, obtaining contact details of, and getting to know corporate recruiters.

Career Magazines

Career Magazines also provide information on career and job opportunities, but they are published periodically as magazines.

Computerised job Search

In Computerised job Search, job opportunities are searched through Websites that provide the relevant information.Eg: www.monster.com, www.naukri.com etc

Applying for a Job

The Resume, also called the Bio Data or the Curriculum Vitae is perhaps the most important document that assists you in your job search. It is this document that represents your skills, accomplishments and experience to the prospective employer. The most important role of the Resume is to create an interest in the employer to meet you and discuss the job opening face to face through an interview. The resume should be able to pace a person in a job interview which is the most crucial step towards getting the job.

Resume

A résumé is a document used by individuals to present their background and skill sets. Résumés can be used for a variety of reasons but most often to secure new employment. A typical résumé contains a summary of relevant job experience and education. The résumé is typically one of the first items, that is used to screen applicants, often followed by an interview, when seeking employment.

Most successful resumes have a few things in common in terms of their layout. These are:
•Contact Information
•Job Objective
•Education
•Work History/Experience
•Reference

The order and amount of information you give for each of these depends on the resume format you use. There are many resume formats you can choose from such as the chronological format, the functional format, the skilled format and so on. To start, your contact information should simply state your name, mailing address, permanent mailing address, and phone numbers, fax numbers and/or email addresses you want employers to contact you at. This information must always be at the top of your resume.

Your job objective is best positioned directly below your contact information. It must be short and precise. Using a specific job title like mechanical engineer or administrative assistant is usually best. Where you place the education section of your resume depends on how relevant this information is to the job you're applying for. It also depends on how relevant and substantial your work experience is. In this section you need to place your most recent or highest degree first. Choose the one that is most relevant to your job objective in the number one spot. Then put the name of the school below.

The information you include in your work history / experience section depends on the resume format you have chosen. This is not an autobiography; you may not want to include every job you ever did. Unless of course all the experience you have had is relevant to the job you're currently seeking. In this section state the positions you've held, the dates you held the positions and the relevant and specific tasks you accomplished.

A curriculum vitae, commonly referred to as CV, is a longer, more detailed synopsis than a resume. It includes a summary of your educational and academic background, as well as teaching and research experience, publications, presentations, awards, honors, affiliations, and other details.

Summary: The summary should be short and sweet, no more than four or five lines of text and should highlight your key skills and attributes. This should portray a highly favourable picture of you and indicate your strengths which are relevant to the position you are applying for. Your summary, however, must be completely truthful

Major Achievements: After the summary you should list three to six major achievements that are directly related to the job you are applying for. It is important to pick achievements that are relevant as this shows that you have understood what the recruiter is looking for.

If possible you should mention facts and figures, although you may feel that these are confidential and you may not want to disclose them. They do however make the CV more interesting and give the recruiter a better idea of your capabilities.

Work Experience: Your work experience should come next and should describe your responsibilities, skills attained and achievements in each position that you have had. This should always be in reverse chronological order, starting with your most recent position and working backwards from there. You should concentrate on your two most recent jobs, unless these are not relevant to the position you are applying for or you were only in these positions for a short time. Mention budgetary responsibilities, number of staff managed (if applicable) and try and give a good picture of where you fitted into the organisation and what interactions you had with other companies and departments.

Education / Qualifications: Provide details of your educational qualifications in this section.If your educational achievements are not so excellent, then you should not waste too much space on it, because your work experience will be far more important to the recruiter. It goes without saying that you must actually have all the qualifications you have claimed for yourself.

IT Skills / Training / Other Skills: You should list your up-to-date IT skills, training and other skills (such as language skills and typing speeds if relevant). For IT skills you may want to include hardware (PCs, Macs), operating systems (Windows 95/98) and applications (Microsoft Word, Excel, PowerPoint).

Personal Details: This should include your date of birth and age, marital status (optional) and nationality (optional).

Hobbies/Interests: Hobbies and interests are generally not considered very important on a CV. However they may be able to tell a recruiter a lot about your personality, leadership potential and team working skills. So they should not be overlooked completely.

References: References do not generally needed to be included on a CV unless specifically asked for.

Follow up Communication

Employers—in any kind of labor market—are not going to looking for you. You need to follow-up on your contact with employers—either by phone or by mail, depending on the circumstances. Be sure to follow-up on ALL resumes that you send to employers. This will separate you from the competition and help you glean more information about the hiring process.

If the job posting does not have a contact number, look up the company on the web and use the contact information provided. When you call, ask to speak to the person in charge of the particular job opening. You will most likely be directed to Human Resources. Find out who you would report to and contact them via phone preferably or email.

MODULE IV

SELF MANAGEMENT

Self Esteem

Self-esteem is how we value ourselves; it is how we perceive our value to the world and how valuable we think we are to others. Self-esteem affects our trust in others, our relationships, our work – nearly every part of our lives. Positive self-esteem gives us the strength and flexibility to take charge of our lives and grow from our mistakes without the fear of rejection.

Following are some outward signs of positive self-esteem:

Confidence

Self-direction

Non-blaming behavior

An awareness of personal strengths

An ability to make mistakes and learn from them

An ability to accept mistakes from others

Optimism

An ability to solve problems

An independent and cooperative attitude

Feeling comfortable with a wide range of emotions

An ability to trust others

A good sense of personal limitations

Good self-care

The ability to say no

Feelings of low self-esteem often build up over a lifetime. It may take time, hard work, and it may require professional counseling. But there are some simple, positive thinking techniques that can be used to help improve self-esteem. These are called affirmations. Using affirmations to stop negative self-talk is a simple, positive way to help increase self-esteem. Affirmations are encouraging messages we can give ourselves every day until they become part of our feelings and beliefs. Affirmations work best when a person is relaxed. But since people are often upset when they are giving themselves negative self-messages, they may need to counter negative messages with positive ones.

Self awareness

Self-awareness is the capacity for introspection and the ability to recognize oneself as an individual separate from the environment and other individuals. As a form of intelligence, self-awareness can be an understanding of one's own knowledge, attitudes, and opinions.

Self control

Self-control is the ability to control one's emotions, behavior, and desires in order to obtain some reward, or avoid some punishment. Some reward or punishment is operating in the short term which precludes, or reduces, the later reward or punishment.

Emotional Quotient and Social Quotient

Emotional quotient (EQ) is a measurement of a person's ability to monitor his or her emotions, to cope with pressures and demands, and to control his or her thoughts and actions. The ability to assess and affect situations and relationships with other people also plays a role in emotional intelligence. This measurement is intended to be a tool that is similar to intelligence quotient (IQ), which is a measurement of a person's intellect. There is much debate surrounding the legitimacy of EQ, however, primarily because there is no standard of measurement. Measurements of people's emotional intelligence quotients are used in many settings. The idea is very popular in the corporate world, where many businesses use EQ tests to help their employees determine and measure their emotional responses to various situations.

Social intelligence is the capacity to effectively negotiate complex social relationships and environments. Social intelligence is an aggregated measure of self- and social-awareness, evolved social beliefs and attitudes, and a capacity and appetite to manage complex social change. A person with a high social intelligence quotient (SQ) is no better or worse than someone with a low SQ, but they have different attitudes, hopes, interests and desires.

Social intelligence is defined as "the ability to deal efficiently and thoughtfully, keeping one's own identity, employing apposite social inputs with a wider understanding of social environment; considering empathetic co-operation as a base of social acquaintance." Social Intelligence or SQ is a statistical abstraction similar to the 'standard score' approach used in IQ tests with a mean of 100. Scores of 140 or above are considered to be very high. SQ has until recently been measured by techniques such as question and answer sessions. These sessions assess the person's pragmatic abilities to test eligibility in certain special education courses; however some tests have been developed to measure social intelligence.

People with low SQ are more suited to work with low customer contact, because they may not have the required interpersonal communication and social skills for success on with customers.People with SQs over 120 are considered socially skilled, and may work well with jobs that involve direct contact and communication with other people.

Coping with emotions- Stress and strain

Stress is a feeling of strain and pressure. Symptoms may include a sense of being overwhelmed, feelings of anxiety, irritability, insecurity, nervousness, social withdrawal, loss of appetite, depression, panic attacks, exhaustion, high or low blood pressure, insomnia, sexual dysfunction, migraine, gastrointestinal difficulties, and for women, menstrual symptoms. It may also cause more serious conditions such as heart problems. Small amounts of stress may be desired, beneficial, and even healthy. Positive stress helps improve athletic performance. It also plays factor in motivation, adaptation, and reaction to the environment. Excessive amounts of stress however, may lead to many problems in the body that could be harmful. Stress can be

external and related to the environment, but may also be created by internal perceptions that cause an individual to have anxiety or other negative emotions surrounding a situation, such as pressure, discomfort, etc., which they then deem stressful.

Individuals deal with perceived threats that may be stressful, in various ways. There are different ways for coping, or defense mechanisms. There are productive and counterproductive ways to handle stress. Because stress is perceived, the following mechanisms do not necessarily deal with the actual situation that is causing an individual stress. However, they may be considered coping mechanisms if they allow the individual to cope better with the negative feelings or anxiety that they are experiencing due to the perceived stressful situation, as opposed to actually fixing the concrete obstacle causing the stress.

Some of the important ways of stress management are:

- Affiliation – involves dealing with stress by turning to a social network for support.

- Humor – the individual steps outside of a situation in order to gain greater perspective, and also to highlight any comic aspect to be found in their stressful circumstances.

- Sublimation – allows an "indirect resolution of conflict with neither adverse consequences nor consequences marked by loss of pleasure. Essentially, this mechanism allows channeling of troubling emotions or impulses into an outlet that is socially acceptable.

- Positive reappraisal – redirects thoughts to good things that are either occurring or have not occurred. This can lead to personal growth, self-reflection, and awareness of the power/benefits of one's efforts.

- Displacement - This is when an individual redirects their emotional feelings about one situation to another, less threatening one.

- Repression – Repression occurs when an individual attempts to remove all their thoughts, feelings, and anything related to the stressful situation out of their awareness in order to be disconnected from the entire situation.

- Reaction formation – An individual substitutes their feelings or thoughts or behavior with the exact opposite.

- Acting out – Often viewed as counter-normative, or problematic behavior. Instead of reflecting or problem-solving, an individual takes maladaptive action.

- Passive aggression – When an individual indirectly deals with his or her anxiety and negative thoughts originating from their stress by acting in a hostile or resentful manner towards others.

Depending on the situation, all of these coping mechanisms may be adaptive, or maladaptive.

Conflict resolution- Steps and stages

There are situations where different people with different goals and needs come into conflict. However, conflict is not a bad thing: As long as it is resolved effectively, it can lead to personal and professional growth. In many cases, effective conflict resolution can make the difference between positive and negative outcomes.By resolving conflict successfully, we can

solve many of the problems that it has brought to the surface. Some of the benefits of conflict resolution are:

- **Increased understanding:** The discussion needed to resolve conflict expands people's awareness of the situation, giving them an insight into how they can achieve their own goals without undermining those of other people.

- **Increased group cohesion:** When conflict is resolved effectively, team members can develop stronger mutual respect and a renewed faith in their ability to work together.

- **Improved self-knowledge:** Conflict pushes individuals to examine their goals in close detail, helping them understand the things that are most important to them, sharpening their focus, and enhancing their effectiveness.

However, if conflict is not handled effectively, the results can be damaging.

Conflict resolution is conceptualized as the methods and processes involved in facilitating the peaceful ending of conflict. Often, committed group members attempt to resolve group conflicts by actively communicating information about their conflicting motives or ideologies to the rest of the group and by engaging in collective negotiation. Ultimately, a wide range of methods and procedures for addressing conflict exist, including but not limited to negotiation, mediation, diplomacy, and creative peace building.

Some important steps of conflict resolution are:

1. Create an Effective Atmosphere
2. Clarify Perceptions
3. Focus on Individual and Shared Needs
4. Build Shared Positive Power
5. Look to the Future, then Learn from the Past
6. Generate Options
7. Develop "Doables"
8. Make Mutual Benefit Agreements

Developing Positive thinking and Assertiveness

Positive thinking is an important aspect of stress management. Positive thinking just means that you approach the unpleasantness in a more positive and productive way. You think the best is going to happen, not the worst.

Positive thinking often starts with self-talk. Self-talk is the endless stream of unspoken thoughts that run through your head every day. These automatic thoughts can be positive or negative. Some of your self-talk comes from logic and reason. Other self-talk may arise from misconceptions that you create because of lack of information. If the thoughts that run through your head are mostly negative, your outlook on life is more likely pessimistic. If your thoughts are mostly positive, you're likely an optimist — someone who practices positive thinking.

The benefits that positive thinking may provide include:

- Increased life span

- Lower rates of depression

- Lower levels of distress

- Greater resistance to the common cold

- Better psychological and physical well-being

- Reduced risk of death from cardiovascular disease

- Better coping skills during hardships and times of stress

Assertiveness is a skill regularly referred to in social and communication skills training. Often wrongly confused with aggression, assertive individuals aim to be neither passive nor aggressive in their interactions with other people. Although everyone acts in passive and aggressive ways from time to time, such ways of responding often result from a lack of self confidence and, therefore, are inappropriate expressions of what such people really need to say. It is a form of behavior characterized by a confident declaration or affirmation of a statement without need of proof; this affirms the person's rights or point of view without either aggressively threatening the rights of another or submissively permitting another to ignore or deny one's rights or point of view.

When you act assertively you act fairly and with empathy. The power you use comes from your self-assurance and not from intimidation or bullying. When you treat others with such fairness and respect, you get that same treatment in return. You are well liked and people see you as a leader and someone they want to work with.

Developing Assertiveness

Some people are naturally more assertive than others. If your disposition tends more towards being either passive or aggressive, you need to work on the following skills to develop your assertiveness. Some important ways to develop assertiveness are:

Value yourself and your rights

- Understand that your rights, thoughts, feelings, needs and desires are just as important as everyone else's.

- Recognise your rights and protect them.

- Believe you deserve to be treated with respect and dignity at all times.

- Stop apologizing for everything.

Identify your needs and wants, and ask for them to be satisfied.

- Don't wait for someone to recognize what you need

- Understand that to perform to your full potential, your needs must be met.

- Find ways to get your needs met without sacrificing others' needs in the process.

Acknowledge that people are responsible for their own behavior.

- Don't make the mistake of accepting responsibility for the how people react to your assertive statements

- As long as you are not violating someone else's needs, then you have the right to say or do what you want.

Express negative thoughts and feelings in a healthy and positive manner.

- Allow yourself to be angry, but always be respectful.

- Do say what's on your mind, but do it in a way that protects the other person's feelings.

- Control your emotions.

- Stand up for yourself and confront people who challenge you and/or your rights.

Receive criticism and compliments positively.

- Accept compliments graciously.

- Allow yourself to make mistakes and ask for help.

- Accept feedback positively – be prepared to say you don't agree but do not get defensive or angry.

Learn to say "No" when you need to.

- Know your limits and what will cause you to feel taken advantage of.

- Know that you can't do everything or please everyone and learn to be OK with that.

- Go with what is right for you.

- Suggest an alternative for a win-win solution.

Being assertive means knowing where the fine line is between assertion and aggression and balancing on it. It means having a strong sense of yourself and acknowledging that you deserve to get what you want. And it means standing up for yourself even in the most difficult situations. Assertiveness can be learned and developed, and although it won't happen overnight, by practicing the techniques presented here you will slowly become more confident in expressing your needs and wants. As your assertiveness improves, so will your productivity and efficiency.