

A cluster of colorful puzzle pieces in various colors including green, yellow, purple, pink, and blue, arranged in the top-left corner of the page.

Life Skills

workbook for adults

A large, colorful arrangement of puzzle pieces in various colors including green, orange, blue, pink, purple, yellow, and teal, forming a shape in the bottom-right corner of the page.

Workbook on Life-Skills

World Health Organization defines Life skills as “Abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life” (1997).

Life skills help us to become more self-aware, reflective and provide ways of interpreting events that happen in an empowering manner. Life Skills build personal agency in our day to day life – in our interactions with people, what we say or don’t say to others and how we handle criticism and rejection. Life skills help us resolve issues, make choices and move on with freedom, at peace with our own selves.

The 10 life-skills can be broadly classified into five areas:

1. Self-awareness and empathy
2. Communication and interpersonal relationships
3. Coping with emotions and coping with stress
4. Decision making and problem solving
5. Creative thinking and critical thinking

Life Skills are inherently interlinked and overlap with each other. These skills are not “new”, and like other skills, they are learnt. From childhood we learn innumerable skills through observation, imitation and practice. Some skills we learnt because we wanted to, and some were learnt under threat of punishment or promise of a reward! We have also learnt certain ways of handling problems, dealing with people and being with ourselves.

Following is a list of the 10 skills and the capabilities they encompass:

1. Self- Awareness: Be aware of one’s strengths - qualities, values, skills and capabilities. Be aware of areas one wants to explore and develop further.
2. Empathy: Feel what life is like for the other person even if one has no experience of their situation. Accept others. Understand that their behaviour may be very different from one’s own.
3. Effective communication: Express one’s desires, fears and opinions effectively, with respect and understanding. Seek assistance and advice with confidence.
4. Interpersonal relationships: Understand what builds and breaks relationships, relate positively with people and maintain personal agency. Know how to end a relationship in a constructive manner.
5. Decision Making: Consider all options available and the likely consequences of each action before making a choice. Know that the decision is made in and for a situation. New situations require fresh decisions.
6. Problem Solving: Choose a course of action after considering all options and follow it through even in the face of impediment. If the decision later proves to be ineffective, then go through the process again. Learn from past ineffective methods and carry on.
7. Creative thinking: Look beyond the obvious, think beyond the paradigm, look at issues in a perspective that is different from the usual or the norm. Look for and find creative ways to resolve problems and problematic situations in life

8. Critical Thinking: Analyze information and experience in an objective manner, question and reason independently.
9. Coping with emotions: Recognize emotions in self and others, be aware of how emotions affect one's health and behaviour, respond to emotions appropriately. Develop thinking patterns that are realistic and energizing.
10. Coping with stress: Recognize the source and the effects of stress and take remedial measures. Identify one's resources and seek support.

The aim of this book is to offer simple, practical interpretations of various concepts included under life skills such that one can apply them in daily life. Certain patterns of thinking prevent us from expressing our qualities and abilities – saying or doing what we deep inside wish to say or do. In such instances we immediately experience a loss of power (sadness, low energy) and may feel regret later on. The idea is to make it easier for a person to express their qualities (strengths) and skills in their daily interactions with people and reflect on their attitudes and behaviour objectively. It feels great to experience joy and fulfillment in our daily life. These skills enable that experience.

How to use this book:

“What one has not experienced, one will never understand in print.” - Isadora Duncan, My Life. This book is therefore designed as a workbook – to give you an experience of what is being talked about in print. We will switch between the pronouns ‘we’ and ‘I’ depending on whether we are referring to us, the author, or the person reading the workbook. You will get the most out of this workbook by doing the exercises given in each section. Think over and discuss the concepts put forth with your friends and family members. What you like and agree with, you could apply in your personal life.

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1. Self-Awareness

Self-awareness, two deceptively simple words. What do people mean by it? For different people these words have different meanings.

What do you mean by 'self-awareness'?

Use this space to write down your thoughts:

Let's explore the concept of self-awareness.

Are animals aware of themselves? Or is it only we humans with our higher intelligence who think and talk about self-awareness?

We humans are aware of ourselves - observing and questioning own selves. Majority of animals act on their inborn instincts, without thinking about or questioning their own behaviour. Their behaviour is hard wired, our behaviour, though often based on instinct, and pre-existing neural pathways, is open to self-modification, self-restraint, self-appreciation and self-criticism.

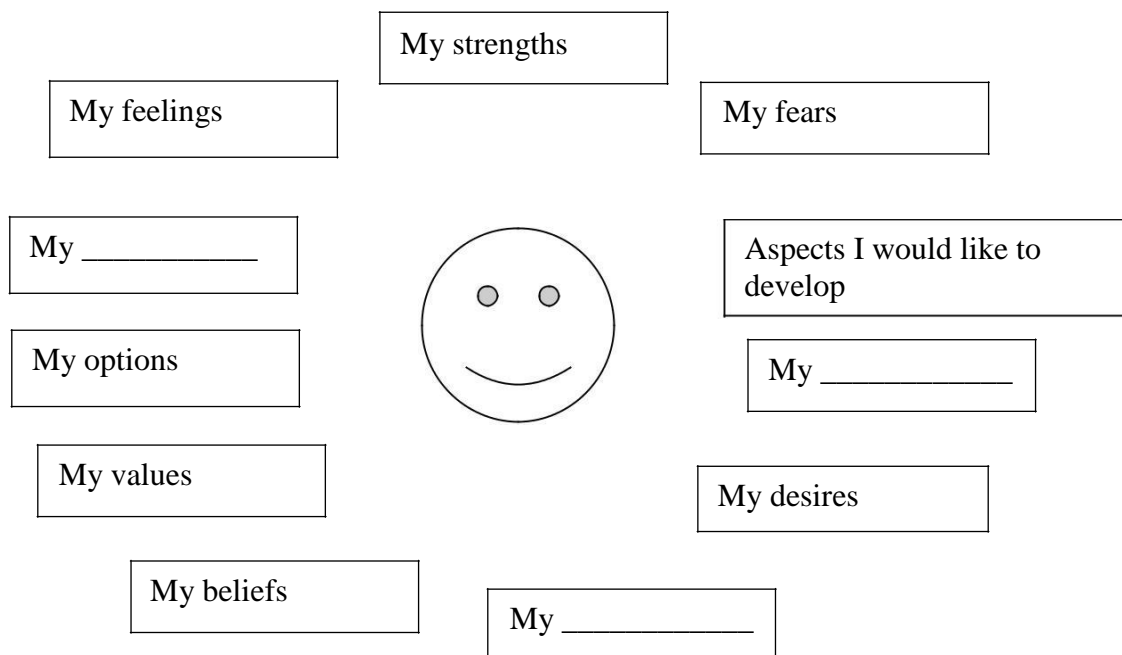
In this section you will explore self-awareness.

Tick the statements that you feel are part of becoming self-aware:

- Being aware of my body.
- Being aware of my thoughts, desires, potential, fears, shortcomings, and inner most being.
- Asking, "Who am I?"
- Thinking about what I would do if money, time, place or people did not constrain me.
- Knowing what gives me happiness.
- Knowing how I feel about myself and my life when I am all alone.
- Knowing what my deepest beliefs are.
- Knowing what I will never give up.
- Asking, "What are my values? Why do I think like this?"

Being self-aware means becoming aware of physical as well as psychological aspects - such as thoughts, feelings, and behaviour pattern.

We have put down some areas of self-awareness around the smiley face. You could add to the cluster.



How aware am I?

How many times have I walked up and down the street leading to my house? Do I know all that is there on that street? The number of buildings, the names on the gate posts, the shops, the architecture? Chances are I don't. I haven't paid attention to them, they are not important to me.

Is it possible that in my busy day to day life, I have overlooked the most important person in my life? My own self? I may go to great lengths to ensure that my parents, siblings, friends, colleagues, neighbours, relatives, and even acquaintances like and accept me. But have I bothered to find out what I like? What I want? Have I accepted me?

“Knowledge of self is the mother of all knowledge. So, it is incumbent on me to know myself, to know it completely, to know its minutiae, its characteristics, its subtleties, and it's very atoms.”

Khalil Gibran

The Philosophy of Logic.

It's time I paused to consider my Self. And reflect on my dreams, wishes, strengths, fears, areas I want to develop further, alternatives available, possibilities and opportunities.

My Dreams

My Passion

My Goals (in the near future):

My Goals (for the distant future):

My Strengths

Areas I would like to develop further

My Fears

My Resources

Possibilities that I see (that can help me reach my goals)

If you have written down most of the above, you are already on your way to becoming self-aware. The journey is long, with an unknown destination. Enjoy the journey!

Activity:

My Rainbow

Create your own personal rainbow using the following questions for each color:

- Red:** the stop, beware, watch out color. What would make me see red – that is, raise my hackles, make me dig in my heels and say no? What will I not stand for or compromise on?
- Orange:** the get-set-go colour. What motivates me? What calls me? What touches my heart?
- Yellow:** the colour of light, creativity. What was the best idea I've had?
- Green:** for productivity. What do I plan to do in my life that will enrich me and others?
- Blue:** the colour of dreams, fantasy, sky. In my imaginary future, I will have...
- Indigo:** a deep daring colour. What is the boldest, most daring thing I ever did?
- Violet or Purple:** the colour of power. If I had all the power in the world, what would I do? What is the very first thing I would like to make a difference in?

Now, draw out a rainbow using the following colors and write your thoughts across the colors.

- Red: Caution with
- Orange: Motivated by
- Yellow: Create
- Green: Generate
- Blue: Dream of
- Indigo: Have Courage to
- Violet: Change

My Values

Being aware of one's dreams, skills, strengths, fears, goals and resources is some aspects of self-awareness. Values are another very basic and important aspect. This section is designed to clarify values and determine how they form.

What do I mean by the term 'Values'? (use the space below to jot down your thoughts)

Defining Values:

Which of the statements listed below come close to my definition of values? (Tick them)

- My values are my personal inventory of what I consider most important in life.
- Values are the qualities, characteristics, or ideas about which I feel strongly.
- My values affect my decisions, goals and behavior.
- A value is a belief or feeling that someone or something is worthwhile.
- Values define what is of worth, what is helpful, and what is harmful
- Values are standards to guide my action, opinion, and attitudes.
- Values are like the foundation of a building - hidden, but necessary for the building to stand. They are a set of beliefs that form the basis of my actions.

Searching for values

From the list below, circle what you would consider to be "a value".

Achievement, happiness, relaxation, being liked, health, religion, belonging, honor, respect for others, beauty, independence, cleanliness, initiative, salvation, companionship, sanctity, compassion, security, competence, justice, self-confidence, competition, knowledge, self-discipline, co-operation, leisure, self-worth, courage, love, service, creativity, loyalty, solitude, duty, maturity, spontaneity, education, money, status, efficiency, obedience, empathy, orderliness, success, equality, patience, tradition, faith, patriotism, trust, peace, wisdom, perseverance, workmanship, freedom, prayer, zeal, friendship, productivity, generosity, gratitude, punctuality, courage, self-expression, justice, sense of fairness.

Any one or all of the above could be values that people live by. Different people consider different values to be most important in their life.

I can take the time to think about my values, so that I keep them in mind when I am making important choices. What do I value most in my life? It could be one single value or a combination of different values (write them here):

How do I have these values? How did they form? Was I **born** with some values? Did I **form** them later in my life?

The following section deals with the intriguing concept of how values are formed.

If some values are present in all cultures, all tribes, then we can assume that they were innate in humans – like the sense of fairness.

Do you feel that some of the values listed in the section above may be present in all human cultures?

If yes, which ones could be universal?

Some values have existed among human tribes since time immemorial. They helped individuals to survive in a group; and they helped a group of humans survive in a hostile environment. They were the “codes” of conduct. For instance: friendship, courage, love, justice, sense of fairness, happiness

Some values are inborn – like a sense of fairness. A two-year-old child is not taught what is fair and what is unfair. The child knows. Sense of fairness has been shown to exist in other animals like chimpanzees too.

Some values are not so deep rooted, but are learned later in life, for example punctuality, neatness, orderliness.

Which values do you think helped human communities survive? (refer to the previous page for a list of values. You can add your own).

We are social animals. We survived because we stayed in a group. But this also led to conflicts. Conflicts arose between self- interest and the interest of the whole group. Certain values help an individual survive in a group. Which values would help individuals survive in a community?

Social animals, like humans are born with a complex interlinking system of neurons and pathways that make us feel happy when we do good to others or see someone do helpful things for others. Our ‘do good’ switch is always on (as when we instinctively help a person when the person stumbles). To hurt or harm a person, we have to plan (as when we want to trip someone!). Happiness boosts our immune system. Doing good to others, being good, having others see us doing good – all of these make us healthier as a group, and allows us to live peacefully with each other.

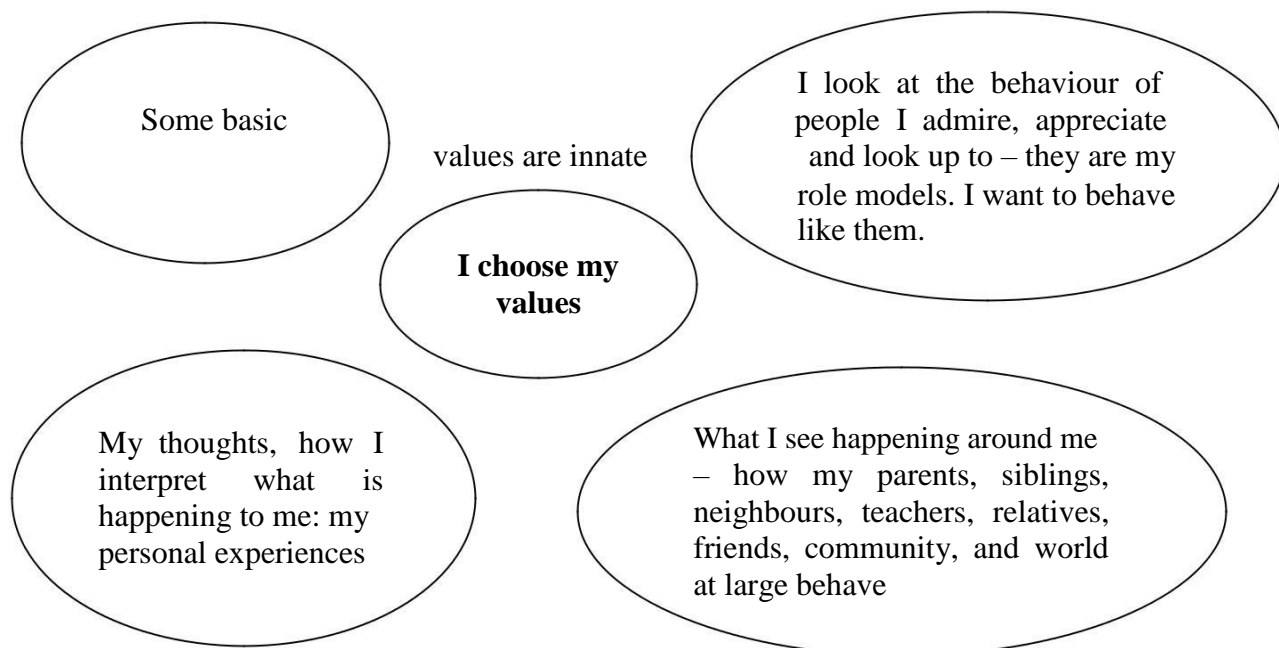
Which are your top five values which hold a high priority for you? (write these here)

How do you think you formed these values? Tick the statements that are true for you:

1. By reading about them
2. Because they made sense to me
3. Because my family members followed these values.
4. Because I was told to follow them
5. Because these were the values of someone I respect or look up to
6. By my own experiences

Different people live by and uphold different values. For instance, some people work for animal welfare, some for clean politics, some for afforestation and yet others for child rights. In this way, all issues get addressed!

This is how values form:



Activity

Write about (or sketch) the person, the incident or the train of thought that led you to form a value that is very dear to you.

2. Self-Esteem

In the previous sections we have explored self-awareness and considered how values form. Now let's look at self-esteem.

What do I mean by self-esteem?

“Self-esteem is the reputation we acquire with ourselves.” ~ Nathaniel Branden

According to psychologist Nathaniel Branden (Ph.D psychology, clinician and author of the book, Six pillars of self-esteem) self-esteem is composed of self-respect and self-confidence:

1. A sense that I **respect** myself and consider myself **worthy of happiness** (self-respect)
2. A sense that **I can deal** with life's many challenges. Even if things are not going well, I know that I am competent to deal with whatever happens (self-confidence).

“Apart from disturbance whose roots are biological, I cannot think of a single psychological problem—from anxiety and depression, to underachievement at school or at work, to fear of intimacy, happiness, or success, to alcohol or drug abuse, to spouse battering or child molestation, to co-dependency and sexual disorders, to passivity and chronic aimlessness, to suicide and crimes of violence—that is not traceable, at least in part, to the problem of deficient self-esteem. Of all the judgments we pass in life, none is as important as the one we pass on ourselves.” ~ Nathaniel Branden from The Six Pillars of Self-Esteem

What is Self-confidence?

Self-confidence is the feeling or belief that I can rely on myself to deal with whatever comes my way. It is trust in my abilities and skills and a strong belief that I can handle adverse situations in my life.

Why do we need self-confidence?

Self-confidence gives me trust in myself. I feel that whatever critical/ creative ideas I have, I will be able to bring them to fruition even though others may be against me.

Self-confidence makes us independent. It allows us to set, pursue and reach our own goals even in the face of adversity. It is the belief that allows me to reach into and utilize my own resources and draw upon the resources of others around me to achieve my goals.

Without self-confidence I would be dependent on others for decisions, goals and direction in my life. I would feel that I am not in charge of my life. I would feel helpless and disempowered.

How to build self-confidence:

5 steps to self-confidence:

1. **Awareness** – of my internal resources. My internal resources help me survive and live happily in the environment. I have 3 types of internal resources – physical, emotional and mental.

- **Physical Resource:** My body – with all its organs, systems and cells is my physical resource.
- **Mental Resource:** My thoughts, ideas, intelligences, skills are my mental resources.
- **Emotional Resource:** My qualities like determination, patience and friendliness are my emotional resources that help me motivate and discipline myself. They help me interact with and enroll others around me into my vision or goal.

Awareness of all of these will build my self-confidence.

Self- reflection - Make a personal list of your resources.

- What strengths do I have?
- What am I good at?

We have many qualities. Tick the ones you think you have. Remember, being a cheerful person does not mean that you have to be cheerful all the time. If you feel that on the whole you are a cheerful person, tick ‘cheerful’. Same goes for all qualities listed below.

Cheerful	Independent	Honest
Energetic/ Active	Responsible	Creative
Systematic	Focused	Punctual
Confident	Outgoing	Thoughtful
Curious	Brave	Friendly
Trustworthy	Sensitive	Careful
Competitive	Ambitious	Determined
Peaceful	Gentle	Cooperative
Serious	Humorous	Helpful
Easy going	Well – behaved	Sensible

Add more qualities to the list!

How many qualities do you have? Sometimes we may not be aware of our own qualities! But qualities cannot be ‘faked’. They are inherent in our behaviour. For instance, I can’t say “I am a very friendly person, but I have just one friend” or “I am very punctual, but sometimes I miss my flight” So ask your friends and family members to point out qualities that they have noticed in your behaviour. Tick these as well!

2. Attitude

When I become more aware of myself, I will become aware of my strengths as well as my weaknesses. The danger is that I might focus on my weaknesses and negative traits rather than on the positive ones.

Keeping my positive qualities and skills in mind will build a positive attitude in me – I can do this, I will succeed, I can handle this, I can ask for help, people like to help each other.

A positive attitude builds self- confidence.

Positive thoughts about myself lead to positive and good feelings inside me. These feelings alter my body posture and my body language. When I think positive thoughts, my body straightens out, I hold my head high, look up, look into the eyes of people and talk, I stand erect, my voice is strong, and I use clear words to communicate my ideas.

“The greatest crime we commit against ourselves is not that we may deny or disown our shortcomings but that we deny and disown our greatness—because it frightens us. If a fully realized self-acceptance does not evade the worst within us, neither does it evade the best.” sum up as “my refusal to be in an adversarial relationship with myself.” **Nathaniel Branden** “As a psychotherapist I see nothing does as much for an individual’s self-esteem as becoming aware of and accepting disowned parts of the self. The first steps of healing and growth are awareness and acceptance—consciousness and integration.”

Self- reflection - Think of a situation when you approached a problem with a negative attitude. What happened? Did you succeed?

Think of a situation when you approached a problem with a positive attitude. What happened? Did you succeed?

3. Action and Adaptation

Being aware of all my resources and having a positive attitude will not be fruitful if I have not put the ideas into action. For example: If I have clay, water and fire and I have an idea of how to make bricks, but I do not do any action to actually make a brick, then I won’t have any bricks!

Being in action, putting my ideas to test can lead me to success and build my self-confidence.

After putting my idea into action I observe the results of my effort. If the result is unexpected, not what I had in mind or totally opposite, I adapt. I change my action, I change the ingredients. I try out something new. This is called adaptation. I go on doing this until I get the result I wanted, until I reach my goal.

It is the same as learning from mistakes. I am not discouraged by failure... I learn from it, adapt and move on. Failure does not mean stop/give up...it means try again, in a different way! Thus action and adaptation too builds my self- confidence.

“To live purposefully is to use our powers for the attainment of goals we have selected: the goal of studying, of raising a family, of earning a living, of starting a new business, of bringing a new product into the marketplace, of solving a scientific problem, of building a vacation home, of sustaining a happy romantic relationship. It is our goals that lead us forward, that call on the exercise of our faculties, that energize our existence.” Nathaniel Branden

Self- reflection - Think of examples of adaptation from your life.

4. **Affirmation**

Affirmation reinforces my knowledge of myself. Sometimes the results of my efforts are not what I had expected. This may shake my confidence in my abilities. I may begin to doubt myself. These doubts, if allowed to persist would erode my self-confidence like water erodes iron.

Affirmations counter doubts. These are positive statements about oneself – example: I am capable. I am intelligent. I have all that I need.

Affirmations convert iron into steel. Water can no longer rust it.

Self- reflection - Write 5 doubts about yourself that trouble you and keep you from speaking up or doing what you think is right.

Now, write 5 affirmations that counter these doubts.

You can repeat these affirmations silently, through-out the day. At night, before going to sleep, look into a mirror and repeat them again.

5. **Acknowledgement and Appreciation**

Acknowledgement is to know and become aware of the goodness in somebody's behaviour and their skills. It is important to let people know that you are aware of their skills qualities and intelligences. Just like affirmation removes self-doubt, acknowledgement removes their self-doubt. It makes you aware of the resources available within your family, neighborhood and friends.

If we appreciate something or somebody then it motivates them to do more of the same thing. If I appreciate the Bisibele bhat or pulao that my brother cooked, he is likely to make it more often!

Appreciation and acknowledgement work best when they come from others, but our internal appreciation and acknowledgement also work to keep up our motivation.

How do you feel when someone appreciates you?

Blocks to Self-confidence

1. Criticism from others

This can be a big blow to our self-confidence if we do not think about criticism critically! For e.g. Somebody said something nasty/ bad about me – I applied to 3 places for job, but faced rejection from all the 3 places. Someone says “You are a failure! You will never succeed!”

a. **Is it the truth?** Certainly not! I know that I could not crack the 3 interviews. This does not mean that my entire life has failed! There are still so many options. I can take on trainings that will help me succeed.

b. **The person could have told me the same thing in better words.** The words that people use tell us about the nature and personality of that person.

A mature person would have said “You could not get through. What happened? What are you going to do about it? What about your future?”

c. **What can I learn from it?** Why is the person saying this to me? Is there some truth in it? I can think about failure and success and work out what I need to do differently in order to clear my next round of interviews.

I can listen to criticism without reacting. I can look at criticism positively and see if I need to change anything in my behaviour. This way I can build my self confidence in the face of criticism.

“To find it humiliating to admit an error is a certain sign of a flawed self-esteem.” ~ Nathaniel Branden

2. **Self – doubt:** remove through affirmations, confident body language and putting in action whatever you had promised yourself or others to do. Example: I decide to get up at 5 am every day to study. But day after day I don’t – I find excuses for it. Inside me I stop believing in myself. I lose self-confidence.

3. **Unintended outcomes:** refer to section on ‘action and adaptation’ above.

What is meant by respect?

- Respect is a sense of worth for the qualities and abilities of self and others.
- Respect is recognizing and accepting the rights and responsibilities of self and others.
- Respect is appreciation and acceptance of individual differences opinions, ideas beliefs
- Respect is demonstrating consideration and high regard for self and another.

Respect is a feeling. It cannot be given or taken – but it can be felt through behaviour. Our behaviour brings us pride, respect or shame. Respect is not a part of the body – how we use our body generates the feeling of guilt, shame or respect.

What respect is not:

Respect is not obedience.

Obedience is following orders or doing exactly as told. We often confuse this with respect. But there is a huge difference. Obedience is a kind of duty, a must, punishable if not followed. For example, in the army, a soldier has to obey all orders coming from his seniors. He has to obey all of them. However, if you asked a soldier which of the seniors he respects, he may name only 3 or 4 seniors and not all of them.

Think of people you respect.

We often take advice from people we respect. Taking advice is not the same as following orders. We consider the advice of all the people we respect, we think about our values and beliefs, and what will be best for us; and then we decide. Our final decision may be completely different from the advice given by various people. This does not mean that we do not respect them. We thought about what they had said and finally decided for ourselves. No one knows us better than we know ourselves. Advice is a suggestion. It is not an order.

Obedience has a place in the army – where every soldier cannot decide for himself the best strategy for attack – since he does not have access to the bigger picture/ information.

Obedience has no place in a home as a home is a place where we nurture children. Home is for fostering self-discipline. We nurture our children's creativity, free and independent thought. We place boundaries and limits on them for their safety when they are small. As they grow older we show them how to set their own boundaries for their own safety. Instead of punishment we use logical explanations. Instead of hitting or abusing them, we let them learn by facing natural (not hurtful and dangerous) consequences of their actions. This fosters self-discipline without killing self-motivation.

Why do we need respect?

Respect helps us build strong, nurturing, trusting relationships with people, plants and animals and even things! It allows us to live in harmony with ourselves and others around us, including all living and non-living things. It allows us to create and give form to the qualities and intelligences we have inside us without stamping on the right of others to do the same.

Building respectful behaviour towards myself:

Do I respect myself?

My body:

Do I look after my body? Do I eat when hungry, sleep when sleepy, do I take nourishing foods?

Do I avoid things that may harm my body – like tobacco, alcohol, drugs?

Do I exercise/ play out door vigorous games to keep my bones and muscles healthy?

Do I take precautions to avoid diseases and accidents?

Do I protest and resist when people touch me in harmful or hurtful ways?

My emotions:

Do I accept all my feelings? Or do I accept only the positive feelings?

Do I feel bad about myself when I feel jealous, angry, ashamed, fearful or guilty?

Do I understand that feelings arise naturally in me?

Do I understand that feelings are my friend and are trying to tell me something about myself and my surroundings?

I can accept all my feelings but I need not act on all of them.

I can choose how to express my feelings so that I do not insult or make another person wrong.

In my relationships:

Do I always put other people's needs above mine?

If others treat me with disrespect, do I keep quiet and not address it?

Do I tell people what is upsetting me about their behaviour?

My Higher Self:

Do I act in ways that make me feel small, unworthy, ashamed of myself?

Am I aware of the internal feeling that tells me that I did not act in accordance with my higher Self? My values?

Do I understand that I have control over my behaviour and can change it so that I begin to feel good about myself? So that I am in integrity? My behaviour is in sync with my values?

“Integrity is the integration of ideals, convictions, standards, beliefs—and behavior. When our behavior is congruent with our professed values, when ideals and practice match up, we have integrity.” Nathaniel Branden

Examples of Self Respect:

Eshwari's grandmother keeps pestering Eshwari to observe numerous religious rituals. Eshwari believes in God but does not like to follow many rituals. This makes the grandmother angry and she taunts Eshwari's parents for failing to bring up their daughter properly. Eshwari used to feel very upset and angry with her grandmother. One day she told her grandmother “Grandmother, I love being with you. I like to listen to your stories. But I feel very upset when I hear you taunting my parents about my behaviour.” The grandmother understood and stopped doing so.

Hemanth comes from a happy family. Hemanth knows that his father cares for him. However, Hemanth's father often shouts at him, which makes Hemanth angry. One day this is what Hemanth said to his father “Appa I know that you care for me a lot and you tell me things for my own good. But when you shout and tell me things, I can't hear anything because I am feeling so upset and angry. Can you tell me the same thing in some other way?” Father listened and thought about it calmly. He started writing down his advice and giving it to Hemanth. Both father and son became even closer.

Self- reflection - How to deal with ‘disrespect’?

What happens when I feel disrespected?

What feelings arise in me?

What do I feel like doing?

If I acted on these feelings, what would happen to the person who disrespected me?

If I acted on these feelings, what would happen to my self -respect?

Some examples of disrespect and how to deal with it:

1. When elders scold me unnecessarily.

Words and actions of others tell us about the speaker's personality and state of mind
 Example: Shiva's father shouts at him and demeans him on a daily basis for some reason or the other. Shiva needs to understand that his father is upset and has limited ways of communication. He does not know how to express his feelings in any other way.

This understanding will help Shiva appreciate the underlying core issue that is bothering his father. What concern or fear about Shiva's future or present behaviour is of concern to the father? Shiva can look into those, discuss them with his father rather than get into a shouting match with his father.

2. When others taunt me:

Words and actions of others tell us about the speaker's personality. It is their opinion. It is not the truth. Only I know myself completely. No one else can know my internal thoughts and feelings.

If a person is calling me "Loser" I do not become a Loser! I can ignore it. I can say "Looks like you do not like something I did. You seem upset with me. If you want, we can discuss it meaningfully." If they still persist in taunting me, I can move away from them.

3. When someone blames me:

Understand that **behaviour is separate from Self**, from who you are. You are your qualities, skills, intelligences abilities and so much more.

For instance, when someone says "You are a liar!" then he is calling my Self a liar. This is not true. My Self is much bigger and larger, pure qualities (like fairness, boldness, truthfulness) and divine. I cannot change it. It is beyond my control.

When a person says "You lied to me." then he is describing my behaviour. This might be true. I can look into it and change my behaviour. I have control over my behaviour.

Similarly, when someone is acting in a certain hurtful way, I can **separate their Self from their behaviour**. I can tell them how I feel hurt by their behaviour. I can say "When you taunt me, I feel hurt. When you call me names, I feel upset." Describe their behaviour and your feelings. Do not say "You are bad. You upset me. You hurt me. You make me angry." Their Self is not bad or hurtful. It is also pure qualities (like love, integrity, peace) and divine.

4. When I disrespect myself:

I may be behaving in ways that make me feel small, unworthy, ashamed of myself. I understand that I have control over my behaviour. I can begin with small changes in what I say or do and then build on them. With practice I can change my behaviour such that I feel good about myself.

Role of self-esteem in daily life

Once we have discussed self-confidence and self-respect in detail, let us now think about self-esteem.

How would self-esteem help me in my life? Do I really need to work on this?

Tick what you think would become possible if you had high self-esteem:

1. I can be assertive.
2. I can begin to express my views clearly.
3. I can hold my ground.
4. I can express my feelings.
5. I can resist exploitation or harassment.
6. I can negotiate my way through discussion and debate.
7. I can claim my rights with responsibility.

All of the above are possible and real for any person with high self-esteem. Here are some questions you may have:

1. **If self-esteem was so important, how come I was not born with it?**

You were. Like any child, you were whole and complete and full of joy when you were born. You had no idea of your “self or identity or ego”. You felt yourself to be a part and parcel of the universe – you did not separate yourself from the world around you. You did not feel incomplete, wrong, ashamed, unworthy, sad or embarrassed when you were born. All that came later and played havoc with your sense of “I am worthy of love and happiness, so love me, cuddle me and take care of my needs and feelings.”

Psychiatrist, Erik Erikson (1902 -1994) described the physical, emotional and psychological stages of human development in 1956. The stages are tabled below for your reference. Each stage is associated with the development of specific qualities (that keeps alive the sense of self-worth or self-esteem), provided the physical and emotional requirement of that stage have been met adequately. If the requirements are not met, the person grows into the next stage but the ability remains underdeveloped (child begins to feel inadequate, as if they are lacking something). This may interfere with further psychological growth of the child. For instance, if a toddler is over protected and not allowed to learn by exploring, doing and making mistakes, the toddler develops a sense of doubt in his or her abilities. This may complicate later attempts at independence and industry.

Stage	Person develops	Physical / emotional requirements for development
Infant 0-18 months	Basic trust or Basic mistrust (Hope)	Needs maximum comfort with minimum uncertainty to continue trusting himself/herself, others and the environment. If the child's needs are neglected or ignored, child begins to mistrust self and others. Feels insecure.
Toddler 1.5 -4 yrs	Autonomy or Doubt, shame. (Will)	Child explores, attempts and works to master the physical environment. Understands and uses the powerful word "No." Gets control over movement of her / his body. If child is brought up with constant admonitions like "Don't do that, you will get hurt", "Don't go there", "Don't say that!" child develops doubt in her / his abilities.
Early childhood 3-5 yrs (pre- school)	Initiative or guilt (Purpose)	Begins to initiate and not just imitate activities. If the child is blamed for the 'mistakes' the child makes, the child develops guilt, becomes fearful, is restricted in play skills and imagination. The child remains unduly dependent on adults. If the child is encouraged to explore and create, and if consequences of actions are explained, then the child develops initiative, self-motivation and confidence. The child is imaginative and cooperates with others, specially playmates.
Mid childhood 5-12 yrs (school age)	Industry or inferiority (Competence)	Child tries to develop further his or her sense of self-worth by working on, and developing various skills. Child learns to follow rules during play and while interacting with peers. A trusting, autonomous child, full of initiative finds it easy to become industrious. A mistrusting child, carrying guilt and shame experiences defeat and inferiority. Comparison, criticism and discouragement can also contribute to a feeling of inferiority.
Adolescence 13-20 yrs	Identity or role confusion (Fidelity)	Tries integrating many roles (child, sibling, student, athlete, worker) into a self-image under the influence of role models and peers. A lack of role models in the adolescent's life and inability to resist negative peer pressure can lead to role confusion. Self-certainty can be replaced by self-doubt.

Young adult 20 -40 yrs	Intimacy or Isolation (Love)	Person learns to make personal commitment to another as spouse, parent or partner. Psychological development or lack of it in prior stages shows up now.
Middle aged adult 40-60 yrs	Productivity or Self-absorption, stagnation (Care)	Seeks satisfaction through productivity in career, family and civic interests
Older adult 60 yrs +	Integrity or despair (Wisdom)	Person is proud of what they create. Has developed a self-concept with which they are happy. Reviews life accomplishments, deals with loss and prepares for death.

2. Looks like I may have started ‘losing’ my self-esteem pretty early in life. I can’t go back and undo all of that. So what’s the point of going on and on about it? Should I start blaming my parents and family and friends?

There is lots you can do. Your self-esteem did not go anywhere. It just got covered with a whole lot of negative thoughts and feelings. As a child, you heard a lot of negative statements. They made you feel bad. As you grew up, you started believing them. You thought “If my parents/ teachers/ friends/ relatives are saying that I am a bad child, then I must be a bad child.” You had no options, but to believe what you were told. “Often what we call ‘thinking’ is merely the recycling the opinions of others.” ~ Nathaniel Branden

Today you are an adult. You have independent thoughts. You are free and capable of choosing what to believe and what to discard as rubbish. When something happens and someone says something, **how you feel** about it will depend on **how you think** about it. Remember, you are free to think anything! The elders in your life are not to blame either. They did as they had seen their parents do. They thought they were doing what was best for you...

You were born brimming with self-esteem. Like a glittering diamond. As you grew up, the diamond, more often than not, got covered with ‘grime and dirt’. So much so that after years of gathering dust, it does not appear like a diamond at all. But it is there inside you. Waiting for the day when you will take a clean cloth and dust away all the dirt. You can polish it and it will glitter once again.

This section will help you learn some ‘diamond polishing’ skills.

Let me begin by thinking about my life and all the people who left a lasting impression on me.

People who have left an impact on my life: It could have been positive or negative	Incident in my life when that person said/ did something	How I interpreted that incident and what impact it had on me



As a child I had no control over the incidents in my life.

Looking back, I can choose to think differently about them. Giving them a different meaning, a different interpretation will not change what happened, but it will change the way I feel about the incident and myself.

The table below gives some positive and some common negative meanings to the same incident.

Incident	Negative statements	Positive statements
When I failed	"I am a failure."	What I did, did not produce the desired result. I need to do it differently next time. I learnt something from this incident. My actions failed. I am not a failure. I am a learner, not a loser. I may lose sometimes.
When someone criticized me	"Whatever the person is saying is THE TRUTH. I am like that."	Let me understand why the person is saying all this about me. Did I really behave like that? Is there any truth in what they are saying? Or is it just their perception and nothing to do with my behaviour?
When someone said something to put me down. ("You are so dumb!")	"I am dumb." I believe what they are saying about me.	I know that I am smart. I know my capabilities and my skills. Others do not know me as well. Words that a person uses reflect their character, not mine! Words say more about the speaker than what is spoken about. Words that Buddha used were different from the words Hitler used.
When I doubted my abilities	"I can't do this. I always fail. No point in even trying."	"I was not born with all abilities fully developed. But I was born with the ability to learn. I can learn. I will try. I will make mistakes like everyone else. I will try again and again until I learn it. That is how I learnt to walk, talk, read and write..."
When I felt rejected.	"I am no good. I don't deserve to be loved. No one cares for me. There is something wrong with me."	"I deserve better relationships. This person does not acknowledge or respect me. I know myself. I am worthy of love and respect. I deserve a fulfilling relationship. I will look out for people who value me as a person. I will associate with them."
When I compared myself with others	"I can never do it as well as she does it."	"Everyone can't be good at everything. I can do many things. Some things I can do very well, some not so well. She is different from me. She can do some things better than me and some things I can do better than her. How can I judge two things that are different? The only person who is exactly like me is I. In all fairness I can only compare myself with me. If I did not do something as well as I wanted to last time, can I look and see how I can improve it next time?"

When I entered a competition	“I must do better than others. I must beat them and win. If I lose, I will feel very bad. I am feeling stressed and worried. The worry may interfere with my performance. I am feeling nervous.”	“I will prepare and practice so that I can perform to the best of my abilities. It is a challenge to me – to do my best. I am competing against my past performance – not other’s. Let everyone do as best as they can. I may or may not get recognition from others. That’s immaterial because I will know in my heart that I did my best. That is what counts. I will get to know the limits of my abilities.”
When I lost someone whose company, I valued	“I don’t deserve happiness. Whatever I value dearly, I lose. I must never get deeply involved with anyone.”	“I am lucky to have known that person for as long as I did. I valued our relationship. Now the person is no longer with me. I feel sad, but that is the way it had to be. Life goes on. I am ready to move ahead. I look forward to a fulfilling future.”
When I felt unloved, unaccepted by friends or family	“No one loves me. I am undeserving of love. There is something wrong with me.”	“People have a right to their feelings. I cannot force anyone to love or accept me. In fact, I don’t have to. I love myself. I know my worth. I can be with people who love and accept me. I don’t want to force anyone to love me! If they can’t see my worth, too bad for them.”
When no one acknowledged my efforts	“They did not acknowledge me! They are insulting me. They are taking me for granted. I am not good enough.”	“I know the effort I put into this. I am very happy with what I did. Sometimes people are too busy to notice. Sometimes they have other things on their minds. It’s OK. I can tell them all about it to make them realize the effort I put in, or I can let it be. I did this because I wanted to do it – not to get a pat on my back!”

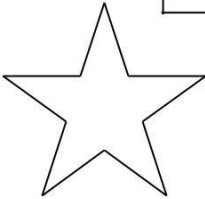
Every incident can be interpreted by me in a positive or a negative way. Positive statements empower me. They help to polish the diamond.

Negative statements or interpretations lower my self-esteem. They cover the diamond with grime.

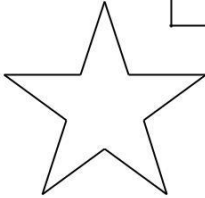
I can choose what to believe. The secret of self-empowerment is in my hands, or rather, in my thoughts. How I interpret an incident is in my hands. What I believe to be the truth is what I think is the truth. Thoughts make up my inner world.

Activity

Negative statements I sometimes say to myself:



Positive statements I can use and say to myself in the place of the negative ones:

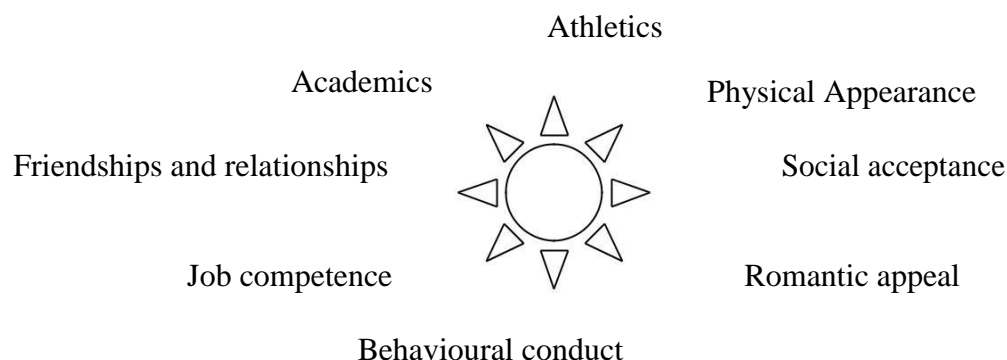


Remember, dusting and polishing will have to be done every day..., like brushing or taking a bath – because we gather a lot of dust every day.

Self-Worth

I understand that changing my thought patterns from negative to positive can restore my self-esteem, but is there anything more I can do? Something that will help build my self-worth?

According to psychologists, self-worth depends on what we think of ourselves and how we perform in eight distinct areas of our life. Psychologists consider these areas to be:



How I perform in these areas contributes to my sense of self-esteem. I may be given certificates, medals, recognition, awards etc as a mark of my achievements. I feel good when I get these. However, awards are given to a few and most of us will not receive any external recognition or reward. In such a scenario, how can I motivate myself? How can I feel good when there is no external reward?

Research in neurophysiology has shown that we have a built-in reward system in our brain. This center automatically rewards behaviour patterns that benefit us as an individual and as a member of a group. The chemicals released by this center make us feel good internally. We feel happy and proud of ourselves. Our self-worth increases whenever we feel good about ourselves.

What is it that I do that makes me feel good within myself? What brings a smile to my face, what makes me feel proud of myself?

We have given a few examples of creating/ doing that produce results in the physical, mental or emotional world.

1. When I create something in the physical world (a new food dish, a program, a painting, a poem, a new design)
2. When I create in the emotional world – I act in a caring and supportive manner (I stand up for my friend when she is being bullied. When I help a person on the road find his / her way.)
3. When I create in the mental world – I come up with a concept, an equation, a new way of thinking

Use the space below to write about what makes you feel proud of yourself:

This inner feeling of achievement may go unrecognized, unacknowledged or unrewarded by others, but it makes me feel proud of myself. I feel happy and fulfilled. This builds my self-esteem.

My Multiple Intelligences

Ok, I got it so far. I know that thinking positively and acting in a thoughtful, and sensitive manner helps build my self-esteem. But, still, at the back of my mind I feel that I am not as intelligent as others. Now that is a reality. However positively I might think, I am unlikely to get full marks in all subjects! I know I am not strong in all subjects.

Howard Gardner, a psychologist from Harvard, studies human intelligence in detail. According to him, there are at least seven types of intelligences in all people. These are

1. Linguistic
2. Math – Logic
3. Bodily Kinesthetic
4. Spatial
5. Musical
6. Intrapersonal
7. Interpersonal

The first two are ones that have been typically valued in schools; the next three are usually associated with the arts; and the final two are what Howard Gardner called 'personal intelligences' (Gardner, 1999). Gardner claimed that the seven intelligences rarely operate independently. They are used at the same time and tend to complement each other as people develop skills or solve problems. **People have a unique blend of intelligences.** Gardner argues that the big challenge facing the deployment of human resources 'is how to best take advantage of the uniqueness conferred on us as a species exhibiting several intelligences'. These intelligences, according to Howard Gardner, are **amoral** – that is they can be put to constructive or destructive use.

Currently psychologists are also exploring the possibility of naturalistic and spiritual intelligences.

Research shows that some intelligences are better developed naturally in some people. Just like some people have longer noses than others, while others have stronger hearts or better vision or hearing ability than others! However, **all** intelligences are present in **all** people. (just like nose, heart and ears). No one is good in **all** areas (like the different parts of the body). Each one does better in some areas and not so well in other areas.

Like our muscles, we can strengthen our not so strong intelligences by practice, to a certain extent. For instances, there are some children who can sing very well or who can play the flute or the drums from a very young age, without being taught by anyone. Of course they become better with training and practice. Some others start learning later in life and do a great job. However no one person can have all intelligences develop to their fullest extent! Anyway, what is the limit of an intelligence? They are limitless. All intelligences exist because they helped us survive. Since we live and survive as a group, no one person is required to have all of them extremely well developed! Different people will do different things well, and in this manner, everything will get done well!

What about my intelligences? Which ones are my strong ones?

What am I good at? Let me find out:

Tick the statements that are true for you. Count the number of ticks in each section and write them in the boxes provided.

Linguistic Intelligence:

1. Books are an essential part of my life/ I enjoy reading
2. I can express my thoughts and views clearly in words.
3. My vocabulary is good
4. I like writing or have written something that I am proud of or which has been appreciated by others
5. I prefer subjects like English, social studies, history over math and science
6. I enjoy word games like crossword, scrabble
7. I can hear words in my head before I read, speak or write them down
8. It's easier for me to remember a piece of information in its auditory form than in its visual form

Logical - Mathematical Intelligence

1. I am good at calculating numbers in my head
2. My favorite subjects are math and science
3. I tend to accept and believe things only if it has a logical explanation
4. I enjoy brainteasers based on logical thinking
5. It's easier for me to understand concepts that have a clear concrete explanation as compared to an obscure/imaginary one.
6. My mind searches for patterns, regularities, sequences n things.
7. I need things to be measured, analyzed or categorized in some way.
8. I am keen to learn about new advancement in the world of science.

Spatial Intelligence

1. I can easily visualize an image of an incident which is being narrated to me.
2. I like to draw or paint.
3. I don't get lost easily. I can find my way to a new place easily with directions. If I visit a place once, I can find my way there again easily.
4. I have a strong imagination which helps me figure out what something will look from different angles, and heights.
5. I prefer geometry over algebra.
6. I tend to remember things easily that are presented visually.
7. I enjoy games that involve visual images, like jigsaw puzzles, mazes, visual puzzles.
8. I am good at arranging nick knacks/ display items aesthetically.

Bodily - Kinesthetic Intelligence

1. I like to take part in dances and dramas.
2. I move my hands and body a lot while talking.
3. I like activities like craft, typing, repairing small gadgets, knitting, sewing, cooking, embroidery, I enjoy playing outdoor games, climbing trees, skipping, playing hopscotch
4. I like to be physically active, I don't like to sit still for long periods of time.
5. I can balance well (ride a bicycle, run on one foot, circle round and round fast)
6. I like to make things with my hands rather than just think or imagine them.
7. I engage in one sport or physical activity regularly

8. My best ideas often come to me when I am walking, jogging, physically active.

Musical Intelligence

1. I play a musical instrument
2. I sing.
3. I listen to music often.
4. I can tell when a musical note is off key (apaswara).
5. I like to make my own music by tapping or humming.
6. I often sing a little tune to myself while working, cooking, studying or walking
7. I can pick up musical tones in sounds made by birds, or the wind or flowing water.
8. Music helps to release my anger, stress or tension.

Intrapersonal Intelligence (self-awareness)

1. I like to be by myself and think about various events and concepts (eg. new ideas, rights, responsibilities, gender issues) by myself.
2. I would like to learn more about myself.
3. I want to figure out my troubles by myself before talking to someone else about it. I like to sort out my feelings and problems by myself.
4. I have a favourite place in the house or outside where I like to sit.
5. I think I am independent and strong willed. I have the confidence to do what I believe in and what I think is right.
6. I can do what I want to do and what I have to do by myself, without being told by others.
7. I know what I want to do in my life. I know what makes me feel happy and content.
8. I am able to overcome setbacks and disappointments easily.

Interpersonal Intelligence (friendship and people skills)

1. I enjoy being with friends. I would rather spend my evening at a party with friends rather than stay alone at home.
2. I enjoy group activities like going to college fests, parties, outings, picnics, group adventure sports.
3. I actively participate in functions and ceremonies held at home
4. I like to talk about new ideas, problems, concepts with friends.
5. I prefer to discuss my problems with my close friends or family rather than attempt to work it out myself.
6. I can make out when my friend is feeling sad. I know what to do to make him / her feel better.
7. I enjoy the challenge of teaching someone a skill I have (art, craft, reading, writing, riding a bike).
8. I consider myself a leader (or others have called me that).

My love for nature

1. I like being outdoors.
2. I can identify plants / birds / insects easily.
3. I like to grow plants, work in a garden.
4. I like animals. I would like to have / I have a pet.
5. I empathize (understand their feelings) with animals.
6. I like to look after sick animals and plants and nurse them to health.
7. I like walking among plants, sitting under a tree, touching flowers. I find it relaxing.
8. I would like to study / observe nature.

My spiritual skills

1. I believe that nature has tremendous power.
2. Even though my mind cannot understand it, I know that the Universe is limitless, and that it has unimaginable energy.
3. I feel that I am a part of the universe. I feel a oneness with all that is there in my world.
4. I believe that all humans are equal. I respect all living and non-living objects as they are all manifestations of the universal energy.
5. I know that my mind and body have many powers and capabilities that have not been discovered by science.
6. I practice meditation.
7. I believe in the power of the sub conscience. I listen to my instincts.
8. I believe that energy flows within the universe. Whatever I give out (feelings, actions), will circulate and come back to me in one way or the other.

Your preferred intelligence(s) is (are) the one (s) with maximum number of ticks.

Each one of us is special because each of us has a unique combination of skills. If you asked your friends to do this questionnaire, you will realize the uniqueness of each one of them. So, intelligence is not being good with only math or science, other skills and intelligence are equally important and can help you create in various areas of life.

Intelligence in action

This table lists different intelligences and names a few professions that require expertise in that area. Take some time to add to the list.

	Profession	Names of people whom I know personally who are utilizing this intelligence to lead a productive /creative life
Linguistic	Writer, journalist...	
Math - Logic	Scientist, teacher of these subjects, programmer...	
Spatial	Interior designer	
Bodily Kinesthetic	Dancers, gymnasts, sportsmen	
Musical	Singers, musicians	
Inter personal	Counsellors, public relations officer, Human resource development officer	
Intrapersonal	Required for success in any profession.	
Spiritual	Spiritual teachers, writers	
Naturalistic	Environmentalist	

I have a unique combination of intelligences. I can develop those that I like to do and that make me happy. When I do something that I like doing, I will do it well. People recognize and value a job that is well done. They are willing to pay for it. I can make my living out of doing something that I like to do.

To rephrase a saying, if you want to make your work seem like a hobby, make your hobby your work!

“To live purposefully is to use our powers for the attainment of goals we have selected: the goal of studying, of raising a family, of earning a living, of starting a new business, of bringing a new product into the marketplace, of solving a scientific problem, of building a vacation home, of sustaining a happy romantic relationship. It is our goals that lead us forward, that call on the exercise of our faculties, that energize our existence.” Nathaniel Branden

Body Image, Self-Image

I understand about intelligences and how each one of us is unique. I understand that I can do something to sharpen my skills. But there is something that I just can't change - my body. I seem to be stuck with it.

If I could, this is what I would like to change in my body:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Tick the messages you may have received from the people around you or the popular media:

1. Beauty is your strength. Look beautiful.
2. Fair is lovely.
3. Slim is beautiful and healthy.
4. Smelling good will get you what you want.
5. Long, silky hair is the secret of a happy relationship.
6. Baby soft skin will keep you happy for ever.
7. This brand of clothes will make you successful/ hep / cool/ modern.
8. These shoes will get you to the top.
9. These cigarettes / drinks / jewellery / soap will make you a real man/woman.
10. Most daring thing you can do is be 'bare'.
11. We know which colour you should be wearing this season.

Let me do a thought experiment. If I really changed overnight what would become possible for me?

Take some time to think about this and write down what will change in your life.

- 1.

- 2.

- 3.

Is it possible for all these changes to happen in my life **without** changing my body?

What would I **need to do** to have all of these in my life, **looking just as I look now**?

Messages of a different kind:

Tick the statements you feel are true.

1. The genes I received from my mother and my father formed my body.
2. I got half my genes from my mother and half from my father.
3. My mother and father carry half the genes of their mother and father.
4. I may resemble a grandmother or an aunt or an uncle.
5. I have no control over what genes I get.
6. I cannot change the shape of my eyes, or heart or my skin colour or my height.
7. If a person criticizes, say, the shape of my eyes, the person is actually showing how ignorant they are of the science of genetics.
8. I can spend my time and money in trying to change my body (like fairness creams for skin colour - which cannot be changed. Fairness creams only prevent tanning. They do not change the basic skin colour of a person) or use my time and money to develop my skills.
9. I can use my body to attract a person.
10. I can use my skills and behaviour to attract a person.
11. A person who is attracted only by the body is different from a person who is attracted by the skills and behaviour of a person.

Which kind of person do I want to attract?

What will happen after 30 years to my body?

What will happen to my skills and personality after 30 years?

My body will deteriorate with time. But my skills develop with time and become better. What I create can last well beyond my lifetime.

Let me make an effort to keep my body healthy and develop my skills and personality. How I use different parts of my body – how I look at people, how I speak, what I make and do will affect my self esteem.

III - Communication, Empathy and Interpersonal Relationships

Communication

Self-awareness is great. But I do not exist in isolation. I am surrounded with people most of the time. I have thoughts, feelings, ideas and information that I want to share with them. I want them to understand what I have in mind.

Communication is the tool to achieve this. In this section, we will explore effective communication.

Self- reflection - Let us think about these scenarios:

Situation 1 – Ajay wishes his Manager, Smita, but Smita is preoccupied and does not hear Ajay wish her. He thinks, ‘Smita is upset with me and is ignoring me.’

Situation 2 – Sameer is on a call with his friend, Sudhir. While Sudhir is telling Sameer about his recent trip, Sameer is engrossed in his book, clearly disinterested in the conversation.

Situation 3 – Shreya comes to Sunita panting but visibly excited and shrieks, “Rajesh passed out!”. Sunita is confused by what Shreya is saying! She wonders why Shreya is so happy if Rajesh is unconscious. But, in fact, what Shreya meant was that Rajesh has cleared his exams.

Do you think communication was clear and complete in the above scenarios?
If yes, why do you think so?

If not, what was missing?

Exploring Communication

I think proper communication occurs when:

In all of the above scenarios, communication was incomplete. The sender sent a message which was either not received, or if received, was not listened to or was misinterpreted by the listener.

Communication is not unique to humans. Animals, even plants communicate. The process of communication becomes more and more complex as we travel up the evolutionary path. Plants communicate through chemicals. Animals, such as snakes, use their body; while others like dogs and cats use their body as well as sounds (barking, cooing) to communicate with others. As humans we have the advantage of language. We use our body - facial expressions and body language, different sounds and tones of voice, and words to communicate with others. While words allow us to communicate abstract notions, words can also lead to miscommunication, if we do not choose them carefully.

Communication among humans is not a simple, mechanical process where information gets mechanically transferred without any change. The sender who initiates the process first **encodes** his thoughts into expressions in the form of verbal and non-verbal language. There after this message is transmitted either orally or through some other medium like letter or telephone. When the message reaches the receiver, it gets **decoded** so as to complete the transaction.

Which of the statements about communication are true? Tick them.

1. The process used to convey information, thoughts, emotions from one to another is called communication.
2. Communication is a simple mechanical process where information gets mechanically transferred without any change.
3. Communication is the base and the most important aspect of every relationship.
4. Words are the most important means of communication in my day to day life.
5. My body language does not say as much as words.
6. When there is a mismatch between the body language and words of a person, I should pay more attention to the words.
7. Communication is complete when the other person receives the information I sent.
8. Communication is complete when the other person understands what I am saying.
9. I need to communicate well only with my friends, family and teachers.
10. I need not communicate with my batchmates, they never agree with me.
11. Communication is complete and proper when I make the other person agree with me.
12. Listening is not the same as hearing.
13. Listening is as important in communication as speaking.
14. When I am speaking, others should listen. It is not my job to ensure that they are listening.
15. If someone is speaking to me then I should listen even though I am preoccupied.
16. As the sender of the message, I should make sure that the other person has understood me.
17. When I ignore somebody, I have stopped communicating with them.
18. To a large extent, my personal wellbeing, happiness and success depend upon my communication capability.
19. Only humans know how to communicate.
20. I am, at all times, consciously or unconsciously, communicating with others in my environment.

What is communication?

Communication is a process through which we let others around us understand our feelings, thoughts, ideas and information. As long as we are awake, we are in a communication. Even when we do not say anything, and sit quietly, we are communicating something to those around us. For example, withdrawing from a friend when they have upset you sends a message to the friend that “something is wrong”.

Even when we are alone, we are in communication with ourselves.

Why do we need it?

We need some means of communication because we live in groups, surrounded by an environment in which things are happening constantly. We need to be able to tell others about what is happening within us and around us so that they can respond appropriately.

Many feelings – like hunger, thirst, pain cannot be transferred to another person. We can only tell a person how hungry or thirsty we are!

Why do we need this skill?

If we have been communicating since we were born, then what is the need to learn this skill now? Don't we already know it?

Communication in human beings, who use language, is not an easy simple process. It involves many steps. Many a time we use just one or two steps and think that our communication is complete. This often leads to miscommunication. So, for effective communication we need to learn the skill.

The communication process -

A wants to communicate to B

Step 1: Thoughts/ feelings A want to convey

Step 2: A chooses words that convey the message

Step 3: A conveys the message (tone of voice, body language)

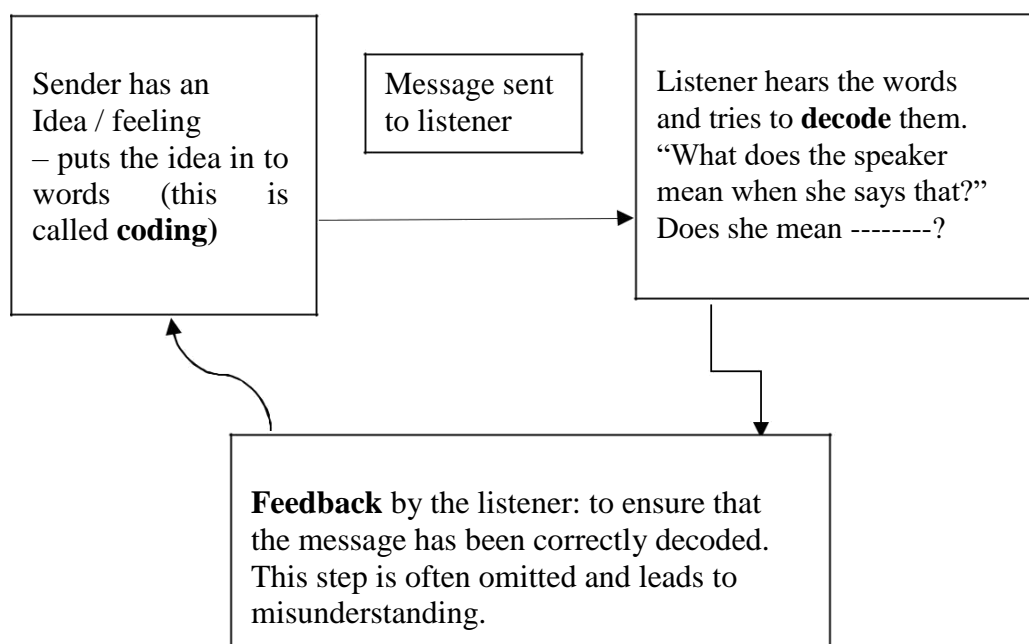
Step 4: B hears the message (words and tone of voice), sees the body language.

Step 5: B thinks about all this and gives it a meaning.

Step 6: B checks with A to make sure that the meaning that B has given is what A had meant in the first place.

Step 7: A confirms or corrects the impression that B has formed.

Steps 6 and 7 are often left out leading to a lot of miscommunication, misunderstanding and conflicts.



How much of our communication is through words? A study conducted by Professor Albert Mehrabian of the University of California, USA on communications of feelings and attitudes showed that more than 50% of our communication of feelings and attitudes is non - verbal (body language), more than 35% is through tone of voice and less than 10% is through words. As the entire process of communication involves many stages, it is quite possible that the message intended may get distorted at any point of time. This interference can come in a variety of forms:

1. What the sender means to say
2. What the sender actually says
3. What the other person hears
4. What the other person thinks he hears
5. What the other person wants to say in reply
6. What the other person actually says in reply
7. What the sender thinks the receiver says and so on

How to be an effective communicator?

When I am the speaker:

I need to be aware of the following aspects.

1. **The Words I Choose:** Words can be the mirror to my feelings - as accurate as possible. Having a large vocabulary helps!

I need not feel apologetic about how I feel. This means being assertive in our speaking. I say how I feel. All feelings are fine. I can choose whether to express them or not. If I choose to express a feeling, I can use appropriate words. Being assertive means not being aggressive, not being passive, but knowing how to speak about one's feelings, rights and beliefs without being insulting or aggressive.

Aggressive communication:

Laxmi is late for school because her friend Meena who had asked her to wait, came late. Laxmi is feeling upset because she does not like to be late for school.

Laxmi: "You idiot! I am now late because of you!"

Meena keeps quiet. She is feeling upset. Both walk rapidly to school, keeping distance between them.

Passive communication:

Laxmi is late for school because her friend Meena who had asked her to wait, came late. Laxmi is feeling upset because she does not like to be late for school. But she feels that if she speaks strongly to Meena, she will stop being her friend.

Laxmi: "Come come, let's go fast!"

Meena keeps chattering and walking slowly. Laxmi is nervous and scared of being late for class.

Assertive, effective communication:

Laxmi is late for school because her friend Meena who had asked her to wait, came late. Laxmi is feeling upset because she does not like to be late for school.

Laxmi: "Hey what took you so long? I have been waiting for a while. Let's hurry up and walk quickly. You can talk on the way!"

Both walk rapidly to school.

Meena explains what had delayed her.

"To practice self-assertiveness is to live authentically, to speak and act from my innermost convictions and feelings—as a way of life, as a rule." Nathaniel Branden

What would be the reaction if you said "I love you" to:

Your parent _____

Your friend _____

Your sibling _____

Your pet _____

Your teacher _____

Your principal _____

Your neighbour's 2-year-old son/ daughter _____

Your neighbour's 20-year-old son/ daughter _____

Right word at right place helps to build relationships whereas right word at the wrong place breaks the same.

Communication is context specific. Behavioural psychologists say that communication is a dance - every dance is different and every dancer is different. When spouses converse, it is a particular context, when parents and children talk it is a different context, and when a boss gives instructions to subordinates it is yet another context. Talking to customers is a completely different context. Therefore, let's be sensitive to the environment and respond accordingly.

When appreciating, pick out a detail that you liked and talk about that. Avoid using general terms like Great! Awesome! Amazing! Far out! Beautiful! Excellent! Nice!

Instead, describe. Describe what you liked about it. This conveys your true feelings to the other person and they realize that you have genuinely paid attention to what you are talking about. If you genuinely don't find anything to appreciate in that person / object, then keep quiet, rather than fake appreciation or pile the person with false praise. You may fake the words, but your body language and tone will give the game away.

2. The tone of my voice: My voice has many qualities such as volume, rhythm, pitch which when wrongly used may distort the meaning of words uttered. Communication experts suggest that speaking is not what you say, but how you say it. For instance, the emphasis on different words in the following sentence may give rise to different meanings to the listener:

“**Shivani** married John” “Shivani **married** John” “Shivani married **John**”

Words provide the content of the communication, voice together with body language provides the context. A word can be whispered, screamed, sung, spoken softly, spoken with anger, said joyfully, with worry or with sadness. What changes in all this is the tone of the voice, because the word remains the same. Try saying “Thank you” in all the above ways.

Our feelings get expressed in the tone of our voice. People pay more attention to this than to the actual word being spoken.

3. My body language: Body language is my body's silent language. My body automatically expresses my feelings using facial expressions, looks in the eye, gestures, posture and actions. When I was born, I could not speak, but I was very good at expressing myself! My parents got the message loud and clear.

Body language accounts for 55%, the majority, of communication of feelings and attitudes. It has the largest impact. Without body language, communication feels 'dry' – as in an email.

I cannot not communicate. ‘No communication’ is also a way of communicating something. For example, withdrawing from a friend when the friend has upset you sends a message saying “something is wrong”.

Let me learn how to read the body language of others. It will help me understand them better. It may also help me by alerting me to danger, deceit and duplicity.

Feelings conveyed by body language –

Confidence	Insecurity
Standing or sitting straight	Biting finger nails
Hands behind back or in coat / jacket pockets	Rubbing thumb over fingers
Maintaining eye contact	Hands in pocket
Openness	Defensiveness
Standing or sitting with hands by the side	Arms crossed over chest
Palms open	Palms fisted, pointing with index finger
Unbuttoned coat or jacket	Legs crossed
Cooperation	Frustration
Leaning forward	Tightly clenched fists
Open hands	Wringing hands
Sitting on the edge of chair to lean forward	Rubbing back of the neck, running hand through hair
Tilted head	Short breaths
Stressed	Nervousness
Jaw or chin support	Clearing throat, Whistling
Hair clasp	perspiration
Temple support	Fidgeting, wringing hands
	Covering mouth while speaking

I can read the attitude and feelings of others. But do I have any control over my body language?
 If I am nervous while going for an interview, is there anything I can do to reduce this feeling?
 How can I hold my body to emanate confidence?

We are all aware that our feelings are reflected in our body. When we feel sad, we cry. When we feel happy, we smile and laugh. Recent research in neurophysiology suggests that willfully changing the expression on our face and changing the posture of our body changes our feelings.

Here are some instances where the person changes the body language to change their feelings.
 Tick the ones you have experienced:

- I am feeling bored in class. I am slouching and my head is bent. I am feeling sleepy.
- I sit up straight, raise my head and look up. I begin to feel attentive.

- I am lying in bed. I am reading a course book. I am falling asleep.
- I get up, sit at a desk / study table. I feel awake.
- I am lounging on a Sunday afternoon. I am feeling bored.
- I take a walk around the house. I feel better.
- I am feeling low. I begin to hum a tune. I feel better.
- I am feeling drowsy. My limbs are limp.
- I stretch my body. I feel awake.
- I have pain. I pay more attention to the pain. I feel even more pain.
- I look away, do something else. Pain reduces.

It is quite clear that I can exaggerate or reduce a particular feeling in me by thinking differently about it or simply by changing my body's attitude (body language).

When I am feeling nervous, I can check my body's language and willfully hold my body in an attitude of confidence. For instance, if I am wringing my hands, fidgeting or covering my mouth, I can consciously stop. I can hold my hands behind my back, stand straight and speak without covering my mouth. I am bound to feel more confident and less nervous.

4. Facial Expression: The face conveys the majority of our emotions. A face can light up with enthusiasm, energy, and approval, express confusion or boredom, and scowl with displeasure. The eyes are particularly expressive in showing joy, sadness, anger, or confusion.

5. Postures and Gestures: Our body postures can create a feeling of warm openness or cold rejection. For example, when someone faces us, sitting quietly with hands loosely folded in the lap, a feeling of interest, openness and flexibility is created. A posture of arms crossed on the chest gives a feeling of being closed, rigid and not cooperative. The action of sitting on the edge of a seat conveys a loss of interest and a desire to end the conversation.

3. Appearance: Living as we do in a clothed society, clothes (along with jewelry, shoes, makeup) have become an extension of our personality. Each garment, each ornament, each shoe, depending on its colour, style, size and shape means something for us.

Self- reflection - Which of the following attitudes or meanings could be conveyed through clothes alone? Tick them.

- Serious
- Interested
- Disinterested
- Confident
- Casual
- Nervous
- Practical
- Mature
- Childish
- Sexy
- Modern
- Traditional

- Futuristic
- Poor
- Determined
- Professional
- Meticulous
- Sad
- Happy
- Artistic

There is more to the list. You can add your own.

Considering the varied meanings that our clothes can have, how would you dress for:

A party in a friend's house

A job interview

An admission interview to an academic institution

A prayer hall

A cousin's marriage

A funeral

Going to college

Going to buy vegetables

Going to a mall

I may feel that I should have the freedom to dress as I please. After all, it is a very personal matter. However, the truth of the matter is that I am communicating with the people around me even when I do not speak. How I dress, how I sit, stand or walk sends a message to those around me.

You would not dress for a funeral the way you dress for a wedding. In both instances, you would dress appropriately. What is considered appropriate would vary from time to time and place to place. You would know what is considered appropriate in your social circle.

According to a survey among business corporations:

96% said their employees had a better chance of getting ahead if they knew how to dress.

72% said they would stall a person's promotion who did not dress appropriately.

84% turned down people who dressed inappropriately for job interviews.

Tips for effective sending skills:

1. Before speaking, I can clarify my feelings/ thoughts / information that I wish to convey.
2. I can be aware of my feelings. These unconsciously affect my body language and tone of voice. The receiver will pick up more information from my body language and tone (93%) than from my words.
3. Though words constitute only 7% of our usual communication, they are important. I can choose them carefully. This is because words can also affect or evoke emotions. I can check whether my words are correctly reflecting my feelings and thoughts.
4. I need to speak clearly, in an audible manner, which is appropriate to the environment I am in.
5. I need to wait and listen to the response from the listener.
6. I can seek feedback from the listener to make sure that the listener has understood what I wanted to convey. The response from the listener often gives an idea about what they have understood. If needed I can also ask the listener to repeat or paraphrase what I have said.

Is there a difference between hearing and listening? What is it?

Hearing is done with the ear and brain. Listening is done with the ear, the brain, the mind and the heart. It involves the whole body. Listening is a way of showing interest in the other person. It requires a desire to understand, respect and accept another's point of view. While listening we need to set aside our own thoughts and feelings. We need to resist the desire to evaluate, judge and approve or disapprove of what the person is saying.

Often, people worry that if they listen attentively and patiently to a person who is saying something they disagree with, they may be sending a message of agreement. This is not true. After the person has finished speaking, we can express our own point of view in words that do not insult or make that person wrong.

Listening

Why should we listen? When we listen empathetically, we begin to understand the other person and his/ her point of view, irrespective of whether we agree with the person or not. Empathy is to feel the feelings of the other person. When we listen, we may hear something that is important or useful for us. When we speak, we can only talk about what we already know. When we listen, we may hear something we do not know. It helps build our knowledge, experience and relationships.

I need to be completely present in the 'here and now' (what's happening at the moment and not something that already happened or something that is going to happen). Also, it is important that I convey to the speaker that they have been heard, understood and that I am genuinely interested in the information that is being shared. Then I am 'actively listening'. Active listening is hearing with empathy. It involves taking off my shoes to put myself in the other person's shoes.

I am not a passive receiver of information like a fax machine or a voice mail box. I actively decode the signals from the sender. This decoding (interpretation of signals, both verbal and non-verbal) depends on my cultural, social and mental background. Therefore, to complete the communication and avoid misunderstandings I must make sure that what I deciphered was indeed the information thought or feeling that the sender wanted to convey.

When I am the listener:

I need to be aware of the following aspects.

1. The speaker's body language, tone, words: We need to listen to the **underlying feelings and thoughts**. Sometimes the words being used by the speaker are inappropriate. We should not be carried away by the words alone. Especially when people are angry, they often say or do things that they do not really mean and regret later on.

Consider the following examples –

Instance 1 –

Teenager comes home really late. The parent is worried about safety and is waiting at the door. Parent (feels relieved, but does not express it) says, “What kept you so long? You should have been back 2 hours ago! You never come back on time.”

Teenager responds, “So what if I am a little late? You just don't trust me, do you?”

Parent says, “You are so irresponsible! You don' care for others!”

Instance 2 –

Teenager comes home late. Parent worried about safety, is waiting at the door.

Parent (feels relieved, and chooses right words to express it) says, “I was worried about you – wondering what happened. I am glad you are back safe. You had said you would be back much earlier. I was waiting for you.”

Teenager responds, “I got a little delayed. I didn't know you would be so worried. Next time I will let you know if I am going to be late.”

Parent says, “It's all right. Inform me if you are going to be late.”

The teenager was reacting to what was said. Angry words could give rise to angry responses. Feeling words often give rise to understanding and caring responses.

2. My own body language: I can face the speaker and maintain eye contact. My posture can be open with arms and legs uncrossed. I can convey to the speaker that I am getting the message by appropriate head gestures.

Giving feedback / asking for feedback:

Communication does not end with “sending the information”. Communication is complete only after the receiver makes sure that the message, they received was the message the sender intended to send. This step is very important to complete effective communication. In this step, the listener checks with the speaker whether the message as understood by them is what was

meant by the sender. The listener can ask for clarification if they have not understood something. It allows confirmation of the message. If the listener is not giving feedback, the speaker can ask for it.

Given this information, how can I make communication more effective?

I may want to communicate an idea, some information or a feeling I have. Of these, communicating feelings is the toughest. It is also the most important for my wellbeing.

In order to convey to the sender that the listener has understood him, it's important to send the information that has been shared back to the sender. This can be done by using few of the sender's exact words (key words, words that the speaker emphasized on) and a few of listener's own words. This is called paraphrasing. Paraphrasing is different from mere parroting. It's repeating the sender's information along with a bit of reflection of their feelings, trying to gauge the sender's feelings in the information shared.

For example:

Sender – “My mother has always been partial towards my brother. I was always asked to compromise since I was the elder one. She would always say ‘you need to understand since you’re the elder one’, and I would be taken for granted.

Listener – “You feel that your mother has been partial towards your younger brother, whereas you were expected to understand and compromise because you were the elder one and were also taken for granted! You feel this was unfair.”

Sender – “Yes, exactly.”

There are times when a whole lot of information has been shared at once without the interference or intervention of the listener. It gets difficult and time consuming to paraphrase the whole chunk of information in a go. To paraphrase a larger slot of information the listener can quickly summarize the information and put it back to the sender along with a bit of reflection of feelings. This is called summarizing. Summarization would assure the sender that the listener has been genuinely listening and has understood all the important information.

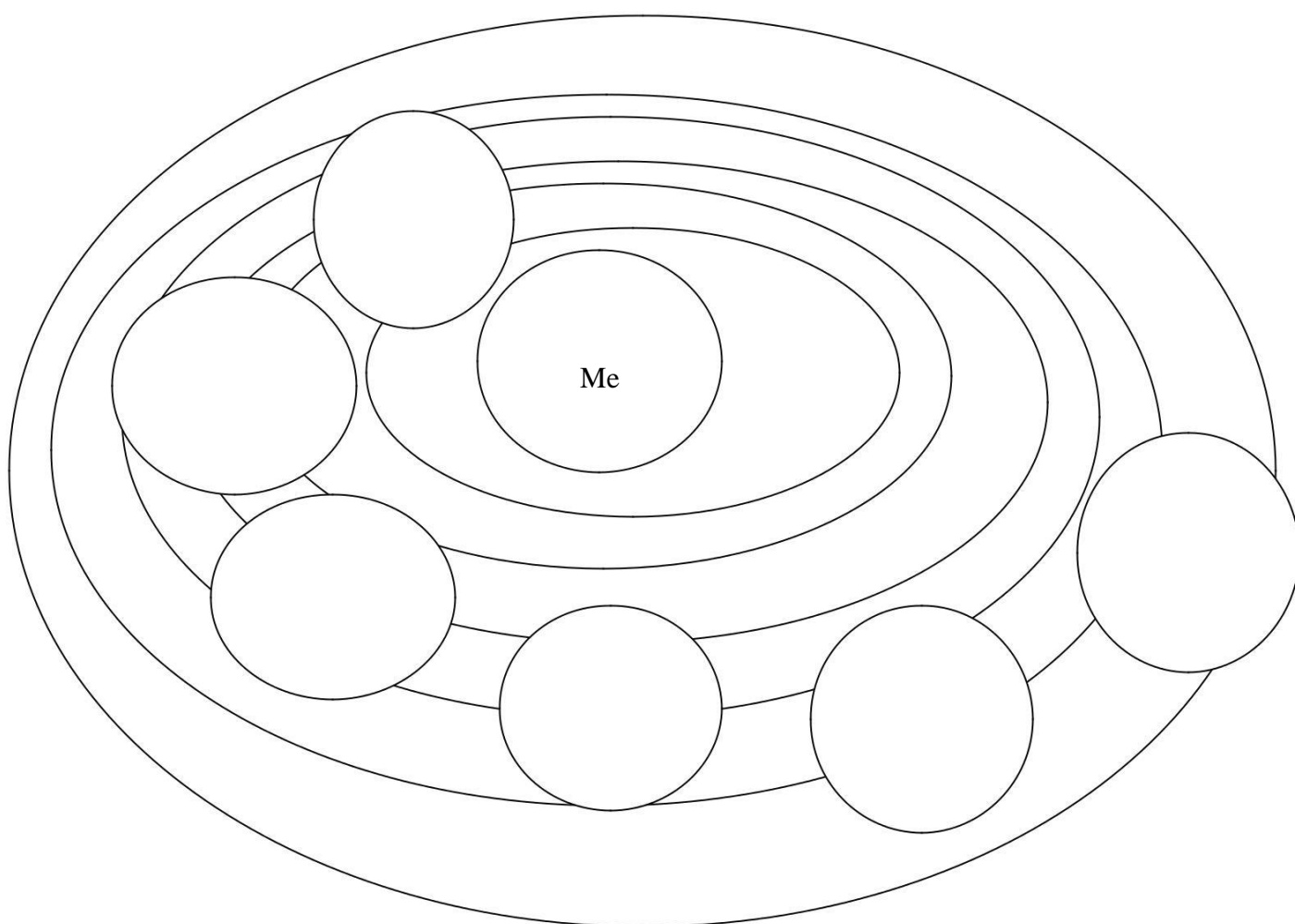
Interpersonal Relationships

In the first section, you explored self-awareness – your relationship with your own self. Now, after communication skills, it is time to delve into interpersonal relationships. What is a relationship? How do relationships form? How are they maintained? And what can be done to change them?

If you were to depict your life as a solar system, with you at the center, whom would you place and where in the diagram below?

People waiting to join your solar system are:

Cousins, siblings, parents, grandparents, friends, best friend (s), uncles, aunts, distant relatives, colleagues, boss, principal, shop keeper, vegetable vendor, family doctor, doctors working in hospitals, plumber, electrician, carpenter, policemen, mechanic, road sweeper, commuters on the road, household helper, romantic partner, film stars, sports persons, authors, singers, models, painters, spiritual leaders, lawyers, judges, accountants, artisans, tailors, beauticians, dieticians, gym owners, beggars, leaders, orphans, scientists, social workers, counselors, fashion designers, postman, gardener, politicians of your state, Prime Minister of your country, PM of the neighbouring country, people of other countries,...



Would you have imagined that there are so many people in your world? Do you share a relationship with all of them?

Here are some thought provoking questions about the origin and extent of relationships.

1. What does relationship mean to me?

In algebra, you may have read that A and B are related. If A changes, there is a change in B. A and B share a relationship. In life, relationship is a feeling. It is a feeling in which a change/action by one person produces a change or effect in another.

Relationships are also free of constraints like time, space, laws and family. You may have experienced close relationships with people who are not your relatives - friends are a prime example. You can shift people across time and space and bring them close to yourself.

2. Why do I need relationships? Why can't I live independently – all by myself?

As social animals, we have survived through millions of years because we stayed in a group. Even today we live in groups. In our daily life we interact with hundreds of people. Each interaction depends upon our level of relationship. Without any direct or indirect interaction with other people it would be very difficult to survive.

3. Is it possible for me not to be in a relationship with anyone?

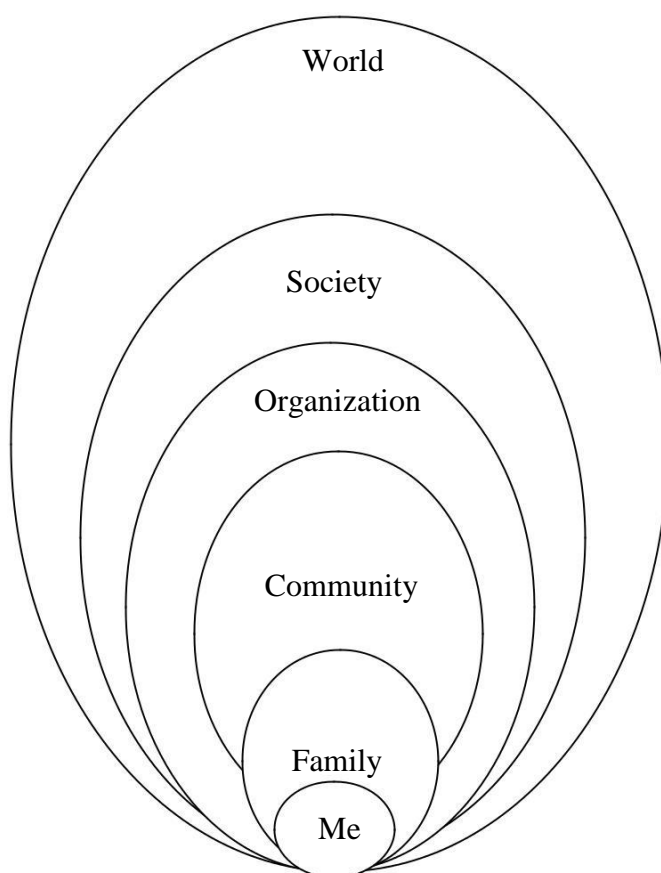
Quite impossible. Since a human child is incapable of independent survival for quite some time after birth, it follows that each and every one of us was looked after by someone or the other, at least for the first few years of their lives. We automatically bonded with this /these people and our very first conscious relationships started forming.

4. Is it possible for me to be in a relationship with everyone in the world?

Strange as it may sound, each and every one of us is in a relationship with each and every person in our world. And now comes the question, who is in your world? Who is in my world? Each person lives in a world unique to them. Here we are considering the emotional world, the world of experiences. Not the physical world – which you and your family share. The emotions, the experiences that you have are unique to you. They make up your life. No one else, not even your twin would have exactly the same experiences. You live in a unique world of your own making.

Take some time to fill in the following diagram about actual people in your world:

1. The central person in my world: me
2. People who are closest to me: (usually parents siblings, friends) Write their names in the second circle.
3. People in my community - relatives, neighbours
4. People in my organization: teachers, colleagues
5. People in my society: shopkeepers, police, government officials.
6. People in the last circle are people I do not know personally but whose actions will impact my life and my world. For instance, if a country declared war on your country, it would impact your life. So that country and those people are part of your world. Write a few names in these circles too.



It is quite obvious that you share a ‘close’ relationship with people who are ‘close’ to you emotionally (not necessarily physically). As you move outwards from the circle, the strength

of your relationship diminishes. You are however, in a relationship with everyone in your world.

You have the freedom to take any one (or many) and put them close to you. That is called building relationships.

Relationships and my life

But hold on. I am getting swamped by all this relationship stuff. At times I feel I would have been happier if I was left alone. I would like to be independent. I don't want to be answerable to anyone.

Let us imagine a life devoid of relationships. How would my life be?

How would I feel if:

- My birthday came around and no one wished me.
- I felt very happy but there was no one around to share it with.
- I was successful, but I went alone to my favourite restaurant to celebrate because I had no friends or relatives or colleagues who would come with me.
- I fell ill. No one came to help me. I was too sick to even call for an ambulance.
- I was feeling low. I had no one to talk to about my feelings.
- I wanted be in a long term romantic relationship. I had no friends. I had no romantic partner. No relatives came forward to arrange a 'match' for me.
- I had no pet either!

Looks like life would be pretty lonely without relationships. My life could do with at least a few close relationships.

Relationship Levels:

If you were to hear the following exchanges between two people, how would you rate the level of their relationship on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being a distant, shallow relationship and 5 being a close, deep relationship)?

1. "The weather is changing"
"Yes, it was so cold today morning." Probable Level of relationship
2. "I felt so anxious today. I overslept and then I missed the bus. There was no auto around. I thought I would miss the appointment."
"Oh my! You must have been worried. Did you make it to the interview in time?"
Probable Level of relationship
3. "Good morning!"
"Good morning!"
Probable Level of relationship
4. Two women are sitting side by side. One has put her head in her hands. Other has put an arm around her. Neither is talking. They sit like this for 10 minutes. Probable Level of relationship
5. "I don't like what is happening in our political system. I think all corrupt politicians should be barred from contesting elections."

“I think if everyone voted, we could get rid of these people. Our government should make voting compulsory.”

Probable Level of relationship

Typically, relationships pass through 5 stages, step by step, as they develop:

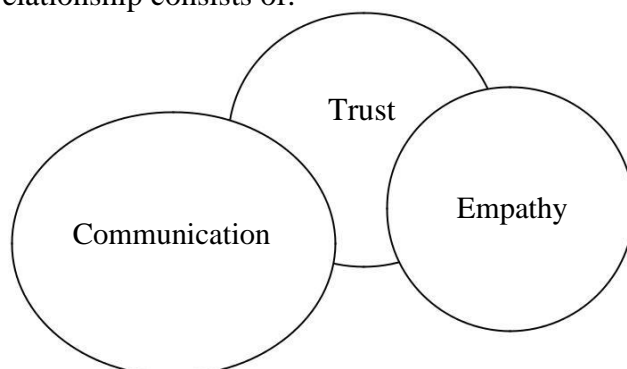
1. Initial stage: Cliché level – the “hi”, “hello”, “good morning”, “all the best!” “take care” stage.
This is the starting stage of any relationship. People are just becoming acquainted. These kinds of exchanges are socially acceptable between strangers. With many people in our community or neighborhood we may remain at this level.
2. Second stage: Information stage - “What is the time?” People have crossed the initial awkward stage and are feeling comfortable enough to ask for information. This is the relationship level between a regular customer and a shopkeeper.
3. Third stage: Opinion stage – people involved feel close enough to start sharing their opinions. “What do you think of the new English teacher?”
This level of relationship is seen among colleagues, students and teachers, casual friends.
4. Fourth stage: Experience stage – people involved have developed enough trust in each other. They now start sharing their experiences and feelings. “I am feeling very upset today. Today, at home there was such a ruckus. My brother and my mother were shouting and screaming at each other...”
If the person’s feelings are respected and shared experiences are not ridiculed or taken advantage of, then the relationship deepens further. Level of trust also develops. Close friends, siblings, child and parent, husband and wife, mentor and student, counselor and counselee often reach this level of relationship.
5. Last stage of a deep relationship is when words are not required to communicate. Two people become so intimately linked with each other that they can sense correctly the feelings/ thoughts of the other person. This stage, though rewarding, is rare.

Building Blocks of Relationships

Relationship is a bond, an intricate web of feelings that keeps people together. It helps me as much as it helps others.

How can I strengthen my relationships?

The web of relationship consists of:



Empathy, the basis for a humane relationship:

The ability to empathize is innate. As our brain develops, the empathy center also develops. It allows us to realize what the other person must be feeling. This is the center that makes us say “ouch” when we see someone getting hurt. Mirror neurons and spindle cells in our brain help us automatically discern the feelings of others when we watch them. Empathy can be aroused just by hearing about an event.

Empathy is different from sympathy because sympathy arises out of pity. Empathy is like stepping into someone else's shoes. Sympathy is wishing the person had better shoes!

Empathetic communication touches our heart. It builds relationships. In the section on communication, we discussed empathetic listening. Empathy is listening so intently and identifying so closely that you experience the other person's situation, thoughts and emotions. (Berger 1987).

Tips for empathetic listening:

- Pay full attention. Do not engage in any other activity
- Listen without interrupting the speaker
- Deploy both ears - one for meaning and other for feeling!
- Make eye contact (maintaining eye contact doesn't mean staring into the person's eye, occasional breaks are required.)
- Sense the feelings of the speaker
- Rephrase information to check accuracy
- After the speaker has finished speaking, you may ask them questions to clarify something you did not understand. Make sure that your **questions are out of concern and not curiosity.**

Blocks to empathetic listening:

1. Negative judgmental response – by words, body language or tone. Example, “Oh my God! How could you?” These can halt a conversation in its tracks.
2. Judging in your mind, “Crazy!” “Stupid!”
3. Questions out of curiosity.

4. Trying to outguess the speaker. “I know why he is saying this! I know what is happening in his mind. I know!” The point is, you never know what is going on in someone else’s mind.
5. Thinking about yourself – how does this impact me? What will happen to me? Why is this being said to me? This takes away your concentration from the speaker.
6. Comparing your experience with the speaker’s. (Whose experience was more intense? More serious? More tough?)
7. Jumping to conclusions based on what is being shared. Trying to mind read the person. (“She sounds really angry with her dad. Probably she doesn’t share a good relation with him”)
8. Planning what to say next or getting ready with a counter reaction.
9. Interrupting the conversation before the person finishes sharing what he had to say.
10. Daydreaming – thinking about something totally off track, not related to the current situation.
11. Getting into an advice mode – “why don’t you....”
12. Considering yourself right and smarter than the speaker. So, whatever has been shared is not considered important.

Empathetic speaking: Words that build relationships

How many times have you not said something to someone because you thought it would hurt them? Are there ways to express my feelings without hurting the other person?

Let’s search for a way.

How would you feel if someone close to you said this to you:

- | | |
|----------------------------|--------------|
| “You irritate me.” | I would feel |
| “You never understand me.” | I would feel |
| “You don’t care for me.” | I would feel |
| “Don’t make me angry.” | I would feel |
| “You are so insensitive.” | I would feel |
| “Don’t try my patience.” | I would feel |
| “You don’t love me.” | I would feel |

Chances are, you felt angry, guilty, offended, hurt, disliked, rejected, irritated or plain fed up with the constant complaints and blames. The speaker was busy blaming you. The speaker was not communicating his or her feelings. This kind of communication breaks, rather than builds relationships.

How would you feel if someone close to you said this to **you** because of something you did

“I feel irritated when I am bombarded with questions.”
I would feel

“I feel misunderstood. I feel frustrated and angry when that happens.” I would feel

“I feel as if I am being taken for granted. I feel unappreciated.” I would feel

“I feel very angry when my things are taken without my permission.” I would feel

“I feel hurt when I am spoken to like that.”
I would feel

“I feel as though I am on the edge. I am exhausted. I cannot handle this at the moment.” I would feel

“I feel unaccepted.”
I would feel

If someone spoke to you like this, you would understand what they were going through. You would probably go out of your way to make the person feel better. The speaker has truthfully communicated his or her feelings, without hurting or blaming you. This kind of communication builds relationships.

When I speak in a manner that truthfully expresses my feelings without hurting or blaming anyone else, it is called empathetic speaking.

Tips for empathetic speaking:

1. Begin the sentence with an “I”.
2. Talk about yourself – your feelings, your desires.
3. Do not bring in a “you”. Saying things like, “you did ...” or, “you don’t ...” make the listener feel blamed. They immediately become defensive and stop caring about the speaker's feelings.
4. Describe the event that caused the feeling. Blame the event, not the person. Example: “I feel very angry when my things are taken without my permission.” (and not “I feel upset because you take things without my permission”)

Building trust:

Trust is a feeling – and the cornerstone of a close relationship. If you remove it the whole bridge will come crumbling down.

How does trust develop?

If you look back at the earlier section on self-awareness, where we discussed the development of self-esteem, you will find the table that shows how a baby develops trust. When a baby's demands are met, when it is touched, held and cuddled, it causes the release of a hormone called oxytocin that leads to development of trust. This is how a baby bonds with the care giver.

I got that, but what about later in life? How do I learn to trust someone later in my life?

Think of all the people you are friendly with. Now reflect on these questions:

How many friends do I have?

How many of these do I trust?

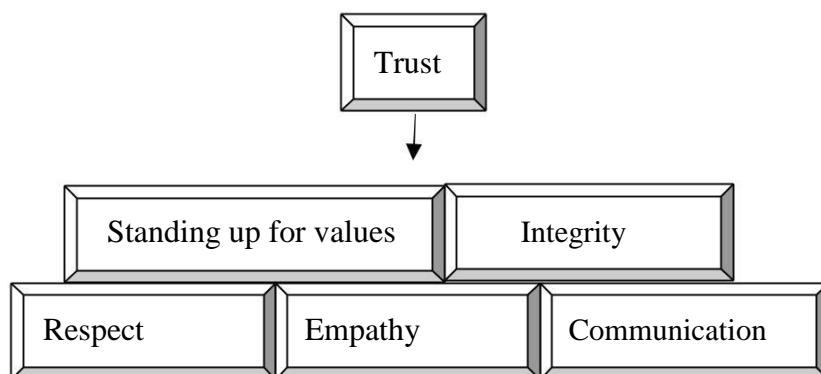
Why do I trust some and not others?

Think of one person (not your parent) whom you trust. Why do you trust this person so much? What is the basis for your trust? What happened?

That is your answer to how trust develops. It develops over time, as you spend time together, talk to each other, exchange opinions and share your experiences.

If during this time you find that the other person is considerate, empathetic, respects you, keeps their word, keeps your secrets and stands by you through thick and thin, then you begin to trust that person.

Building blocks of Trust:



IV – Coping with emotions and coping with stress

Coping with Emotions

I have a fair idea about how I build my self-esteem, communicate effectively and build relationships. There is however one stumbling block - my emotions. Sometimes I get carried away – like a paper boat sucked into a whirlpool. It takes me a while to calm down. How can I communicate effectively when I am having such strong feelings? Sometimes what I say or do at that time damages rather than builds relationships.

In this section we are going to look at how these strong emotions arise and what we can do to channelize them in a direction of our choice. In other words, we are going to explore who holds the control button – our emotions or us?

Emotions and feelings

Are emotions the same as feelings?

What would I label as an emotion and what would I consider a feeling?

Emotion

Consider for a moment that Emotions are a form of energy. Emotions are the fuel for action. They motivate us to act or de-motivate us. A strong feeling of any kind is an emotion – for example hatred, anger, love, joy or grief.

Coping with emotions

Some emotions fill my body with energy. When I am feeling gung-ho about something, I am able to work, be active and accomplish a lot. Some emotions seem to suck away all energy from me. I feel drained, sad and pessimistic. Then all I do is sit and brood. It will not be wrong to say that emotions translate into energy levels in me.

Out of the list of feelings below, let me tick the ones that fill me with energy:

Joy, desperation, sadness, anger, anxiety, nervousness, love, fear, rebelliousness, fun, hurt, rejection, encouragement, loneliness, fearlessness, optimism, pessimism, happiness, shame.

Here are some examples of less empowering feelings. You can add some of your own:

anxiousness	guilt	upset	embarrassment	abandonment
uneasiness	worry	sadness	discouragement	nervousness
stress	fear	tension	hurt	foolishness
loneliness	shame	hopelessness	panic	disappointment
	rejection	blame	pessimism	

How can I deal with emotions that lower my energy levels?

Before I can deal with my feelings, I need to understand what causes these feelings.

Tick the statements you think correctly explain the cause of our emotions:

- It's because of something that happens in our body, some chemical imbalance or hormonal imbalance.
- It's because of the bad things that happen to us - if we are treated badly by others; abused, mistreated by our parents as children, or betrayed by a loved one.
- It's because we feel others around us are better than us. We know we are not as good or smart or pretty as the other person. We compare ourselves with others and feel less confident and successful.
- It's because of the way we think about all that happens in our lives.

What triggers my feelings and emotions?

Like any other living thing, I have developed sense organs that help me know what is happening in my environment. Feelings are sensations, but as an intelligent, thinking being, I am able to go beyond mere physical sensation.

For instance, if I am feeling cold, I do not stop with just that sensation. I proceed to interpret it further with questions like why am I feeling cold? It is winter yet? Am I coming down with a cold? What will happen if I fall sick now? Tomorrow is my interview! Oh my god! I hope I don't fall sick now... This kind of reasoning and thinking will soon produce 'worry' and stress in my mind and not just a feeling of 'cold'. It makes me feel as if I have no agency, no ability or power to influence the outcome.

Strong emotions are invariably produced by events or changes that I chose to interpret in a particular way. For instance, if I could have followed a train of thoughts that went like this: 'I am feeling cold. Let me put on a jacket. Tomorrow is my interview. As a precaution I will keep myself warm. I will do steam inhalation also when I get the time. Let me see, what else do I need to do to prepare for the interview?' These thoughts would have produced a sense of agency and confidence in me.

From childhood you may have heard various statements about life and experiences. Which of the following do you believe in?

1. Life is like that. You can't change it.
2. You have to learn to adjust to the circumstances.

3. You have no control over what happens in your life. Try to cope with it.
4. It is all our karma.
5. You should feel _____ when _____ happens.
6. People make me angry.
7. They made me do it.
8. They pushed me to the edge.
9. You are supposed to make me happy.
10. There is so much competition these days.
11. Everyone would feel the same in this situation.
12. People are not trustworthy.
13. You have to be perfect.
14. You should not make mistakes.
15. No body helps anyone these days.
16. Life is unfair.

We have been brought up to think that we are victims of our circumstances and emotions. We have been told that situations and circumstances can be perceived in only one way and that how we feel in a particular situation is beyond our control.

The truth is we feel the way we think. We are not disturbed by events but our opinions about the events.

For instance, what would be the emotions generated if a student who got 50% marks in an exam, thought about it in the following different ways?

1. “Oh my God! What will my parents say? How can I tell them my result?”
Feeling generated would be:
2. “I was expecting low marks. There was a lot in the question paper that I did not know. I can read up and clarify those parts that I do not know.”
Feeling generated would be:
3. “I am going to ask my parents to find me a tutor who can explain this subject to me. I need help in this area.”
Feeling generated would be:
4. “I am going to hide this result from my parents and friends. I can’t face them.”
Feeling generated would be:
5. “I am at the lower end of the class. My friends tease me. They think I am stupid.”
Feeling generated would be:
6. “I am going to ask my friend to explain this to me. She has done well.”
Feeling generated would be:
7. “If my friends make fun of me because of this, then I will know who is a real friend and who is not.”

Feeling generated would be:

In all of the above scenarios, the initial low feeling upon getting 50% marks was quickly replaced by some other stronger emotion depending on the thought process.

By now, you may be getting irritated and thinking ‘What rubbish! It’s not that easy’, or you must be feeling hopeless, thinking ‘I don’t think it really works’ or you may be feeling all pepped up thinking ‘Hey let’s see if this works it might be of great help’....You see, it’s about how you think about it!

So far, we have explored how our thoughts can upset us. Now we come to another idea that is extraordinarily interesting. When we feel upset, the thoughts that make us feel that way are often illogical and distorted. These thoughts may seem logical and as real as the skin on your hand, but they are irrational none the less.

What this means is that when I feel miserable, I am nearly always fooling myself about something, even though I am not aware of this. It is as if I am looking into thick mirrors at an amusement park that makes me look fat, short, skinny, or tall and I believe it. I need to realize that the mirror is not reflecting my true self. In other words, some thoughts I have about myself do not reflect my true nature.

Feelings like anxiety, guilt, hopelessness, frustration are often caused by illogical thoughts. Some examples of the distorted thinking that we do most of the time are given below. Do you sometimes think like this?

1. **All or none thinking** – Look at things in absolute, black and white categories. For example – I didn’t do well in something. I tell myself, “I am a total loser. I am really dumb.” So, it’s like either I am great at something or I am entirely dumb. Either I am at the top or at the bottom. There is nothing in between.
2. **Over generalization** – View a negative event as a never-ending pattern of defeat. ‘One friend betrayed my trust. Therefore, all of them are the same. I can’t trust anyone.’ Or ‘I failed in one test or lost a game; therefore, I am a loser in life forever!’
3. **Mental filter** – Concentrate on negatives and ignore the positives. I concentrate on the day I lost or didn’t play well, or didn’t perform well or didn’t speak well and ignore all the other past events when I did well.
4. **Discounting the positives** – Insist that accomplishments or positive qualities are trivial and don’t count. I concentrate only on my weaknesses and dwell on them. I am not as attractive as my friend therefore, I am not an interesting person in spite of the fact that I am a very good dancer/singer/writer/painter/speaker.
5. **Jumping to conclusions** – Conclude things are bad without any definite evidence.
 - a. Mind reading – I assume that people are thinking negatively about me without any such communication from them.

Often the other person is preoccupied with something else and is not even thinking about us!

- b. Fortune telling – I predict that things will turn out badly.
I think: ‘I know I will do badly in exams’ or ‘I will lose this game’ or ‘I will make a fool out of myself by saying something stupid’ or ‘nobody will like me in the new place or at the party’.
Such thoughts affect my behaviour and then, I actually make them come true!

6. **Magnification or minimization** – Blow things way out of proportion or shrink their importance. After facing a failure, I say “All is lost, nothing can be done now. My whole life is going to be a tragedy!” or “So what if I have the support of my parents and family. What I need is acknowledgment from my best friend and I am not getting it.” or “It’s just a small article that I wrote, it’s no big deal. It’s not all that great, even though it was selected for publication.”
7. **Emotional reasoning** - Reason from how I feel. “I feel like an idiot so I must be one”.
8. **‘Should’ statements** – Criticize yourself or other people with shoulds, shouldn’ts, musts, and have-to. “I should have a bike.” “I should be popular in class.” “I should be perfect”. “I should not make mistakes.” Life neither guarantees anything, nor does it set boundaries or expectations, shoulds or should nots. Its we who do all this!
9. **Labeling** – Instead of labeling the event or the action, I label myself. Instead of saying ‘I made a mistake.’ I tell myself, ‘I am a jerk’. Instead of saying ‘I lost the game’ I say ‘I am a loser’.
10. **Blame** – Play the blame-game instead of identifying what went wrong and how the problem can be resolved. I blame myself for something I wasn’t entirely responsible for, or I blame other people. I overlook the ways in which I or others contributed to a problem. I get so lost in the blame game that I forget to address and resolve the problem.

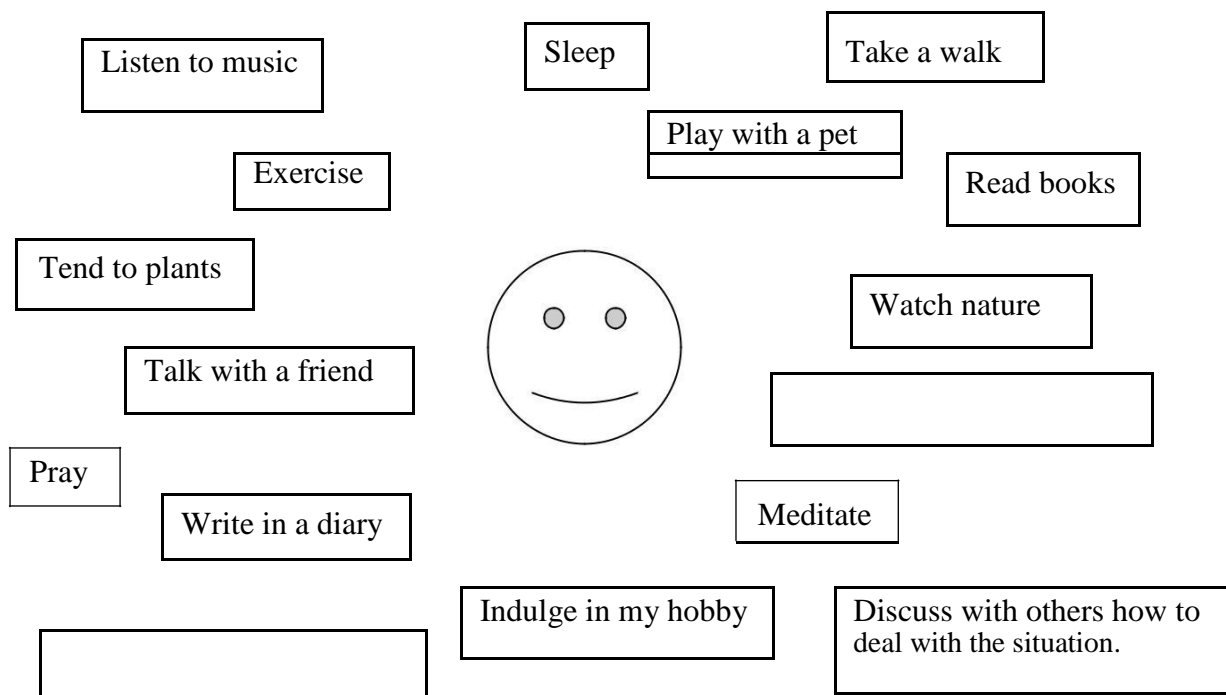
By putting an end to such thoughts, I can change the way I feel. This can be done, because I am the driver of my train of thoughts. I can decide which direction to take. Positive, rational thoughts are thoughts that empower me. Negative, irrational thoughts dis-empower me. I can choose which thoughts to pursue.

In the next few days, watch out for such thoughts and catch yourself whenever you find you are getting sucked into their whirlpool. Replace the thoughts with positive, rational thoughts.

So far, we have been discussing the relationship between thoughts and emotions and how by changing the thoughts, emotions can be changed. Sometimes, our emotions are responses to events that we cannot alter by our thoughts – for instance loss of a loved one.

In the chapter on communication, we discussed how changing the actions or attitude of our body can alter our thoughts and feelings. Sometimes we can use different activities to help us cope with our emotions.

Here is a diagram showing some activities that people do to cope with emotions. Which ones do you use? You can add other activities too.



Anger Management

We will consider anger separately because it is a complex emotion.

Circle the scenarios that usually produce anger in you:

1. When I feel insulted.
2. When I feel rejected.
3. When I feel that my efforts are being thwarted.
4. When I feel frustrated.
5. When I feel powerless.
6. When things are not going according to my plan.
7. When others are not doing as I told them to do.
8. When I am disturbed.
9. When too many demands are made on me.
10. When I feel I am being taken for granted.
11. When people don't agree with my opinions.
12. When people don't accept my ideas.
13. When people indulge in anti-social behaviour.
14. When I am unjustly blamed.

People usually feel angry when they perceive -

- Injustice, unjust blame

- Punishment
- Loss of or damage to something of value
- Rejection
- Disrespect
- Disobedience
- Opposition to ideas, opinions
- Anti-social behaviour by others

Anger is said to be a secondary emotion. Some other feelings often underpin the feeling of anger. Once we understand the basic cause, we will be able to express and channelize anger better.

Some common triggers for anger in daily life and how to defuse them:

1. Perceived Disrespect:

This is a common trigger. Example “How dare they speak to me like that?” “I can’t take it when someone calls me names.” “No self- respecting person would tolerate such behaviour.” The reasoning we follow in such scenarios is that if a person is calling us names then we must resist, negate, challenge or shame that person in order to maintain our dignity. Such reasoning presupposes that whatever the other person is saying about us is the truth or will become the truth, unless I negate it immediately! We also feel that if I let a person get away without retaliating, then our ‘self- respect’ will diminish.

According to this type of reasoning, we would have changed into a donkey or monkey in our childhood itself. Just because a person says something about us, it does not become the truth. We know our worth, our qualities and our abilities. Calling a rose ‘shit’ does not take away its sweet smell. Calling me a stupid, worthless, useless person will not make me one!

In fact, the words a person speaks reflect their own character. They say nothing about the character of the person being referred to. Imagine that you are in a crowded street and two men are making their way through the crowd. One says “Excuse me.” as he makes his way and the other says “Get out of my way!” Whom will you consider to be a dignified person? Words reflect our character and not the character of the people we speak about. The words I use, in daily conversation and when angry, reflect my upbringing and my character. Similarly, the words others use reflect their character and upbringing. When someone says derogatory words to me, I can pity the person rather than get angry about it. To respond angrily is to acknowledge that there is a grain of truth in what has been said. Am I upset because the truth that I was trying to hide is now out in the open?

We can use words that clearly express our displeasure and at the same time do not attack another person’s character.

2. Perceived disobedience and reaction to domination

Disobedience is commonly perceived as a sign of disrespect, and the person in authority gets angry. For example, “If you respect me, then you will do as I am telling you to do.” Or “I respect my elders; how can I go against their wishes?” But obedience and respect are two

different concepts. Soldiers obey their officers, but they respect only some of them. Similarly, I may obey my elders, but do I respect all of them?

When we can see a quality in a person, that we appreciate and consider worthy, then we start developing respect for that person. We value that person's opinion, we listen to them, we consider what the person has said and then decide what to do. Asking for advice is a mark of respect. We may or may not follow their advice, but we still respect them.

3. The misuse and abuse of power

Circle the categories of people you have been told to obey:

parents, teachers, elders, religious leaders, law makers, boss, guide, in-laws, spouse, friends, coach, authority figures,

The reasons I obeyed them were:

More often than not, people obey others out of fear of punishment or adverse consequences. Some consider it their duty, and others do it to get appreciation. Some do it because they are being dominated. This is what people often think when they are being asked to obey someone:

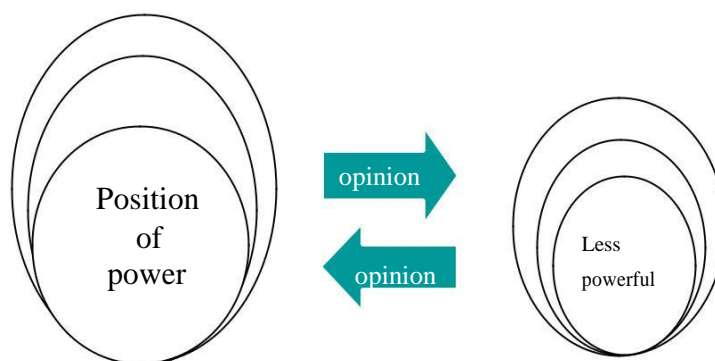
- “What’s the use, I might as well do as they are asking me to do.” (Submit)
- “If I don’t obey, I will get into trouble.” (Submit)
- “This is not going to work. I better leave this place.” (Flight)
- “I am not going to listen to you anymore.” Walk away and slam the door shut behind me. (Flight)
- “How dare they try to force me? No one can make me do something that I don’t want to do. I am not a door mat. I will show them who they are dealing with.” (Resist, Fight)
- “I am not a kid any more. I have my values and I am not going to compromise with that. I am going to put my foot down. I am not going to cooperate. I will resist in my own way.” (Resist)

Respect is not obedience. Disobedience is not disrespect. Disobedience is a reaction to domination.

Power is the ability to produce a change. Power is different from force. Producing a change by force is called domination. Power, be it muscle power, economic power or psychosocial power (which parents, priests, and people in positions of authority might have), is often used to dominate.

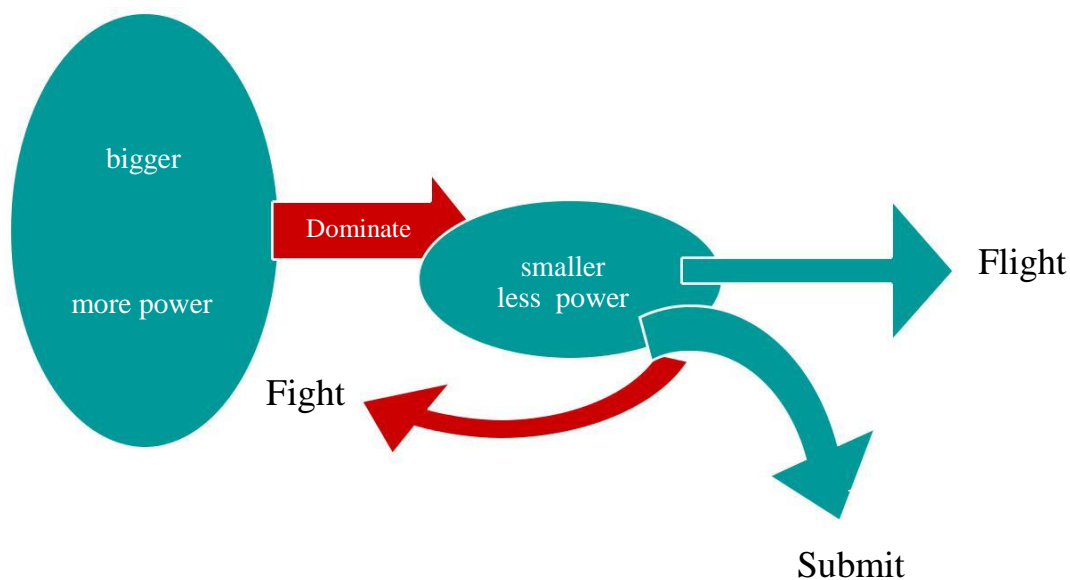
The victim of this abuse of power is left with just three options – to fight back, to submit or to run away to escape from the domination. In all these scenarios the victim feels disempowered, abused, shamed, angry, upset or just unhappy. This is misuse of power.

When there is a free, unbiased, exchange of ideas, opinions and concerns, both parties learn from each other. Both feel empowered. This is appropriate use of power. By discussing, considering each other's opinions, acknowledging each other's concerns; both parties become wiser. This called 'power with' rather than 'power over' and is a sign of maturity.



Consider leaders who practiced ahimsa. They do not use muscle or economic or political power. They use words to express their opinions, and vision. Gandhi used words to enroll people into his vision of a free India. People listened to him; expressed their opinions and discussed the issue with each other. They liked the vision put forth. They enrolled themselves in to the vision voluntarily, freely and enthusiastically in spite of the risks.

Abuse of power is depicted below:



The person, who dominates, does not learn anything new. Those dominated feel low in energy. The negative feelings in hem prevent any creative learning.

Consider this scenario:

Student: "I want to go on a trip with my class. The class is going to Cauvery fishing camp."

Parent: "You cannot go"

Student: "I would like to go with my class. I have never been on any trips."

Parent: "I don't want to send you. It's not safe."

Student: "Three teachers are going with the class. You know my close friends – they are also going. I will be careful. I really want to go."

Parent: "I am scared about accidents. You don't know how to swim. I have heard of so many accidents in that river."

Student: "I can get you the number of the lodge. I promise I will not get into the water. Please can I go? Would you like to speak to my friends? My teachers? You can tell them also that I am not to go in the water. Please?"

Parent: "OK. I suppose you are grown up enough to be careful and responsible. You can go, but get me the phone number."

Student: "Sure! Thanks!"

What happened in the above scenario? How did the student enroll the parent in to giving permission to go out station?

By addressing the parent's concerns, the student was able to enroll the parent into the idea. Aggression antagonizes, while empathetic, respectful and assertive speaking brings about enrollment.

4. Opposition to ideas / opinions

I understand that disobedience happens when people are being forced. However, there are times when I have arguments with people who are at my level of power. Say among friends, cousins, colleagues. Arguments may end with angry outbursts.

What is going on in such situations?

Which statements about opinions do you agree with?

1. My opinion is the only right one.
2. If others oppose my idea/ opinion, then they are opposing me as a person.
3. Everyone has a right to their opinion.
4. Change my opinion after learning new facts is a sign of weakness.
5. Changing my opinion after learning new facts is a sign of maturity.
6. Listening to different opinions opens up new ways of thinking.

7. Opinions are like apples in a basket. I can pick one for some time, look at it and then put it back without feeling bad about it. I don't have to hold on to it forever. I can change it for a different one.
8. My opinions are just ideas. Opinions are not values. Opinions are not me. I have opinions, opinions don't have me.
9. I welcome difference of opinions. It helps me test the validity, the strength, of my opinion. If I find it lacking, I can adopt another idea.
10. There are 6 billion people on this planet. There are 6 billion opinions in circulation. Difference of opinions opens the door to creativity, invention, progress, diversity.
11. If someone opposes my idea, I can thank them. I consider their opinion. I then decide which one will work best in a given situation.
12. If someone opposes my idea, I get angry. I shut them down and try to impose my idea on them. If they agree, I feel great! If they disagree, I get even more angry.

How I respond when someone challenges or opposes my ideas or opinions depends upon my attitude towards opinions and my own sense of self-worth. People with a low sense of self-worth perceive opposition to their ideas as an assault on their character. This is because they mistakenly identify themselves with their opinions. People with a high sense of self-worth perceive opposition to their ideas as an opportunity to explore new and different ideas. It leads them to opportunity, diversity and creativity.

5. Rejection

Rejection is a strong emotion that can lead one to self-blame or its exact opposite – revenge and anger. A personality like a house built of bricks can withstand such a storm without any damage. A house built of sticks will crumble into self-blame. A house built of glass will shatter into a thousand pieces, and the flying pieces can hurt others like anger and revenge do.

We cannot impose, demand or expect acceptance from others. It is their right to accept us or reject us. What is important is that we accept our own selves, believe and respect our own selves. Know that we have the qualities and abilities to be by ourselves. There are many other people in this world. We can build relationships with other people who are happy to have us with them.

The section on self-esteem deals with interpretations and meanings that are available to us when we feel rejected. We can choose the interpretations that empower us. We can work on our primary feelings and see how we can avoid interpretations that result in unnecessary, unproductive anger!

Does this mean that I can go through life without feeling angry?

No. For most of us going through life without experiencing anger is highly unlikely. Anti - social behaviour, laws or rules or traditions that destroy universal values of equality, freedom, love continue to exist. When we encounter these, it will make us feel angry. It will fill us with energy – enough energy to bring about a positive change – if we can channelize it!

How I express anger.

When I feel angry, this is what I do:

How we commonly vent anger:

- Shout loudly
- Verbally abuse the opponent
- Throw or break objects
- Physically abuse the opponent
- Plan punishment or revenge
- Imagine retaliation or cursing
- Walk away in a huff, ignore, become cold and withdrawn
- Direct anger to ourselves. Punish ourselves.
- Transfer anger to someone else or something else
- Submit
- Hurt ourselves; physically or by indulging into something that's harmful for us

When we're angry, we seem to lose all control. Why?

Anger fills our body with energy but hijacks the thinking part of the brain making it difficult to think straight. When we are angry, we often behave and speak as our parents did. As children we learnt not only what we were taught, but what we saw and heard around us. We learnt set patterns of behaviour by watching our parents. Living as we do in nuclear families, we were exposed to just two models for expressing anger – our mother's model and our father's model. Had we lived in large joint families, like a tribe, we would have been exposed to many more models. Then, when we ourselves felt angry, we would have had various models to fall back upon. As it stands today, most of us just use our parents' models when angry.

So, am I doomed to repeat the behaviour I picked up as a child all through my life?

Not at all. You can learn new ways, practice them and learn to control the surge of energy that you feel when you are angry. You can reprogram your brain.

Let us first consider the effects of uncontrolled anger:

Think of a time when you were seething with anger. Now answer the following:

What was the effect on you?

What was the effect on the target of your anger?

Was the problem (that had resulted in anger) resolved or did it become worse?

Did a new problem arise as a result of the way anger was expressed?

Effects of anger on the body:

- Stress reaction in the body. Adrenaline is released.
- Blood pressure rises
- Brain is agitated. Person is likely to act instinctively or according to old learned patterns of behaviour. Is incapable of thinking calmly and creatively.
- Blood glucose rises
- Blood cholesterol rises
- Stomach ulcers develop
- Immunity reduces, person is more likely to fall ill.

How anger affects my life:

Mark the effect of anger on each aspect of your life on a scale of 1 to 10, rating 1 as having maximum effect and 10 as no effect.

My family life _____

My emotional health _____

My finances _____

My physical health _____

My studies _____

My friendships _____

My future opportunities _____

Quality of life _____

Effective Anger

When angry, do not hold back or act calm only to reach a boiling point. The idea is to release anger in short bursts before it reaches exploding point. We want a slow, controlled release which can be constructive and effective rather than an outburst that we regret later.

You may be angry with an adult or with a child. In most cases, the immediate response is to use harsh words. Words cut like knives, some can leave permanent scars – on relationships and on children’s self-esteem. That is why expressing anger without insulting the other person, adult or child, remains the only civilized way to vent our anger. Other methods dehumanize.

Below are some tips on effective anger management.

When angry:

1. Express your feelings clearly – “I hate lies” (not “I hate you”).
2. Value the other person’s point of view, even if you disagree with it – “I see you have a different plan. In my experience, it may not work.”
3. State a rule – “This is a no-smoking area.”
4. Describe the problem – “You are late. You may miss the train.”
5. Offer a solution – “You may go by another route. There will be less traffic on that road.”
6. Give choices
7. Write a note
8. Allow the person to face the consequences – “You have repeatedly missed the deadline. I will mention this in your assessment report.”
9. Assert your values – “We do not give or take dowry.”
10. If the opponent is not present, wait until you are calm before sending a reply.

You are more likely to find a way to resolve the problem when you are at peace.

When angry, avoid:

1. Tit for Tat – Calling someone a rat doesn’t make him a rat. Insulting words show the character of the person using the words.
2. Vengeance – Scheming, sabotaging, plotting take away time and are likely to back fire.
3. Sounding phony – “I will break every bone in your body” – not possible.
4. Labeling or judging – “You are stupid. You are wrong” – aren’t we all, sometimes?
5. Blaming the other person – “It is your fault” - makes the person less cooperative.
6. Exaggerating what has happened – “Now we are ruined.” – really?
7. Becoming confrontational – “Let me see what you can do” - aggravates the situation.
8. Excessive response – hopping mad – you may burst a blood vessel in your brain!
9. Irrelevant response – throwing dishes, breaking objects – adds to the cost of conflict.
10. Physical abuse – never solves the problem – creates new ones.

11. Verbal abuse – insults aggravate the problem.
12. Pretending that there is no problem - a problem that is not addressed does not disappear. It grows.

Punishment

Parents and authority figures often use this to enforce discipline. It is ineffective because it is based on fear - once the punished person learns to overcome fear or avoid punishment, it stops working. Punishment damages self-esteem. It does not solve the problem either. When we punish people, they feel as if they have paid for their crimes and have served their sentences. Now they are free to repeat their misbehaviour.

Effective Anger – Developing a solution

Think of the last time you became very angry. Answer the following questions keeping that episode in mind:

1. What was the trigger?

2. What did you think about the incident?

3. What did you do to keep calm?

Now score your reaction on a scale of ten – 1 means reacted very badly, 10 means reacted very well.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

If you have scored above one, there must be something about how you behaved that you felt went well. List three of those things below:

If you were to improve your score, which of these three things would you like to build on? Would you like to try something new? List three things you would do differently to improve your score from _____ to _____.

I do control my anger. The way I respond to my sibling when I'm angry is different from the way I respond to my parents or the way I respond to my colleagues.

We are not perfect but we can, and do, improve.

Dealing with fear

As children adults often told us 'Don't be afraid.' because they didn't want the child to be paralyzed with fear and not take any action.

Fear is a protective reflex. It tells us to be cautious. It does not imply inaction. Learning this distinction would help me respond to fearful situations carefully and with caution. Fight, flight or freezes are built in reactions to a threat to life. I can learn to respond – rather than react, as many threats in today's world are not as real as a tiger chasing us

V - Conflict Resolution

I have seen how anger is often a response to opposition to ideas or opinions. Uncontrolled anger can escalate into a full-blown conflict. Conflicts are reported daily in the newspapers. Wars, terrorism, riots, and strikes seem to be regular features. Newspapers report major conflicts. Personally, I am at times in conflicts with people in my life. Could these be resolved in a mature, humane and dignified way? Is there such a way?

Let us first clarify how conflicts happen and which people are generally involved:

Since we live in social groups, and since each one of us has a right to their opinions, there are bound to be differences of opinions. If we do not give space for people to express their opinions, or respect their point of view, there will be resentment and anger, leading to heated arguments and fights. People in authority may try to impose their opinions on others. People do not like this and may resist, leading to conflicts and wars

Conflicts in my life: - these could be with parents, children, siblings, relatives, friends, colleagues, community

1. People with whom I have arguments:

2. Mostly these arguments are about:

3. What is it that I generally argue about?

My rights? Freedom? Friends? Goals? Values? Marriage? Romance?

Some reasons for conflicts and arguments are given below. Do any of the following ring true for you?

1. 'I am an adult. My parents still treat me like a kid. I want more freedom'
2. 'My child does not understand that what I am saying is for her own good.'
3. 'I am responsible. I have ideas. I want to be listened to. Why can't people ask me for my opinion? I want to be part of the decision making.'
4. 'I am doing my best at work, still I am not appreciated.'
5. 'I can take care of myself. Leave me alone.'
6. 'I can judge people. Don't ask me to change my friends.'
7. 'My parents have no right to tell me who I should marry.'
8. 'It's my life. I should have the right to set my goals.'
9. 'I am treated differently. My sibling gets away with so much. Nobody says anything to them. It's not fair.'
10. 'I can manage my life. Don't interfere. Don't nag me. I want some privacy.'
11. 'I feel closer to friends than to my parents. My friends understand me.'
12. 'Studies are important to me, but so are so many other things.'

13. 'I will wear what I want to wear.'
14. 'I want to change my job and chase my dream, but I have financial commitments.'

Most conflicts happen between parents and their children. Parents find it difficult to realize that their child has grown up. The young adult instinctively looks for independence, freedom, trust and privacy. They want to set their own goals, adopt their own values, but parents remain over concerned and protective. They may refuse to acknowledge that their child has independent thoughts, desires, values and goals.

Similarly, arguments often happen between friends – especially when one person tries to impose their views on others. Sometimes 2 or 3 friends get on one side and start pressurizing one person. It is important to be clear about the things you will not do under any circumstance. It could be things like – I will not tell lies, I will not steal, I will not hit or beat another person, I will not disrespect people, I will not give or take dowry, I will not harm my body, I will not take drugs or tobacco. Being clear about what you will or will not do will help you resist pressure from your friends.

How do I respond to the conflicts in my life?

1. Get angry.
2. Go on a hunger strike.
3. Lock myself in my room.
4. Become violent.
5. Sit down and explain my position.
6. Stick to my opinion or idea – become stubborn.
7. Listen to other's point of view.
8. Try to find a way out.
9. Give up and submit.
10. Pretend to have no conflicts, upsets or anger.
11. Manipulate people.
12. _____
13. _____

My response to conflicts will have a huge impact on the outcome. How I behave and what I say and do can completely alter the result. Let's look at different ways of dealing with a situation of conflict. You can decide which one will suit you best:

1. **Be aggressive.** Kick up a ruckus. Get angry. Make a scene. Finally force the opponent to agree.
2. **Be manipulative.** Find my opponent's weakness. Blackmail, feign sickness, tell lies, or gossip. Put the other person in such a situation that they have no options left. "If you love me, you will let me do this."
3. **Be passive, compromise.** Let everyone have their way. Never stand up for my rights. Never take responsibility. "Do as you please. I am not saying anything. I never say anything. It's all in your hands. If things don't work out, it will be your fault."

4. **Be in denial.** Refuse to acknowledge that there is a problem. Hope that it will disappear with time. “I have a wonderful relationship with everyone in my life. There is no problem.”
5. **Be empathetic and assertive.** State the problem. Assert values. Work with the opponent to find a solution that is acceptable to both, and does not require a compromise on values. Express your feelings respectfully.
“I understand your situation. But if I marry a person who asks for dowry, I will have to suffer my entire life. Dowry is against my value system. I want to live with dignity. I will marry a person who finds me worthy. Someone who does not give or take dowry.” We have considered empathetic listening and speaking in the chapter on communication.
6. **Do critical thinking** – keep aside emotions. Do not be attached to your point of view. Consider the merits and demerits of each person’s opinion. Gather more information. Interact with and seek advice from people with different points of view. Talk to experts in that field. Choose the one best suited to the situation.
7. **Be creative and look for out of the box solution** – If time allows, postpone decision making for the moment. Contemplate. Move around, listen to songs, relax, draw the problem make models of the problem, and visualize it. Discuss again and come to a mutually acceptable solution.

Before choosing a method, let us explore the consequences of each method.

What would happen:

1. To my sense of self-worth?
2. To my opponent’s sense of self-worth?
3. To our relationship?
4. To the conflict/ problem?

Which method has the potential to resolve conflicts peacefully, without mental, physical or emotional violence? Why?

Cost of violent conflicts:

- Direct cost of damage to physical objects
- Damage to body and mind
- Damage to relationships
- Loss of productivity and creativity
- Lawyer’s fees

Before choosing a method, let us explore the consequences of each method. What would happen in each method:

5. To my sense of self- worth?
6. To my opponent’s sense of self -worth?
7. To our relationship?
8. To the conflict/ problem?

Which method(s) has the potential to resolve conflicts peacefully, without mental, physical or emotional violence?

How can we develop the skill of respecting the opinions of others while expressing my point of view?

Step 1: When someone is opposing my point of view, understand that the person is not opposing you but the train of thought - which you may or may not choose to change.

For Example: If my friend says: “I do not agree with you, it is important to be on time”, does not mean that I am a bad person and that my friend wants to break the friendship.

Step 2: The person may be criticizing my behaviour, or the behaviour of someone close to me, I can understand that the person is criticizing one particular behavior and not me. For Example: If my friend says: “You are so lazy, you never come on time.” I can understand that my friend is criticizing my being late. I know that I am not a lazy person because I help around the house, I play rigorous sports.

Step 3: I be sensitive and listen to the feelings and concerns that the person is trying to express. For Example: I can understand that my friend is irritated because he had to wait for me, his time was wasted and we were late for the circus.

Step 4: I check if any of these statements are against my values like freedom, justice, friendship, truth, wisdom or equality. For Example: While I agree that we should be punctual, I don’t think that it’s important to be on time for each and everything, especially for a circus.

Step 5: In case if the person’s opinion is against my value system, then I can state my point of view assertively and clearly state my values. Response: “I am sorry. I wasted your time and we will be late for this show. We won’t miss anything important! But next time when I am meeting you, I will be on time.”

Learning to say “NO”

Sometimes we find it very difficult to say “NO”, but learning to say “NO” is important to our safety and health. Saying “no” in a way that does not antagonize or anger the person making the request is part of effective communication. It requires self-confidence and self-respect.

An example of saying “no”

Manjula went to her friend Neela’s house to discuss something. When she reaches her friend’s house, she finds that her friend, her mother and father are away and will return only after 2 hours. Neela’s 22-year-old brother, Hari, is at home. Hari wishes her and asks her to sit down. Manjula sits down but feels uncomfortable.

Manjula: “I should be going back now”

Hari: “You have come after such a long time. Have something to eat.”

Manjula: “No, no”

Hari: “No you must have.” He brings something to eat.

Manjula: Eats quickly. “Thanks. I am leaving now. My mother is expecting me back soon. She will be worried.”

Hari: Comes closer. “No, you can’t go now. I always wanted to speak with you in private.

Today you have come.” Moves closer to her.

Manjula: “I can come again tomorrow. Then we can talk.” Stands up and turns towards the door.

Hari: Stands up. “No, wait. Listen to me.”

Manjula: “Don’t you care for my mother and the trouble I will be in if I am late?”

Hari moves towards the door as if to block her way.

Manjula moves quickly to the door and goes out.

Manjula (from outside): “Bye”

Next scene: Manjula tells her mother about the incident and how she felt uncomfortable with Hari’s behaviour.

Another Example:

Ramesh went to meet his friends on Sunday near the mango orchard. They all planned to play cricket in the open area next to the orchard. When he arrived, he saw that some of his friends have already come and were smoking. They ask him to join them. Ramesh does not want to smoke.

Sundar: Hi Ramesh! you have come at a perfect time. Come join us.

Ravi: Yes Ramesh. See I got 3 cigarettes from my dad’s packet when he was bathing. Let’s try.

Ramesh: Sorry! I don’t want to smoke.

Sundar: Don’t be a girl. Smoke 1 cigarette. Be a Man!

Ravi: Come on. Let’s 3 of us try. I always wanted to know how it feels to smoke.

Ramesh: NO. I don’t want to try. I know it is not good for me. let’s play.

Ravi: If you don’t smoke you cannot play with us. You are a ...!!!

Sundar: Yes, you are such a weak guy. You don’t know how to be a Man. If you smoke with us then only you can be our friend.

Ramesh: I know what I am. Let’s just play.

Ravi: Nope. Here take a puff.

Ramesh: Ok guys, since you insist on smoking, I better go and do something else.

Ravi and Sundar tease Ramesh.

Ramesh joins another group of boys who are playing cricket.

Strategies that can be used to say “NO!” as demonstrated above:

1. Refuse - “I should be going back now”
2. Give a reason - “My mother is expecting me back soon”
3. Offer an alternative - “I can come again tomorrow. Then we can talk”
4. Move away - stands up and turns towards the door.
5. Reverse the pressure - “Don’t you care for my mother and the trouble I will be in if I am late?”
6. Leave the place - Manjula moves quickly to the door and goes out.
7. Strength in numbers - she will not go to her friend’s house alone. She speaks to her mother about Hari.
8. Change the group / company / friend.

When is it OK to say “No”?

1. When it is injurious to your health.
2. When it clashes with your values and rational beliefs.

3. When you feel deep inside you (instinctively) that saying yes will get you into trouble.

Refusing politely:

1. You can refuse politely by saying: “I understand how much you want me to do this, but I am really sorry, I won’t be able to do it. If there is anything else you would rather have me do, then we can discuss it. But I just can’t say yes to this.”
2. You can give a reason.
3. You can talk about your feelings and say, “I can’t do this because doing this would make me feel really uncomfortable. I don’t think I should be doing this. I am sorry to disappoint you, but I can’t do it.”

Inability to refuse

Sometimes, try as we might, we are not able to get away from a harmful situation. The reasons can be many - fear, shock, ‘freezing up’.

This can happen to anyone, adult or child. It is not the fault of the victim. The fault remains with the perpetrator – the person who did the crime, acted in a violent, disrespectful way is to be blamed. The victim cannot be blamed for not resisting or fighting or running away.

Restorative Justice based approaches are a great way to resolve conflicts, repair the harm done, meet the needs of the victim, build accountability and responsibility in the person who did the harm. You can find out more about this and use it your life.

VI - Stress

Too many demands and too little resources make us feel stressed!

Imagine:

You are visiting a zoo. Suddenly there is an urgent announcement “Attention! Attention! High alert! Three lions have just escaped from their cages!” Which words would best describe the state of your body?

- My palms are dry /clammy.
- I begin to sweat /no change in my skin.
- My breathing is fast /slow.
- My heart is beating slower/faster/as usual.
- My muscles are tensed /relaxed.
- I feel alert/sleepy/bored/disinterested in what is going on.
- My senses are sharp /dull.

The changes that we feel under stress are universal. All humans would react in the same manner – thanks to the rush of adrenaline in our body which gives us the strength to fight or run (flight) to save your life.

After a few minutes (which seem like hours), you hear the announcement “Sorry for the false alert. It wasn’t the lions but the lambs that had escaped from their cages.”

How do you feel now?

The stressful situation is over. You heave a sigh of relief. The rush of adrenaline is replaced by release of other chemicals that help my body and mind to calm down.

At a biochemical level, stress causes the levels of glucose and cholesterol to rise in your blood to provide ready energy to your muscles. Blood is diverted from the digestive and reproductive tracts to the muscles. Brain is put on autopilot – it depends on ancient reflexes to help you out of a sticky situation of life and death. There is hardly any time to think. You just act.

Here is an incident narrated by a nine-month pregnant woman after the tsunami hit the east coast of India - “I saw a wall of water advancing towards me. I ran. I don’t know what I did after that. When the water receded, I found myself hanging from the branch of that tree.” She points to a tree. “The strangest thing is I have never climbed a tree in my life! How could I do it that day, with a nine-month pregnancy? I am amazed!”

Stress is useful in life-threatening moments. Our body reacts when we perceive danger and threat. But here is the catch: most of us will never experience a life-threatening situation like the above, but all of us have already experienced stress in our lives.

The origin of stress:

Do you think the prehistoric, cave dwellers felt ‘stressed’?

Why do you think so?

Biologists believe that there has been no major change in our genes, brains and bodies for last 25,000 years. If we are feeling stress today, then it implies that the prehistoric cave people also felt stress.

What situations could have produced stress for a prehistoric person?

What situations produce stress in me? Note down the most common situations:

In both scenarios, a feeling of stress is experienced when demands exceed the personal and social resources of the individual. (This is now the most commonly accepted definition of stress, mainly attributed to Richard S Lazarus.)

Manufacturing Stress

We are manufacturing stress in our minds by the way:

- a. we interpret events and
- b. we imagine our future.

We scare ourselves into thinking that our life is in danger. Our brain responds accordingly.

How stress occurs:

Event – I did not do well in my exams.

Imagined consequence –I think “I will fail. I will be the only one repeating a class. My parents and teachers will be disappointed. I may not be allowed to study further. My friends will laugh at me. I cannot tolerate that.”

Response to the imagined scenario (fear, anger, stress) – These thoughts produce a feeling of fear. Fear is interpreted as a sign of threat to life by the brain. My heart begins to beat fast. I feel cold and palms become wet. I am tense.

Result - no action or inefficiency – I am unable to study for the next exam. I am likely to perform poorly in that exam too, and that will confirm my fears about my imagined future. Fear will set in once again. The cycle will repeat itself.

Our body's response to stress remains unchanged however long the stress lasts. If we feel stressed day in and day out, then our brain assumes that we are under continued stress (something like being up on a tree while the lion prowls underneath for days together).

Stress is useful in life-threatening moments. My body reacts when I perceive danger and threat. But here is the catch: most of us will never experience a life-threatening situation like the above, but all of us have already experienced stress in our lives.

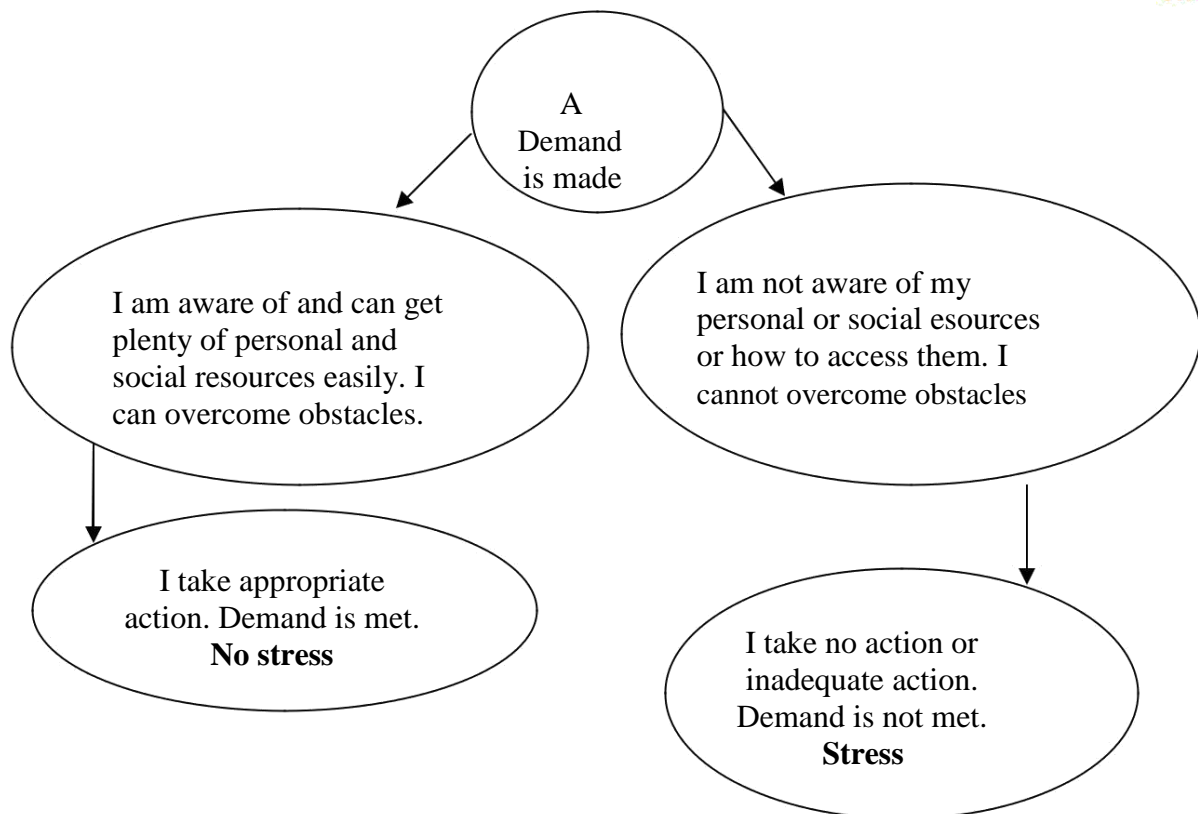
The biochemical changes will show up as:

- Headaches
- Breathlessness
- Skin allergies
- Sweating too much, feeling too hot
- Indigestion, irregular bowel movements
- Colds and coughs
- Sleep disorders

Chronic stress can lead to:

- High blood pressure
- Gastric ulcers
- Diabetes
- Heart disease
- Reduced infection fighting ability
- Susceptibility to cancer or tumors

How stress starts:



We can use the above model to reduce stress in many different ways.

Constraints or obstacles:

Often what we consider a constraint, say, of time, money, space, skill or health, is more a product of our imaginations than reality. You might have heard stories about people who have been blind, but scaled mountains or became courier delivery men, people who were paralyzed but painted with brushes in their mouths, people who were uneducated but became successful businessmen.

You might have had experiences when you went ahead in spite of your constraints and succeeded. Think of the times when you thought you could not make it, the times when you nearly gave up, the times when others discouraged you but you didn't give up. You went ahead and found that actually the constraints weren't as huge as you had initially imagined.

Use the space below to make a list of as many such instances as you can recall:

Demands:

The list of demands can be limitless, illogical and irrational. It is up to us whether we accept a demand or not. we can refuse a demand.

Some demands are unavoidable, many are avoidable. Some demands others place on us, while, some demands we place on ourselves.

I can spare myself a lot of stress by reducing the demands I make on myself. These are the toughest to give up! I can learn to accept myself as I am with faults, skills, traits, quirks and all. Once I am at peace with myself, I can accomplish whatever I want to. Stressing myself (by refusing to accept myself unless I change to meet my demands) will not help me. Stress brings down efficiency.

What demands do I face?

How many of them are self-made?

How many are imposed on me by my family, relatives, friends, teachers, colleagues, boss and others?

Tick the demands you think you have to meet:

1. I must do well in academics.
2. I must do well in sports.
3. I must be popular among my friends.
4. I must have many friends.
5. I must please my family, teachers, friends, and others.
6. I must look attractive.
7. I must get in to the best job.
8. I must be able to earn a lot of money.
9. I must always be on time.
10. I must do everything perfectly.
11. My room must be in perfect order.
12. I must work to make my body perfect.
13. I must wear the latest/most fashionable clothes/shoes/accessories/perfumes.
14. I must be liked by everybody.
15. I must help everybody.
16. When someone requests me to do something, I must do it.
17. I must watch the current serials on TV.
18. I must follow tradition.
19. I must not follow tradition.
20. I must climb up the social ladder.
21. I must own a vehicle.
22. I must win when I participate in an event.
23. I must never make mistakes.

24. I must have many skills – like dancing, singing, painting, cooking, skating, bowling, craft...

By now you would have got the picture.

The list of demands can be limitless, illogical and irrational. It is up to me whether I accept a demand or not. I can refuse a demand.

Which of the following statements are true for you?

1. I feel that refusing a request is equal to being rude.
2. I must accept all requests and demands that are made because I want to be known as a helpful, nice and friendly person.
3. I find it difficult to refuse requests made by people who are close to me.
4. Sometimes I say, “yes” because I don’t know how to refuse politely.
5. Saying, “yes” is respectful. Refusing is disrespectful.
6. Saying, “no” to friends can make me an outcast. My friends may make fun of me, call me names, or break off.
7. I must accommodate other people, even if it means that I have no time left for myself.
8. I cannot argue with the tradition, culture, or age-old belief systems of my family. I have to agree to whatever they say.
9. If I love someone, I must do as they say. Saying, “no” means I don’t love or trust that person.

Which of the following statements do you agree with?

1. A request is a request. It is not a binding on me. It is not an order. I have complete freedom to refuse it if I can’t or don’t want to help.
2. Requests made by people who are close to me are generally more tough to refuse because of the relationship I share with them. I feel good when I help them. I also know that tomorrow I may be the one requesting their help. I must however watch out for people who misuse my relationship with them to emotionally blackmail me.
3. A person who accepts all requests is unlikely to fulfill all of them. Soon that person becomes known as unreliable and untrustworthy.
4. It is possible to say, “no” politely.
5. Respect and requests are different concepts. They are not interchangeable.
6. Friends who do not accept a “no” from me do not really care for my feelings, likes, dislikes, beliefs and values. They want me to fulfill their wishes. Such people hinder my self-expression and growth. I would like to associate with people who can accept me as I am.
7. As a social being I like to help others but this should not clash with my self-interests. I need to balance the needs of my social group with my personal needs.
8. Traditions, culture, beliefs, religions are not static. They change. They are made by people and are changed by people. I can follow what makes sense to me and what does not clash with my values.
9. Love is wanting the best for another person. It is not obedience! If the other person also loves me then that person would want the best for me; they would not make unreasonable demands.

Assertiveness

I can reduce a lot of demands that others make on me by learning how to say “no” in a way that does not antagonize the person making the request. This is called being assertive.

Being assertive means not being aggressive, not being passive, but knowing how to stand up for one’s rights and beliefs. It involves a firm belief in one’s values and a desire to act in accordance with them.

Resources:

Time, space, money, skills and people are resources. Human resources can be physical (lifting a heavy suitcase), mental (solving a math problem), emotional (offering support, love, care), spiritual (faith), skill (ability to sing) or economic (offering a loan).

If you have never spoken with a colleague/classmate, how can you suddenly ask her to help you in for a project? We can increase our resources many fold by building stronger relationships (refer module on communication and relationships).

Go back to the instance you mentioned when talking about **constraints**. In that instance, what helped you to reach your goal, meet the demand or succeed? Were some of the resources personal? Did others help in any way?

Personal resources that helped me:

Resources that other people provided:

My web of resources:

How intricate is my web? Which resources do I already have? Which do I have but not use? Think of each resource listed below. How can you strengthen it?

	Personal	Social (family, friends, community, teachers, coaches, associations, institutions, specialists)
Physical resources	Health Wealth Space Equipment	Nutritious food Money – loans, grants, scholarships Space Equipment Internet
Emotional resources	Self confidence Self-motivation Self-discipline Self esteem Communication Intrapersonal intelligence	Encouragement Acceptance Motivation Discipline Care Help Support Role models Insights Friendship
Mental resources	Skills Intelligences Time management Prioritization Goal setting Concentration Memory	Role models Training Coaching Guidance Insights Books, libraries Experience

Human resources – be they physical, mental, emotional or economic can be summed up in one word: **Relationships**. We survived and evolved as a social group – not as individuals living and facing the stresses of a jungle life all by ourselves. Even today, when it may seem that we do not need each other so much, others remain a strong source of support and resources. I can increase my resources many fold by building stronger relationships (refer chapter on communication and relationships). Relationships can be my antidote to stress.

Feeling scared can produce stress and so can a helplessness, inadequacy and failure. When a demand is made on me, I immediately do a mental inventory of my resources and my constraints. If I find that I have adequate resources to meet the demand in spite of the constraints, then I feel I can meet the demand. I feel confident and in control of the situation. If I find my resources inadequate, constraints too many and demands too frequent, then I feel I am ill equipped to face life’s demands and challenges. I feel powerless. I perceive future failure. This perception gets translated into ‘threat to survival’ in my brain. Stress is the result of such a perception.

Reducing Stress:

1. By building Supports

- People can help only if I ask them to help me.
- People, including parents, are not good at guessing or “just knowing” what I am going through.
- I have to tell them – I have to share my problems and the demands made of me at home and outside.
- If I let my family know what I am trying to accomplish, they can support me.

1. By breathing slowly:

When I am stressed my breathing is

When I am relaxed, my breathing is:

The reverse is also true. That is, breathing slowly willfully when I am stressed or angry can calm my mind. When my mind is calm, I can think of a solution, and be creative and productive.

When we are stressed our breathing is rapid and shallow. When we are relaxed, our breathing is slow and deep. Breathing slowly purposely when we are stressed or angry can calm our mind. When our mind is calm, we can think of a solution, and be creative and productive. Brain waves change, indicating a relaxed pattern and stress reduces.

Let us try the following steps:

- Breathe through your nose.
- Slowly expand your abdomen, pushing it out, and then expand your chest. Air flows in.
- Hold your breath for a while.
- When you can't hold the breath any more, exhale. First breathe out from your chest, using your rib cage. Next pull in the abdomen. The diaphragm is pulled up. Let all air escape.
- Relax completely while exhaling, let go.
- Hold your breath.
- Repeat 1-5 for as long as you wish. You may keep your eyes closed. You may be sitting, standing or lying down.

2. By eating well:

Eating fresh vegetables, fruits and nuts reduces stress. Taking enough vitamins, iron and calcium keeps you healthy and strong. Anti-oxidants are chemicals that help me fight against pollutants, free radicals and stress. Refer to the chapter on health for a list of antioxidants. Coffee and tea contain caffeine. Caffeine does not reduce stress. In fact, it adds to the stress levels. Nicotine in tobacco also produces stress in the body. Alcohol reduces one's ability to think and act. You may feel awake and bright when you drink coffee or tea, but trying to keep awake when you are actually feeling sleepy is like whipping a tired horse. The horse, though tired, will run a little more because it is being whipped. But in the long run, a tired and whipped horse is going to collapse sooner than a horse that is well nourished and well rested.

3. By physical activity, sports, dance, exercise, yoga:

These keep the body healthy, active and strong.

4. By meditating – builds inner peace and strength.

5. Having relaxing surroundings:

1. Soothing music
2. Plants or flowers
3. Soothing colours
4. Natural light, which helps keep me in tune with nature
5. Pictures and drawings that bring a smile to my face

How can you respond to stress?

Respond after deliberate thought.

Take an action only if needed.

Avoid reaction.

VII - Decision making and Problem solving

Decision making

Samridhi was good at acting. She used to participate in school cultural programs and act in plays put up by students. After finishing 12th standard, she decided to go to university to do a course in theater arts. Sadly, when she applied, she realized that to be accepted she should have acted in bigger theater productions or written or directed a play. She was rejected from the course, disheartened. Theater was her dream, acting came naturally to her, but she wasn't qualified to study them.

She was now confused about what to do. If she could not study theater, what should she study instead? She took an aptitude test to find out what her interests were. It turned out she liked medicine. Her mother's close friend was a doctor, so Samridhi spoke to her to find out about the course, the requirements, the time commitment, future options etc. After some thought and discussion with her friends and parents, she decided to pursue medicine. Today she is studying in a medical college.

Samridhi was making an important decision that would change the course of her life. Her decision to pursue theater did not work out, but her decision to pursue medicine did. What, in your opinion, was the difference between the two decision making processes?

We decide all the time, from deciding what to wear to which profession to choose, to whom to marry – we cannot escape decision making. Future events may prove a particular decision unsuitable, but at the time we make our decision, given the information we had, it was the best one we could make.

Steps I took while making an important decision in my life

Decision making can be understood by the analogy of baking a cake for my aunt's birthday:
Steps I can take when making a decision or choice:

1. **Gather information** - "I want to bake a cake. How is it done? What do I need? What are the different types of cakes that can be baked? Can some cakes be made without an oven? Let me ask my friend or uncle who bakes wonderful cakes."
2. **Consider the various options available** – Do a search on the web, speak to different people, ask people who have had experience in that field.
3. **Short-list** - "It's Christmas time. I'm going to make a plum cake for her!"
Choose the option(s) that best suit my skills, my desires, goals and values.
4. **Discuss** - "Hey, have you ever made plum cake? What do I need? Do I need to soak fruits for a few weeks before making the cake? Can I use fresh fruits? What if I make a pineapple cream cake, can I use fresh fruits then?"
Discuss my plans with my parents, friends, partners, counselors, and specialists. What is their opinion? What is their experience?
5. **Reconsider** - "Plum cake needs lot of preparation. I don't have that much time. I think I will go for a pineapple cream cake."
Do I want to change my mind? Do I want to choose something else instead? Do I want to stick with my original choice? Decide on one course of action for the moment.
6. **Take stock of the situation, be creative** - "I have all the ingredients, but I am really short of time. Can I ask my brother to help me prepare the cake?"
Consider my resources. How can I mobilize my personal and social resources to achieve what I have set out to do?
7. **Take action** - I bake the cake. Act according to my decision.
8. **Keep an open mind** - "My aunt is allergic to pineapples! I didn't know this. Let me buy her cookies. Next time I will make her a sponge cake."
In the future, if the decision proves to be unsuitable, I will need to go through the decision-making process again, taking into account the new situation. I would then have to make a fresh choice.
9. **Be responsible, have freedom** - "I acted with best intentions. It didn't work out. No one is to blame for this. I will make something else for my aunt."
I have the freedom to choose. I can choose to do anything. I am responsible for my choices and actions. I am responsible for the consequences of my action. If it works out, I can take credit for making it happen. If it doesn't, then I will take steps to find a way out of the new situation. I shall not blame anyone if things don't go according to my plan. It was after all my choice. I will not play the blame game. I will learn from the event and proceed to resolve the issue.

Pitfalls in decision making:

1. **Making decisions in a hurry:** Important decisions that impact my life need deliberation and discussion.
2. **Unwillingness to explore new possibilities:** If everyone only did what had been done before, there would be no innovation, no discoveries, no progress. We would still be living in caves, and wouldn't even have fire.
3. **Getting attached to my idea:** This kills numerous other possibilities that I may not have thought about. If someone else's idea can get me where I want to go, then there is no harm in using it. I can acknowledge the person, thank him or her for the idea and proceed.
4. **Getting stopped even before starting:** When I stop myself exploring the different resources that are available to me: "How can I ask that person for help? How can I apply for a grant/loan? What will people think? What if I fail? What if they refuse to help? Let me not ask. Let me not do what I want to do. I will only do what I can without help from anybody."
 We live in groups. Groups survive because people help each other. People like to help each other. Go ahead, make a request. It might be accepted. If it is refused, you haven't lost anything. Go ahead and ask someone else.
 You may not be aware of many resources. Talking to people, searching for information can open many new avenues.
5. **Fear of responsibility:** Fear of responsibility is an effective road blocker. It is second only to fear of failure. If I pause to think of it, it becomes clear that 'response-ability' is what constitutes the word responsibility. To have the ability to respond to a situation is to be responsible. It does not involve blame. It does not involve a sense of failure. It only means that when I choose to act, I should have the ability to face, and respond to, the consequences of that action. I should not expect someone else to clean up the mess I made. I need to have enough self-confidence to say, "Whatever happens, I will be able to deal with it. I may do it alone, or I may use my social resources."
 For instance, when I run, I may fall. I have the ability to get up and run again. I will not waste my time sitting and looking around to blame my fall on someone. I will look to see why I fell – was there something I didn't see and I tripped? I will learn from my fall and run again.
 Failure is not when I fall. Failure is when I refuse to get up.

If I do not want to face the consequences of my actions, then I might allow someone else to decide for me. I can then blame them for the consequences if things don't work out. This way I will avoid responsibility. However, in this scenario I am giving up my freedom to choose for myself.

Closely linked with the ability to take a decision, is the final destination – the goal. A goal is a purpose that we work towards. Goals give meaning to our life. Our values guide us in choosing our goal and how we work towards them.

The need to set goals:

Setting our own goals and achieving them makes us feel empowered - powerful. We feel that we can bring about change, we are in-charge, we have the capacity and capability to do what we want to do, achieve what we want to achieve.

Achieving goals produces a feeling of fulfillment, a feeling of contentment and satisfaction.

The need to set our own goals:

If we don't set our own goals, we will live our life like a puppet – feeling that someone else - a person or random events are in-charge of us. That is not a great feeling! As a child our parents are in charge of us. But as we grow older, we take charge of ourselves more and more – until we become adults. Then we decide for ourselves. We set goals for our lives; we find ways to reach them. We feel happy and fulfilled.

Do we need to set our own goals? Should others decide for us?

Only you know yourself completely. No one can get inside your head and feel the way you feel, know all that you know, be aware of all the skills you have, think the way you do. Therefore, only you know what your deepest desire is. Only you know what all you are capable of.

If you follow goals that someone else set for you, and your heart is not in it, then you will work half-heartedly towards it. You may or may not reach it. Even if you reach it, you won't feel fulfilled – because it was not what your deepest self-wanted in the first place! It is like you want to eat a dosa but some else forces you to eat a pongal. Your stomach may fill up with pongal, but your desire for dosa remains unfulfilled. You still feel dissatisfied.

Why do different people do different things? Why do we have different goals?

It is because different people give importance to different values. Values are qualities and concepts that we find worth having and preserving.

Consider the following list given below. Are any of the following worth pursuing and having? happiness, health, honor, independence, cleanliness, companionship, security, justice, competition, knowledge, cooperation, courage, love, service, creativity, loyalty, duty, education, money, status, orderliness, success, equality, patience, tradition, faith, patriotism, trust, peace, wisdom, freedom, friendship, sense of fairness.

Our goals depend on what we value, find worthy and worth pursuing. Any one or all of the above could be values that people live by. Different people have different values. But some values are present in all cultures, all tribes. We can assume that they are inborn in humans – like all humans are born with a heart.

Some values have existed among human tribes since time immemorial. They helped individuals to survive in a group; and they helped a group of humans survive in a hostile environment. For instance: friendship, courage, love, justice, sense of fairness, happiness. Not one universal value is better or more desirable than another. All are needed. When we do not follow our

values, we feel a lot of regret, guilt and a sense of shame. The world may not know anything about it, but we find it hard to live with that sense.

“No one can feel competent to cope with the challenges of life who is without the capacity for self-discipline. Self-discipline requires the ability to defer immediate gratification in the service of a remote goal. This is the ability to project consequences into the future—to think, plan, and live long-range.” Nathaniel Branden

Problem solving

When do I consider something to be a problem?

Consider these scenarios:

Imagine: I am traveling by car to the railway station. The car breaks down. I am short of time. I may miss the train.

Is the break down a problem?

Imagine: I am being forced to go and pick up a person from the railway station. My car breaks down. I can't make it in time. That person will fend for himself.

Is the break down a problem for me or an answer to my prayers?

The breakdown was the same in both instances. Only in the first instance it was considered a problem. Problems arise in my thinking and the meaning I attach to events. The solution to my problems too will be found in my mind.

I have seen people solve problems. I have myself solved many problems. Sometimes the resolution of the problems happens in a way that leaves everyone concerned empowered and satisfied. Sometimes the solution seems to create more problems.

We have listed many different ways of resolving a problem. Which ones have you experienced directly or indirectly? Take a few moments to jot down what happened to the contentious issue after that particular method of problem solving was used.

1. **Stuck with one option:** This is the only way to solve this problem.

2. **Lion King:** Do as I say. Nothing else will work.

3. **Defeatist attitude:** There can never be a solution to this problem. Learn to bear it.

4. **Close ranks:** This is my problem. I don't want to discuss it with anyone, even though I haven't yet found a way out.

5. **Passive attitude:** This is not a problem, this is my destiny.

6. **Garfield's approach:** There is no problem.

7. **Ostrich attitude:** If I pretend that there is no problem, then the problem will somehow disappear.

8. **Elephant's approach:** If I stamp on (bury) the problem hard enough, it will disappear.

9. **Octopus's dilemma:** Which option do I choose? I have so many solutions. Which one is the best? I can't decide...

10. **Cuckoo's egg:** Land the problem on someone else's lap in such a way that they begin to think that it is their problem!

Such approaches would lead to an exaggeration of the problem over time.

Resolving problems is a lot like making decisions.

1. Consider various options.
2. If other people are involved in the problem, ask them for their ideas.
3. List all options.
4. Discuss the possible consequences of each option with all the people involved in the problem.
5. Agree on one option that is acceptable to all (and not the majority of people).
6. Review the situation after the option has been put into practice. Is the problem resolved? Are there any new problems?

Refer to the section on conflict resolution for more details.

VIII - Critical and Creative Thinking

Critical Thinking

I can't imagine that I need lessons on 'how to think'. I wouldn't be an active walking talking person if I had not been able to think. So, what's the idea?

Thinking is a lot like muscle movements. We seem to do a lot of movements automatically – like breathing, walking or swallowing. We do some on purpose – like hugging, saluting or waving, and we learn others from training because of the joy we get out of them – like dancing, singing, and sculpting.

Similarly, many thoughts are automatic – like 'Snake! Danger!' Many are purposeful thoughts – like, "how can I answer this question?" and, "how can I use this machine?" I can make my thoughts creative and critical by training and practice – then I can experience the joy that creativity and critical thinking provide.

What is critical thinking?

To think critically about an idea or issue is to consider it from various aspects, ask questions about it, analyse it, and come to an unbiased conclusion. It is not simply accepting an idea/solution because someone in authority is suggesting it.

As children we learned by watching and by asking questions. We accept whatever answers we get as the truth. As we grow older our capacity to analyse and reason increases. We learn not only to ask others questions, but also to question the answers. For instance, a three-year-old will accept the answer given to her but a 13-year-old is likely to say 'How can you say that? I disagree. That's not what it means. I have a different view' This is critical thinking.

Why do we need it?

Critical thinking allows new ideas to emerge. It helps us do, make and behave in better and different ways. It allows change and transformation. In fact, any man-made object or concept has arisen out of critical thinking. All inventions arise in a base of critical thinking, because critical thinking is about asking questions. Answers come only when there is first and foremost, a question!

Learn! Train! You must be joking. I don't want to put in any effort in something as vague as creative thinking. No thanks. I am already burdened with a lot of things in my life. I am not about to add to my list.

It's strange that we think of learning as a chore, as hard work, as a burden and not as a fun activity that is immensely rewarding. Next time you are in the company of a 2 or 3-year-old, just notice the number of questions the child asks. Typically, it's, "what's that?" "why?" and "how?" multiplied a hundred times. That's how keen our brain is to learn.

Our brain grows from an average weight of 230 g at birth to a peak of about 1400 g by the age of 20 – 24 years. The weight of our brain as a ratio of our total body weight is the highest among all species on Earth. We are genetically programmed to develop a complex brain.

Our brain is naturally programmed to learn and to add to its basic functions by listening, watching, imitating and improvising. That is why children are born curious and eager to learn. We are born learners. When we learn something, we feel good. The motivation center in our brain makes us want to learn more and more.

We absorb everything happening around us. When we were children our brains were like sponges – soaking in all that was happening in the environment.

We learned to walk, talk, run, cycle, play games and tie our shoe-laces. We were eager beavers: “let me do it. I can do it. I want to do it.” We learned by trial and error. We were free to make mistakes and learn from them.

Once we entered school, we were bombarded with messages that frightened us - messages that put road blocks in the path of learning.

Did you get any of these messages?

- “Don’t make mistakes.”
- “Be careful. If you get it wrong, you will get a red mark. You will not get a star.”
- “How many marks did you get? What is your position in class? Why can’t you be like her/him?”
- “If you fail, you will suffer.”
- “If you fail, you will not succeed in life.”
- “What! How could you do/say/write something so stupid!”
- “You are stupid.”

How did these messages make you feel? We have listed some feelings, you can add your own:

Anxious: “When I learn something, I should get it right the first time.”

Intimidated: “I should not make a mistake or fail otherwise I will be punished.”

Unrewarded: “The effort I put into learning goes unrewarded, unacknowledged. Only the end result (marks) seem to matter. Getting marks is more important than learning or thinking or innovation.” Results in widespread cheating during exams!

In competition with others: “I should watch how well another person is doing and try and do better than them. I need not work to achieve my full potential. So long as I am better than others, I should feel satisfied and happy!

Humiliated, unworthy: “I am stupid. I am foolish. I am not good enough.”

My parents' and teachers' attitudes can easily convert me, a born learner, who used to thrive on learning, into an anxious, stressed person, learning in order to get marks. I am likely to stop enjoying learning and develop an aversion to it.

Ok, so I get it. I am a born learner. I can regain my joy in learning by focusing on how I feel when I understand or 'suddenly get' something. I can stop focusing on how others feel about my learning speed or method. But what is this critical thinking stuff?

As children we learned by observation and by asking questions. As we grow older, our analytical capacity increases. We learn not only to ask others questions, but also to question their answers.

Sometimes we get carried away by a flaw in our reasoning. Here are some examples of such flaws. Have you come across any such instances?

1. King's robes: if every one is saying the same thing then it must be true. Chinese proverb: if 500 people say a stupid thing it still remains a stupid thing. At one time, everyone believed that the Earth is flat and the Sun goes around the Earth. Is it true?
2. Generalization: all Japanese are meticulous. Really?
3. Doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result: we often spend our time thinking like this. This is futile. We have got to change the action / thinking process in order to get a different result.
4. Appeal to emotions: don't you feel this is true? Don't you just know it?
5. Refusing to admit that there are many options: "poor thing, he had no options but to do as he was told."
6. Assumptions for justification: "anyone in my situation would have acted like that. Therefore, I was right."
7. Getting side-tracked: Start focusing on a side issue while the main reason goes unattended. "Doctors performing female foeticide need to be trapped and punished. How can this be done? What do we need? Let's make fresh laws." The real issue of why people are going to doctors for such abortions is side tracked.
8. Citing precedents and authority: "that's the way it has always been done." "The boss said so."
9. Blinded by glamour: super models use this product. It's got to be good.
10. Accepting all claims without cross checking: "this is the best health drink."
11. Transferring the qualities of the container to the contents: "a well packaged item must be of a good quality."
12. Red herring: diverting attention from the main issue by introducing something irrelevant.

Blocks to critical thinking

What prevents us from thinking critically?

- **Fear of questioning** – We are told, "do as you are told. I have had a similar experience and know what is best for you."
Way out: Understand that each adult has the wisdom of his/ her years of experience of life. While they can guide you from that place of wisdom, you are the best person who knows about your internal strengths, weaknesses, dreams and aspirations. We can listen and take input from all sources and use all this information to decide what suits us best.
- **Fear of punishment** – A parent might say, "How rude! Don't speak when adults are talking!"
Way out: Understand that the parents are taking a hard line because they believe that their advice will ensure the best future and wellbeing of the child. Family members

worry about the child’s future and want the child to live comfortably when they grow up. Share your ideas and aspirations with your family and friends. Unless they know about it how can they understand you? Not being aware of your thoughts and dreams they might keep on imposing their ideas on you. Communicate more and more with your family. Share with them your feelings, ideas and thoughts.

You also need to address the adult’s concerns. Will your choice of subjects/ training/friends/ clothing/ food etc help you or harm you? Do these lead to a bright future?

To reach your goals, you may have to pass through difficult times. You may not have the power to do anything about the hurtful things being said or done to you, but you can keep your goals alive inside you, keep them in sight and work towards them.

- **Fear of making a mistake / being ridiculed** – This often happens in a classroom or at a workplace: You may think “What if my reasoning is wrong? What will everyone say? If no one else is objecting, then the person must be right. How can I challenge the person alone? I’d better keep quiet.”

Way out: We all have our unique ways of thinking. Sometimes the unusual/ seemingly crazy idea proves to be the great insight that changes lives: aeroplanes/ light bulb/ Swami Vivekananda’s and Gandhi’ s ideas. Our ideas may not be so revolutionary or extra ordinary, but if we never try them out, we will not know what we have missed or lost in life.

It is OK to try out, explore and make mistakes. Life teaches us through mistakes. If you gave up trying to ride a bicycle because you fell the first time you tried and your friends laughed at you, then you would not be riding a bicycle now.

- **Fear of responsibility** –We may think “I will be held responsible for what I say. I am not sure if I am right. Let it be.”

Way out: Yes, the person who takes a decision or action is responsible for handling all the consequences arising from that action. Since consequences happen in the future and after making a decision, they are unknown. If you have enough self-confidence, you will feel that you have the qualities, skills and abilities to handle any possible consequence arising from that action or decision. You will not be afraid of taking on responsibility.

There are many instances when we do not look at facts critically. Prime examples are advertised goods. List three objects you bought recently and the reasons you chose to buy that particular brand:

What I bought	Why I bought that particular brand

Consider:

1. Was the choice based on critical judgment?
2. Did I have enough information about the product while making my choice?
3. Was my choice based on reasons, facts, emotions or habit?
4. If I had not seen that product advertised by a glamorous personality would I have still bought it?
5. Do I accept every claim of the manufacturers?
6. Could the information on the package be misleading?
7. Am I an informed customer or a gullible one?
8. Can I go by the testimonials of people who have been paid to endorse a product?

Critical thinking involves:

1. Gathering information: why, what, when, how, who, where?
2. Following logic
3. Staying focused
4. Arriving at a logical conclusion.

For example, take the interlinking of rivers project:

“Considered to be the 'mother of all projects', interlinking of rivers is projected as the one and the only solution to all water problems – droughts and floods. Never before has any proposal won the unstinting support of the apex court, the first citizen and the chief executive of the country, all at the same time.”

If I were to analyze this idea critically, what would I like to know besides the following?

1. The anticipated socio-economic implications
2. Ecological implications
3. Concerns of conscientious citizens
4. The rights of the riparian countries
5. Effects on the political atmosphere in South Asia.
6. The experiences and the lessons learned from similar interlinking projects in other countries
7. Possible negative impacts of this seemingly beneficial scheme

Am I being blinded by authority figures? Glamour? Appeals to emotions like patriotism, unity? How often do I just tag along with someone else’s opinion? Forming an opinion takes time and effort. Do I consider it worthwhile to have my own opinions?

It’s time I thought for myself. It will help my personal, academic and social life. Critical thinking leads to insights that can lead me to create things.

Creative Thinking

Think about the time when you created something – maybe a new dish, a painting, a dress, an object, a computer program.

How did you feel when you were working? How did you feel when you completed it?

What is creative thinking?

Creativity refers to the ability of a person to create something new (a product, a work of art, a novel, a food item) that has some kind of value - either for the person, or for society in general. Creativity is the process that a person goes through. Often the end product was never visualized or conceptualized as it turns out! It surprises the creator as much as those who see or come to know of it. "New" may refer to the individual creator or the society or domain within which novelty occurs. "Valuable", similarly, may be defined in a variety of ways.

Creativity is not limited to art and craft like painting, dancing, drama or writing poems and novels. It includes the ability to find creative solutions (new solutions) to problems.

Sometimes these solutions are not apparent by pure critical thinking. Focused thinking involves aiming for a single, correct solution to a problem, whereas creative thinking involves generation of multiple answers to a set problem. The problem itself may be phrased/looked at in a creative / different manner, altering the way one would need to think!

Creative thinking is looking at what everyone has seen, but seeing something that no one has seen.

Let's try a creative puzzle:

Which is the highest number you can represent using three 9's only?

You have been surely thinking very critically about this challenge. What was the highest number you got? Write it here: If your number fits here, it was not the answer.

The answer is 9^{9^9} . It runs into hundreds of digits.

This is an example of creative thinking. Let's explore creativity.

Which of the following statements about creativity do I agree with?

1. Only artists, writers and scientists are creative.
2. Only young people can be creative.
3. Creativity is a gift. Some have it, some don't.
4. Creativity can't be learned.

5. Creativity requires a high IQ.
6. Creativity can be practiced.
7. Creativity requires use of both halves of the brain.
8. Creativity is a skill and can be mastered.
9. Creativity is easy.
10. Creativity is difficult.
11. We are all naturally creative.

Difference between critical thinking and creative thinking

If you were to proceed logically, step by step through an idea, you would be doing critical thinking. If you were to hop, jump and skip playfully through ideas, connecting, breaking, making fresh associations; you would be doing creative thinking. It's like looking at ideas with fresh eyes, seeking patterns, insights, rhythms, new meanings, completion and beauty. Everyone can be creative. Creativity is not a random string of ideas – it is random ideas strung together beautifully.

Why do we need it?

Creativity is a human ability. It allows us to make things that make our life easier, efficient and enjoyable. It allows us to progress and develop. Look around, we are surrounded by man-made objects; each was created. We didn't stop with objects, we created concepts too – like mathematics, religion and philosophy. We can create a feeling of love, hope, joy too! And some of us can create in the so called paranormal/ supra-conscious world. We can create in the physical, mental, emotional or spiritual domain.

Ability to create sets humans apart from other animals. The bird builds its nest – because it is pre-programmed to do so – like a computer. It cannot build a temple! Creativity is making something of value. It can be of value to the creator - the creator feels happy during the process of creation. That feeling is its own reward. No one else need to see or appreciate the final product! Many a time the final product is seen and valued by others. They appreciate the effort put in by the creator and reward or pay something to the creator to use the product. The creator feels happy. They are motivated to create more and better things. In this way the individual and the entire society benefits!

How can we develop this skill?

Think about the time when you created something – maybe a new dish, a painting, a dress, an object. How did you feel when you were working? How did you feel when you completed it? Point out that creativity is present in us from birth. Have you noticed how small children will be busy making stuff? Then they call their parents to come and look at it and applaud! Creating something makes us feel good about ourselves.

Let us first explore how creativity happens.

Our body, our brain and our environment work together to generate an idea. Paying more attention to these and being more aware of ourselves will increase our creativity.

Body retains all the experiences we have had. The memory is stored in our cells. If you have learnt to bicycle or swim, the skill is stored in your body and you can do it without even thinking about it. Your body has inborn wisdom to survive. It keeps sending signals to the brain in the form of 'gut feelings' or instincts. These help you to be safe and creative.

Brain: Our brain has right and left halves and these two are specialized. Our right brains handle basic functions like interpreting emotions, recognizing colours, faces, images, patterns, and interpreting auditory information (tones, sounds, rhythm and music). It observes, takes in the whole picture, and thinks in totality / holistically. It also controls the left half of the body, especially the left hand. The left brain handles functions like language, reading, writing, mathematics, logic, analysis and reasoning. The left brain thinks, rationalizes and acts; it seeks explanations for why events occur. It controls the right half of the body – especially the right hand.

Creativity is when we are able to put together ideas that don't usually go together or haven't been put together before, and make something useful or beautiful out of them. It helps when we can mix ideas that are generated in different parts of the brain. To be creative, we need to balance both halves of our brains.

Left Brain Functions and Activities:
Linguistic – <i>learning a new language</i>
Reading, writing - <i>reading, writing poems, stories, facts, fiction</i>
Verbal – <i>tongue twisters</i>
Numerical – <i>number puzzles, Sudoku</i>
Mathematical
Logical – <i>logic puzzles, mysteries, science</i>
Analytical
Scientific
Linear
Sequential
Listing
Clear
Rational
Motor activity – <i>games, exercise, walking, jogging, Yoga</i>

Right Brain Functions and Activities:
Emotional – <i>identifying my own and other's feelings.</i>
Spontaneous
Intuitive – <i>acting on intuition, listening to the inner feeling</i>
Visual – <i>optical illusions puzzles, noticing details, recalling images</i>
Faces
Holistic – <i>looking at the big picture, looking for similarities</i>
Recognition
Images
Patterns – <i>jigsaw puzzles, tangrams</i>
Colours - <i>art</i>
Spatial – <i>craft, origami</i>
Artistic
Music - <i>listening to music, singing, playing musical instruments</i>
Rhythm
Parallel processing – <i>managing more than one thing at a time</i>
Daydreaming
Imagination

Environment: We do not exist in a vacuum. We are surrounded by and live with the help of a host of living and non - living things like light, air, water, fire, soil, plants, animals and other

human beings. Using all our senses we can be aware of the environmental inputs. These too help our brain think of new ideas.

Being aware of the intuitive and telepathic feelings that arise in us can make us more sensitive to these inputs. We can be more tuned into the supra-conscious world and receive messages/ ideas without consciously thinking of them. Many inventors 'dreamt' of the solutions to the problems they were grappling with – for instance the Benzene ring structure - August Kekule's somnolent vision of a snake biting its tail, a dream that supposedly revealed the true structure of the benzene ring to the German chemist.

Preparing to be creative: we need to be in touch with (aware of) all 3 aspects:

1. Being aware of my body:

Act in tune with your body. Go to sleep when you feel sleepy, wake up naturally and not with the help of an alarm! Eat when hungry, and stop when you feel full. Drink water when you feel thirsty. Eat foods that suit your entire body and not just your tongue. Pay attention to how you feel 4-6 hours after eating certain foods. Do you think there can be a link between how you feel in the morning on waking up with what you had for dinner?

Move all joints of your body to increase flexibility in your body and mind. It allows new ideas to emerge. Practice yoga or whole-body exercises.

Pay attention to and be aware of your gut feelings, feelings that say “you are missing something” ‘you need to leave this place now” “you need to speak now” “something is wrong here” “this is not safe.”

2. Nurturing the whole brain, balancing the brain and being aware of the environment:

Take time to indulge in free flow of thoughts, imagine, dream. Think and imagine with abandon - no rules, no penalty, no referee. Indulge in free movement/ dance/ make things with your own hands.

Indulge in rhythm - keep in synchrony with day/ night/ seasons Play with colours and shades – draw, paint, sketch

Experience taste to the fullest – can you taste all the ingredients of the food you are eating?

Experience smell to the fullest – what can you smell now? What is the source of these smells?

Experience texture to the fullest – close your eyes and touch something slowly and with awareness – how does it feel? Soft, hard, woody, stony, cold, warm?

Experience sound to the fullest – what all can you hear? How does it make you feel? What is the source of these sounds? Is it music? Listen to music/ play a musical instrument/ sing.

Certain parts of my brain are better developed than others, either from birth or because of the effort I put into developing some skills. Because these parts are better developed, I find it easier to do the mental work that uses these well-developed areas. Over time I begin to think that I can only do work in these areas. I shirk from using other areas of my brain.

To build my creative thinking skills I need to stimulate these underused areas of my brain. A prime example is preference for one hand – say, the right hand. I had an inborn preference for right hand. I continued to build on this preference when I learnt to eat, write, play etc. Today I think of myself as a ‘right handed person’. My left hand, however, is fully capable of doing all that my right hand does – it only lacks practice. Therefore, to activate the other half of my brain, I can start using my left hand to write, play, cut, spread etc. Being ambidextrous boosts creativity.

To begin with let me write A to Z using my non-dominant hand (my other hand)

How about writing A to Z in mirror writing (how the alphabet would look in a mirror)?

What does it take to become a creative person?

Creativity is a game where each player is required to play with abandon - no rules, no penalty, no referee. And rewards? Creativity is its own reward.

All that I have to do become creative is to start playing the game.

That’s easier said than done, I have followed rules all my life! How can I suddenly start playing a game with no rules? I haven’t played a game where I am the judge, the participant, the referee and the spectator!

Let’s play with the whole brain

1. Remove all labels. My brain, in order to make sense out of the numerous bits of information I keep throwing into it, neatly labels each bit of information and stores it away in a designated slot.

To play the creativity game, I need to mentally remove all labels, categories and preconceived notions I have put on objects, thoughts and ideas.

2. Go on a treasure hunt. When I hunt for answers to the most mundane, obvious, natural events, it leads me to new, unknown ideas. This boosts creativity.

3. Sensational synthesis. When I focus on all my senses: smell, taste, touch, vision and hearing, I increase the input to my right brain. I can mix and transpose different sensations to add to my creativity. Visualizing events that haven’t happened yet makes them more likely to happen as I imagined them. Visualization is not fantasy, it is a detailed dress rehearsal of an event I desire. (Hear the sounds, add colour, fill in details of people, place and time. Don’t reason, just visualize).

I can learn to draw and paint, I can listen more acutely to the sounds in my environment and music, I can listen to the silence, and when listening to music, I can try tell the different musical instruments apart. What emotions are being expressed? If I were to draw this music how would it be? How about giving a colour to this sound? I can be more aware of the smells around me. Identify the probable source; how does the smell make me feel? What memories does it bring? I can mix flowers and spices to make perfumes. Similarly, for taste. Can I name the food that is causing the taste? What colour would I give this taste? What sound? Touch can be very enriching. Have I tried touching harmless animals, plants and insects? How do things feel when I keep my eyes closed?

4. Connect. Indulge in games like, for example, “how are cockroaches and diamonds connected?” Finding ways to connect apparently unrelated objects and concepts enhances my creativity.

5. Be a kid, don’t judge. Try it out. If it works, it’s my creation. If it doesn’t, I will have learnt what doesn’t work. I’ll try something different now.

6. Challenge the status quo. To test knowledge through experience and be willing to learn from mistakes.

7. Don’t reject, innovate. I won’t reject ideas or products, but will make gradual refinements, alterations and additions to the product until I am satisfied.

8. Be with Ambiguity. Grey areas and paradoxes lead to insights. Be unreasonable, audacious, and confused. Remember: no rules. Ambiguity is the mother of creativity.

9. Mix and match at random. Intuitive, imagine, think, read, talk, discuss, compare, contrast, explore, change, alter, undo, redo, bend, twist, innovate, work and sleep over it. Split, splice and add spice. Add chili sauce to vanilla ice cream without flinching! Be original.

10. Remember Tortoise’s teachings. Persistence pays. No pain, no gain. In the words of Thomas Edison, discoveries are 1% inspiration and 99% perspiration! Isaac Newton is reputed to have worked 17 hours per day for about a decade.

11. Feed the brain. Give it plenty of glucose. Eat complex carbohydrates and proteins to provide a steady supply of energy to the brain. Walnuts, fish and spirulina supply omega three fatty acids needed to build brain cells.

12. Hop skip and jump. Mistakes are the wobbly stepping stones that connect the mainland to Success Island. I am perfectly safe on the mainland, but do I want to be stuck here?

13. Playing field. I can have lots of stimulating stuff in my surroundings – patterns, colour, art, sculptures, pottery, photographs, music, colourful cushions, wall hangings, sunlight, plants. I can change the display items on and off to add variety.

14. When stuck, take a walk. When tired of thinking, I can move around. This will break the monotony. When I start again, I will begin afresh.

IX - Lifestyle

So long we have been talking about ‘food’ for the mind. We have discussed how to nourish our self-esteem. Now, let’s look at how we can keep our bodies healthy and adopt a healthy lifestyle.

What according to you is optimum lifestyle?

- Adds value to life
- Improves mental clarity and concentration
- Increases IQ
- Increases physical performance
- Improves quality of sleep
- Improves resistance to infection
- Protects from disease
- Extends healthy life span

Living as I do in an environment shown above, how do I ensure optimum nourishment for my body?

This is a question that no other animal on earth asks. Their instincts help them find the kind of food their body needs. Human ingenuity has made available all types of artificial, unnatural, processed foods. These foods do not occur naturally in the form they are sold to me. In nature, what is nourishing for the body is perceived as good and tasty by the senses. Same cannot be said of man-made processed foods.

Most foods are now processed in a factory before they reach the market. In fact, you will have a hard time recognizing the source of some of the foods you eat routinely. Your instincts have been hijacked by your senses. Is all that tastes, smells and looks good best for your body?

Looks like I will have to educate myself about what is available and alluring and what is desirable and nourishing for my body.

How aware am I of what, how and when I eat?

Spot the health hazards from the list given below (cross them out):

- Morning alarm
- Coffee/tea/cigarette
- No breakfast or a hasty breakfast on the run
- 10 am - coffee
- 12 pm - snack
- 3 pm - lunch
- 5 pm - tea, biscuits, snacks
- 9 pm – dinner
- 11 pm – TV
- 12 night – go to bed

Can the following happen?

Tick what is possible for you / what you are already doing:

- 6 am - wake up in the morning without an alarm, ensuring adequate sleep (long term memory is set during sleep. Concentration improves. Around 8 hours of sleep is very important).
- Stretching exercises or yoga for 20 minutes
- 7 am Breakfast – milk/curd (calcium source), a protein source (based on dals, eggs, soya, meat) and fruit (carbohydrates and vitamin source).
- 11 am – fruits, nuts, or juice
- Lunch – Curds, protein and complex carbohydrate, vegetables, fruit
- 4 pm - Milk/lassi/fruit juice/fruits/nuts
- Brisk walk /jog/skipping/cycling/workout
- 8 pm dinner – similar to lunch
- 10 pm – go to bed

I am young and quite healthy. Why should I bother with nutrition?

You may be feeling healthy. You may be happy with your weight today. Would you like to stay that way as days pass? Are you making sensible choices when buying food stuffs? Are your daily intake of vitamins, iron and calcium adequate? Lack of iron can cause difficulty in concentration and mental work. Lack of vitamins affects skin texture and health in general. Lack of calcium causes joint and bone pains. It pays to nourish the body optimally.

What do you feel is optimum nutrition?

Optimum nutrition leads to:

- Improved mental clarity and concentration
- Increased IQ
- Increased physical performance
- Improved quality of sleep
- Improved resistance to infection
- Protection from disease
- Extension of healthy life span

Optimum nutrition and optimum exercise makes you live longer and healthier and improves productivity and creativity.

Some questions about food, calories and weight:

Why do we like foods that are fried, oily or sugary?

Appeal of 'junk' foods (foods that provide empty calories - without minerals, vitamins or fiber):

- Junk foods are rich in fat. Fats add taste and aroma to food. This is why restaurants use a lot of oil – it spreads the aroma of their food all around. Even at home, fried stuff can be smelt all over the house. It smells and tastes good.
Unfortunately, all the fat you eat is absorbed. In nature fat is found inside the shell, inside the fruit, in the seed. It is a rare commodity and our body is designed to absorb all of it. Our body does not know that now oil is available in bottles and that we are consuming about double the amount needed to stay healthy.
- Junk foods are rich in simple carbs (carbohydrates). Sugar, refined wheat, refined rice, and maida are simple carbs that are quickly broken down into glucose and absorbed. They raise blood glucose levels. Our brain uses only glucose as its fuel. It loves to receive glucose. In other words, glucose can be addictive. In nature, sugar is not available as packets hanging from trees. It is part of sugarcane. To get one spoon of sugar, you would have to chew quite a bit of sugarcane. You would feel full – and would not dream of eating a whole lot of the cane. However, we do not think twice before downing a soft drink, which has 140 calories in 330 ml. One heaped teaspoon of sugar (6g) contains 25 calories, so that's like having 5-6 spoons of sugar! In fact, we are likely to ask for more – no one can have just one! Or can they?

Does this mean that I can't have any fun foods?

You can have lots of fun foods that are healthy too. Have you tried any of these?

Peanuts

Bhel

Sprouts garnished with onions, tomatoes, coriander,
lemon Sundal (Chana)

Chikkies (groundnuts with jaggery)

Fruits

Fruit chaat

Fresh juice

Dates and nuts

Popcorn (without butter if you want to lose weight)

Walnuts and sesame seed preparations (like revadi, and walnut ladoos)

Saturated fats like Ghee, butter, lard, coconut oil, animal fats can be heated without damaging the fat; raise cholesterol.

Polyunsaturated fatty acids - oils like sunflower, safflower oil should not be heated. Poor in omega 3.

Monounsaturated fatty acids - like Mustard oil, canola, olive oil, rice bran oil and groundnut oil withstand heating better than polyunsaturated fatty acids. Reduce omega 6 and Increase Omega 3 intake.

What is Omega 3? What are the benefits?

- Enhances brain function
- Prevents clotting of blood and keeps blood vessels open.
- Lowers cholesterol
- Not found in large quantities in common foods.
- Found in fish oils, walnuts, spirulina, flaxseeds
- Omega 6 has opposite effects on clotting and blood vessels. It is widely distributed in nature and we take in a lot of omega 6 fats
- Enhance omega 3 intake, to balance with omega 6 - ideally 1:1 or 1:2.

What are trans Fats?

There are two broad types of trans fats found in foods: naturally-occurring and artificial trans fats. Naturally-occurring trans fats are produced in the gut of some animals and foods made from these animals (e.g., milk and meat products) may contain small quantities of these fats. Artificial trans fats (or trans fatty acids) are created in an industrial process that adds hydrogen to liquid vegetable oils to make them more solid.

The primary dietary source for trans fats in processed food is “partially hydrogenated oils.” Look for them on the ingredient list on food packages. In November 2013, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) made a preliminary determination that partially hydrogenated oils are no longer Generally Recognized as Safe (GRAS) in human food.

From: American Health Association – <https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/healthy-eating/eat-smart/fats/trans-fat>

Trans fats are easy to use, inexpensive to produce and last a long time. Trans fats give foods a desirable taste and texture. Many restaurants and fast-food outlets use trans fats to deep-fry foods because oils with trans fats can be used many times in commercial fryers.

Several countries (e.g., Denmark, Switzerland, and Canada) and jurisdictions (California, New York City, Baltimore, and Montgomery County, MD) have reduced or restricted the use of trans fats in food service establishments.

Before 1990, very little was known about how trans fat can harm your health. In the 1990s, research began identifying the adverse health effects of trans fats. Based on these findings, FDA instituted labeling regulations for trans fat and consumption has decreased in the US in recent decades, however some individuals may consume high levels of trans fats based on their food choices.

Which foods contain trans fats?

- Trans fats can be found in many foods – including fried foods like doughnuts, and baked goods including cakes, pie crusts, biscuits, frozen pizza, cookies, crackers, and stick margarines and other spreads.
- You can determine the amount of trans fats in a particular packaged food by looking at the Nutrition Facts panel.
- However, products can be listed as “0 grams of trans fats” if they contain 0 grams to less than 0.5 grams of trans fat per serving.

- You can also spot trans fats by reading ingredient lists and looking for the ingredients referred to as “partially hydrogenated oils.”

How do trans fats affect my body?

- Trans fats raise LDL cholesterol levels (not beneficial to health) and lower HDL cholesterol levels (not beneficial to health)
- Eating trans fats increases the risk of developing heart disease and stroke. It’s also associated with a higher risk of developing type 2 diabetes
- Damage cell membranes
- Raise cholesterol
- Antagonize the action of essential Fatty acids
- Enhance atherosclerosis, heart disease, arthritis, inflammation, aging

How to limit intake of trans fats?

- Read the Nutrition Facts panel on foods you buy at the store and, when eating out, ask what kind of oil foods are cooked in. Replace the trans fats in your diet with monounsaturated or polyunsaturated fats.
- Eat a dietary pattern that emphasizes fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy products, poultry, fish and nuts. Also limit red meat and sugary foods and beverages.
- Use naturally occurring, unhydrogenated vegetable oils such as canola or sesame/groundnut oil or olive oil most often.
- Look for processed foods made with unhydrogenated oil rather than partially hydrogenated or hydrogenated vegetable oils or saturated fat.
- Look for “0 g trans fat” on the Nutrition Facts label and no hydrogenated oils in the ingredients list.
- Limit commercially fried foods and baked goods made with shortening or partially hydrogenated vegetable oils. Not only are these foods very high in fat, but that fat is also likely to be trans fat.
- Doughnuts, cookies, crackers, muffins, pies and cakes are examples of foods that may contain trans fat. Limit how frequently you eat them.

How can I maintain my body weight?

A rough estimate - 50 kg weight for a height of 5 feet. For every inch thereafter, add 2 kg. BMI (short for body mass index) is the relationship between height and weight. It is a far more effective way of finding out if you’re obese or underweight than comparing yourself with your friends. To calculate it, you divide your weight (in kilograms) your height in meters squared.

$$\text{BMI} = \frac{\text{weight (kg)}}{(\text{Height in meters})^2}$$

For example, a person weighing 50 kgs and with a height of 150 cm (1.5meters) will have a BMI of 50 divided by 2.25 (1.5 multiplied by 1.5) = 22.2
 BMI is usually around 15 kg per m² when you are 10, 18 kg per m² at 16 years of age and 20 kg per m² at 20 years of age.

BMI in adults	
Below 18 kg per m²	Underweight
18 – 25 kg per m²	Normal
26 - 29 kg per m²	Overweight
Above 30 kg per m²	Obese

How do I manage my weight?

Unlike height (which depends largely on genes), your weight is affected by the balance between how much you eat (calorie intake) and how much you use up (calorie use). All the extra calories get stored as fat. There are also some hormonal and genetic problems that cause obesity, like a lack of thyroid hormone, insulin resistance or too much adrenal hormones. Lastly, your metabolic rate, which is how quickly your body burns up its food, also has a part to play.

What does it mean to be underweight?

To be underweight, means having weak bones and less muscle mass.

To address underweight, the attempt can be to build bone and muscle mass, increase protein intake. Exercise, especially weight bearing and impact exercises, might be useful too.

What does it mean to be overweight?

Being overweight means that there is extra fat in your body.

To address overweight, the attempt can be to lose fat (not muscle/ bone mass). A way to do that is to reduce carbs and fats. Eating whole food vegetarian diet – whole grains/ nuts/ veg/ fruits can be helpful too.

If too much weight is the issue...

If you wish to lose weight, the best thing to do is to decrease the fat intake of your diet and replace it with other, more nutritious food. Exercise too, since this will burn calories and add some useful muscular strength.

1. Rule out hormonal problems like thyroid or insulin disorders by consulting a physician.
2. Excess fat is the result of too much calorie intake (food intake) as compared calorie utilization (exercise, manual labour).
3. Reduce intake of fat – as it is we take in twice as much fat as is needed by our body. Reduce fried food and use of oil in the cooking process. But by no means omit fat, as it is necessary for making several hormones. Normally, we need just 15 ml of oil or ghee or butter per day – that is about 500 ml of oil in the entire month.
4. Reduce simple carbohydrates like sugar, refined rice and refined wheat and potatoes. These are easily absorbed. Blood sugar rises quickly and falls again quickly. You feel hungry again. Excess of carbohydrates are stored as fat in the body.

5. Increase intake of whole fresh fruits and vegetables (these are complex carbohydrates). They satisfy hunger, are absorbed slowly and produce a steady low level of glucose in the blood. Increase intake of oats, raagi, wheat bran.
6. Maintain adequate protein intake to maintain muscle mass (1 g per kg of body weight).
7. Exercise for at least 30 minutes every day at a rate that makes you sweat and makes your heart beat fast. This burns the extra fat and builds muscle strength.
8. Don't skip meals. The brain feels it has been deprived and sends you on a binge the moment it gets the chance! Instead eat regularly. Just watch you are eating. Make it fibrous, complex carbohydrate or protein rich (like carrots, cucumber, and thick dals made with minimum of oil).

Methods not recommended are:

Crash Dieting - One common 'weight reduction' technique is crash dieting. Here, a person suddenly deprives themselves of food, during which they deprive themselves of lots of food including essential vitamins, making them lethargic and prey to infections. Soon the body can't bear it any longer and usually goes back to its normal style of eating. Sometimes, the person starts bingeing. What is worst is that the body has now experienced starvation, and therefore increases calorie absorption – especially of fats and carbohydrates – so now the person might end up gaining weight faster than before.

Medication - There are many medications in the market that help you lose weight. Some work by increasing your Basal Metabolic Rate. Though this does increase the number of calories the body burns, it is like forcing yourself to continuously run a marathon, and has harmful effects on the body in the long run, including heart and kidney failure.

Some medications reduce absorption from the gut, but this isn't restricted to glucose and high calorie food and can sometimes hinder other vital fat-soluble vitamins. Sometimes you may come across a few things that will reduce your desire to eat, but remember that if you take them, you may end up with malnutrition (and once again, skipping meals cuts down on valuable protein more than fat).

A few weight reduction programs make you do one strenuous exercise for a long time, but such exercise is seldom sustainable and may lead to knee, joint, or spine damage. Liposuction, a surgical procedure done with anesthesia, basically sucks the fat out of your body. Usually, all the blubber returns rather quickly afterwards.

If being underweight is the issue...

1. Weight is mainly based on the bone, muscle and fat content of your body. If you are underweight, it will be best if you decide to increase your muscle and bone mass. Poor bone mass predisposes to osteoporosis later in life.
2. Do muscular (eg. weight training), endurance (e.g running), and impact (eg. skipping, jumping, stepping up and down rapidly) exercises to build your muscles and bone mass.
3. Take nutritious food with lots of protein, vitamins and calcium. Of course, it is rather simple to increase fat content by taking high calorie foods and being lazy, but there aren't too many benefits associated with putting on fat.

What is Anorexia Nervosa and Bulimia?

National Family Health Survey 2007 found anaemia in: 56 % women of 15-49 years, 79% of children below 3 years, 24% men aged 15-49 years Prevalence seems to be the same in urban and rural areas!

Here, psychology overtakes nutrition. Some youngsters are unhappy with their bodies. They try to achieve a very thin (and unhealthy) figure by avoiding food. Soon they lose appetite (anorexia nervosa) or go to the extent of inducing vomiting soon after eating (bulimia). Their health suffers, they lose weight and stamina, and vitamin deficiency sets in. Menstruation stops as well. The condition can be life threatening and needs counseling.

A self-assessment guide on optimum nutrition:

How well do I know what I need and what I eat? Tick the statements that you think are true.

1. I need 1200 mg of elemental calcium per day until the age of 20 years and thereafter 500 mg per day till I am 30.
2. A glass of milk has enough calcium to meet my daily requirements.
3. 100 ml of milk contains 100 mg of elemental calcium.
4. Caffeine is found in chocolates, coffee, tea, cocoa, cola drinks.
5. Caffeine is addictive.
6. Caffeine is good for my bones, muscles and intestines.
7. Caffeine intake could increase calcium loss.
8. I need 1g per kg body weight of protein per day.
9. I need to combine a pulse (dal, rajma, channa) with a cereal (rice, wheat) to get all the required protein.
10. Soya bean is a vegetarian's meat. It is a complete protein in itself and does not need to be combined with a pulse or cereal.
11. I need 35 mg of elemental iron per day.
12. I know which foods are rich in iron.
13. I know about trans fats.
14. Trans fats are harmful to my body
15. Trans fats offer an advantage to the food industry.
16. Foods cooked in hydrogenated fats have a long shelf life.
17. Butter, cocoa butter, ghee, coconut oil are examples of saturated fats. They raise cholesterol levels. Cholesterol levels can be lowered by exercise. Trans fats damage the cell membrane. This damage can lead to blood vessel and heart disease, skin disorders, arthritis, inflammation, aging, auto immune disorders. This cannot be undone by exercise!
18. Hydrogenated fats, partially hydrogenated fats, margarine, and vegetable shortenings are examples of trans fats.
19. The Food and Drug Administration in USA has made listing of trans fats mandatory. It recommends that consumers reduce their intake of trans fats.
20. I read the labels on the packaged food that I buy.
21. Labels like 'edible oil' provide inadequate information. I need not buy such items.
22. Trans fats are ubiquitous – they are found in margarine, vegetable shortening, ice-cream, puddings, ready-made pies, cakes & cake mixes, biscuits, cookies, pizza, potato

chips, fritters, doughnuts, gravy & sauce mixes, artificial creamers, confectionery, sugary breakfast cereals, cereal bars, and many chocolates in place of far more expensive (and healthy) cocoa butter.

23. Trans fats are also commonly found in restaurant food, especially - but not only - in fast food. I can also make my own trans fat (in small amounts) by repeatedly re-heating cooking oil in my kitchen.
24. It is better to eat food stuffs made from butter, cocoa butter, ghee, coconut oil; than to eat food stuffs containing trans fats.
25. I have heard about omega 3 fatty acids. They keep my blood vessels healthy. They help in development of neurons. Omega 6 fatty acids can lead to narrowing of blood vessels and clotting of blood.
26. Current Indian diet is rich in omega 6. According research, in Indian diets the ratio of omega 6: omega 3 is 15 to 30:1. I need to increase omega 3 fatty acid intake.
27. Oils with a healthy ratio of omega 3 and omega 6 are mustard oil, canola, olive oil and to some extent, groundnut oil.
28. Oils with an unhealthy ratio of omega 3 and omega 6 are safflower oil, sunflower oil, corn oil.
29. Vegetarian diets contain inadequate quantities of Vit B12 and B6. These vitamins are found mainly in the animal kingdom. Vegetarians need to supplement their diets with Vit B12 and B6 multivitamins.
30. Walnuts, spirulina, pumpkin seeds, fish, fish oils are rich in fats (omega 3) that are needed for brain growth and development.

All statements except 2 and 6 are true.

I am the boss of my body. I decide what, when and how much I eat.

The table below will help you make responsible choices. Nobody benefits more from you being healthy than you yourself. So take care.

Table of protein, iron and calcium content of certain foods

Requirement for Iron, Calcium and Proteins

Age group	Iron in mg	Calcium in mg	Protein – gms per kg body wt
0-1 yrs	1 mg/kg wt	500-600	2.3- 1.5
2-10 yrs children	15-20	400 – 600	2 – 1.5
Adolescent boys	25	1200	1.5 – 1.4
Adolescent Girls	35	1200	1.4 – 1.3
Pregnancy and lactation	40 – 30(+5)	1000	1.0
20 –30 yr women	30	500	1.0
>30 years women	30	1000	1.0
Post menopause	20	1000	1.0
Adult men	20	500	1.0

Food 100 gm edible portion	Iron in mg	Calcium in mg	Protein in %
Methi saag /Fenugreek	16.5	400	4
Pudina / Mint	16	200	5
Chaulai saag Amaranthus/China spinach	25.5	400	4
Palak saag /Spinach	11	73	2
Moongphali Ground nuts	2.8	230	25
Badam /Almonds	4.5	230	21
Khajoor /Dates	7.3	120	2
Kishmish/ Raisins	7.7	87	2
Soyabean	11.5	240	43
Wheat refined	2.5	23	11
Wheat whole	11.5	48	12
Rice milled	3	10	7
Channa Bengal gram /Chick pea	10.5	200	17
Urad /Black gram	9.1	150	24
Mung/Green gram	7.3	124	24
Arhar/ tuvar/Red gram	6	73	22
Milk	0.2	120	3
Curd	0.2	150	3
Cheese one slice of 20 gm		110	3.6
Ragi 100 gm	1.3	110	2.4
Egg chicken medium - 50 gm	0.7	25	13
Fish curry 150 gm - one katori	4.3	0.3	10

Do not consume tea with meals as it binds the iron and prevents its absorption.

Tips to healthy eating

- Eating ways: Are you a grazer or a gorger?
- Eat a variety of plant parts
- Eat a variety of colours
- Eat a variety of animal products
- Eat a variety of nuts and seeds
- Buy organic or wash well
- Peel thinly or not at all
- Grow coriander, mint, chillies and tomatoes at home
- Include Soybeans, curds, ginger, garlic and onions in your meals.
- Include sea-food in your meals.
- Include walnuts, pumpkin seeds, spirulina
- Keep meat and eggs to 3-4 times a week.
- Drink plenty of water – 2.5 liters per day.
- Consume fresh and raw food – fruits, sprouts, salads.
- Cook food whole
- Steam or stir fry

- Slice and blend before serving
- Avoid deep frying.
- Boil with minimum water
- Microwaving does not leach out vitamins, but denatures fats and nuts, forms harmful advanced glycation end products
- Keep food cool, in closed containers
- Avoid adding salt or sugar
- Avoid highly refined foods
- Avoid colored foods
- Avoid sweetened / salted pre-packed / preserved foods
- Reduce antinutrient exposure
- Read the label!

Eating healthy has a positive effect on our lives!

It leads to –

- sustained weight maintenance
- a better mood
- increased energy levels
- positive inspiration to others and
- the potential for a heightened quality of life

When we eat healthy, we physically feel good. We mentally have more energy to do the things that matter. When we are both globally conscious and personally healthy in our eating choices, we are contributing to the welfare of the planet. Our decision to practice healthy eating habits has so many consequences in so many ways.

Now that you have all the information you need on eating healthy, the most important action step you can do is to maintain this lifestyle choice as much as possible. Keep a diary of your food choices on your blog or journal. Talk to other people when you are feeling tempted to indulge in unhealthy desserts.

Eating healthy, after all, is not about losing your ability to enjoy indulgences. It is a matter of gaining so many things that will affect you for the rest of your life: a longer life, the ability to enjoy natural foods, a wholesome sense of self-esteem and the joy of respecting your body for all that it does for you.

Let us now look at some examples here –

A group of young college students is planning to go for an overnight trip to a nearby hill station.

Tick what they are likely to pack for the trip:

Fruit juice, beer, buttermilk packets, chips, snacks, fruits, soft drinks, sandwiches, puri bhaji, biscuits, nuts, cigarettes, snuff, paan, curd rice, fried rice, noodles, dosas, chewing gum, mint, ladoos, chocolates, crackers.

In your opinion, which of the above items are associated with ‘having fun’ or ‘having a good time’?

At a party, you see a young couple drinking beer. At the other end is another couple sipping fruit juice. What would you think of the two couples? You may choose from the list of adjectives listed below or use your own.

I think the first couple is

I think the second couple is

Adventurous, modern, fun loving, traditional, simpletons, courageous, outgoing, scared of parents, submissive, assertive, know how to have a good time, know how to enjoy, toeing the line, boring, interesting, fashionable, confident, powerful, in-charge of their lives, successful.

Let’s apply critical thinking:

Why do I think like this?

Why do I associate drinking alcohol with ‘having fun, enjoyment and having a good time’?

Why was smoking considered fashionable?

What contributes to the image of a product?

Advertisements play a big role in creating the image of a product in our minds. Here are some one liners seen in advertisements promoting smoking or alcohol intake:

- ‘King of good times’
- ‘Rule your world’
- “Discover a passion’
- ‘It’s honey dew smooth’

- ‘This evening, join us for a drink. A great way to end a day.’
- ‘India kings’
- ‘The new sign of success.’

Another way an image is created is by enrolling or paying famous, popular people (like film actors, models) to endorse a product. Novels, media and music also play a role. Indirect advertisement is often done by companies to associate their product with youth and strength – typically by sponsoring sports. To make their product appear fashionable, they sponsor fashion shows! Smoking and drinking by actors/ actresses in movies has a huge influence on young boys and girls.

Going up in smoke

If you were to study how cigarettes were marketed and advertised over the last 50 years, you would be able to see through the strategy of the tobacco industry. Initially, the product was aimed at the adult male. The advertisements had pictures of galloping horses and cowboys depicting raw strength. Once the market of adult males was saturated, the focus shifted to the boys. Younger and younger faces started appearing in cigarette advertisements. Once this segment had been hooked, the strategy shifted to target women. Cigarettes were labeled ‘soft, smooth, silky.’ Dew drops started appearing on the advertisements.

Clearly, advertisements do not necessarily tell us the truth. Very often they are misleading. For instance, the truth about cigarette smoke is that it is composed of 500 different compounds including:

- Nicotine
- Tar
- Carbon mono
oxide Ammonia
- Unburnt carbon particles

Many of them are of proven hazard to health. The effect they produce on the airways and lungs is far from ‘soft, smooth’ or dew like.

The actor who portrayed the famous Marlboro man succumbed to cancer of the lungs. This fact was never advertised. The short-term effects of cigarette smoking are yellowing of teeth, aging of skin, wrinkling, bad breath, impotence. Now with the growth of the anti-smoking movement, the proliferation of lawsuits against tobacco companies, and the passage of legislation restricting smoking in public places over the last several years, cigarette advertisers have become more cautious in their approach. Since tobacco is a huge industry, cigarettes are unlikely to disappear from the market any time soon.

Similarly let’s look at alcohol.

Why do people smile when they invite their friend to join them for a ‘drink’? We have associated alcohol intake with ‘having fun’ ‘growing up’ ‘being a real man/ woman’ ‘rebellion’ ‘modern’ etc. Somehow, ‘having fun’ seems to start with just holding a glass of beer in one’s hands. The alcohol has not yet been sipped, but the effect has already started.

What's happening?

The person expects to have 'fun'. Therefore they begin to experience it. Expectation can often mask reality. The truth of the matter is that, the fun is in being with friends and in the ambience. Eating a cake all by your self is never as much fun as having it with a bunch of friends, in a café with music and laughter. It is the same with alcohol, cigarettes, coffee and drugs. Someone who does not smoke or drink often has as much fun in such a setting as someone who drinks alcohol or smokes.

Facts about alcohol

Alcohol (ethanol) is a strong central nervous system depressant. Initially it depresses our inhibition center – the center that keeps us mindful of personal, social and legal norms. This results in the person experiencing relaxation, freedom and cheerfulness. The person begins to laugh readily, talk loudly and behave more 'freely'. Intoxicated people will do things they would not do while sober, often ignoring social, moral and legal considerations.

Further intake of alcohol leads to inhibition of other centers in the brain leading to difficulty in motor coordination. Walking, running, driving, even proper pronunciation becomes a problem, but the person does not realize this and often insists that they are capable of driving/taking care of themselves. With more consumption, the person begins to feel sleepy. Alcohol intake therefore does not increase sexual prowess. After all, how much sex can a sleepy person indulge in? However, due to inhibited critical thinking and reduced ability to make well-thought out decisions, chances of casual sex increases. Excessive intake of alcohol can result in unconsciousness, alcohol poisoning and rarely, even death.

Inadvertent exposure to drugs:

Aneelsha had gone to a party with her friends. In the party she met a man who had also been invited to the party. After talking for some time, the man offered to get Aneelsha something to drink. Aneelsha agreed. The man returned with a drink. She had the drink. After a while, the man asked Aneelsha to follow him. She followed him. He asked her to get inside his car. She got in. The man drove away.

Two hours later Aneelsha's friends found her sitting on a pavement nearby. She was in a hypnotic state and did not know what had happened. The man was nowhere to be found.

This is not a make-believe story. This incident was narrated by the victim to her doctor whom she visited the day after the incident. The drink was non-alcoholic.

What do you think happened?

Have you heard of similar incidents?

What can young people do to keep themselves safe?

Here are some suggestions that people have come up with:

1. ‘Girls in our house are advised to drink alcohol only at home. Never in a public place.’ This rule would hold good for boys too. Driving back home after a few alcoholic drinks is not safe.
2. Because unscrupulous people may add drugs to a person’s drink, it is a good idea to have drinks in a covered glass – one with a cap with a straw. In the USA, such glasses are common.
3. “Always take a drink from a fresh bottle. The bottle / carton should be opened in front of you. Watch while the drink is poured into a glass.”
4. “Ask a friend to watch your drink while you are away.”
5. “Never leave your drink unattended.”
6. These rules apply to fruit juices and cold drinks too.
7. There is strength in numbers. Going inside a juice center, pub or restaurant all alone may not be a great choice. As far as possible, go in a group and stay with the group.

The nature of addiction

Talking about drugs, alcohol and smoking makes us think of addiction straight away. Do you know a person who is unable to give up one of these substances even though they are aware of its harmful effects and wants to stop?

What do these people say when they are asked to stop?

Choose from the list below:

1. I feel restless if I don’t take it.
2. I get a headache / can’t pass motion / get tremors if I don’t take it.
3. I know it is not good for me but I am unable to stop.
4. It calms me down and I feel good when I take it.
5. It helps me forget my worries and relaxes me.
6. I can’t help it. It runs in the family. My parent / uncle / aunt is addicted to the same stuff.

What else have you heard?

The nature of addiction is such that all of the above statements are true. They are not simply excuses.

Let's understand addiction

All drugs, foodstuffs, drinks, are basically chemicals. The chemicals are absorbed into the blood stream and they reach the brain. Some of these chemicals are able to stimulate the motivation center in the brain. Normally, the job of the motivation center is to make a person repeat activities that are beneficial and help the person survive. The motivation center does this by releasing chemicals that make the person 'feel nice'. This 'reward' makes the person repeat the activity. Chemicals like nicotine, caffeine, alcohol, cocaine etc are able to plug into the normal reward system of our brain and are capable of producing addiction. No one is addicted to carrots because the chemicals in carrots are not addictive.

The addictive substances also have physical effects on the body – like rapid heartbeat, gut motility, muscle tenseness, alertness, sleepiness, relaxation etc. With repeated use of the drug the person becomes dependent on the drug for these effects and if the drug is withheld, they experience withdrawal symptoms like headache, constipation, irritability, restlessness, vomiting etc.

Addiction begins with drug abuse.

Why do you think teenagers abuse drugs?

Tick the statements that could be the possible reasons:

1. To rebel against parental control.
2. To look cool
3. To do as friends in the group are doing
4. To avoid being singled out and teased by friends
5. To experiment
6. Out of curiosity
7. To find out what it feels like
8. To avoid facing reality
9. To overcome stress
10. To impress others
11. To prove their independence, adulthood
12. To have fun

From abuse to addiction:

Once drug use starts, the person repeatedly experiences the potent chemical effects of the drug. This chemical action, which stimulates certain brain systems, produces the addiction. The chemical action of the drug starts dominating the individual's behavior. The normal social and personal constraints on behavior become largely ineffective. Drug procurement and use begin to dominate the individual's motivation. The person feels a "loss of control" and even though they may wish to stop, finds it very difficult to do so without support or treatment.

Caffeine and cocaine: Though addictive, caffeine use has gained widespread acceptance over the centuries. Same was true of tobacco until recently when restrictions were put in place over smoking in public.

Drugs like cocaine, heroin and morphine related drugs are strongly addictive because they strongly activate brain reward systems. Initial use of these substances is usually accompanied by mood elevation and other affective changes that lead to their recreational use. But the

activation is much more intense causing the individual to crave for the drug and to focus their activities around taking the drug.

After first exposure, the ability to resist addiction and craving seems to vary from person to person. Genetic factors may be involved in the process of addiction. It is advised that people, who have a close relative who is addicted, should not try out the substance even once. For instance, children of alcoholics could do well to stay away from alcohol altogether.

Reality Check

Knowing all that we do now about drugs, their effects, the role of the media in building expectations and images; what would you think of a person who is unable to overcome peer pressure or their own desires and consumes addictive substances in amounts that are detrimental to them?

Choose from the list below or write your own description:

- Clever
- Modern
- Easily duped by advertisements
- Someone to be emulated
- Someone to be sympathized with because she / he doesn't seem to realize the dangers
- Gullible
- Boring
- Someone trying to impress others
- Someone who doesn't know how to have fun without endangering oneself
- Careless about one's own health
- Irresponsible
- Responsible
- Someone who gives in to peer pressure
- Role model for peers
- Bold
- Courageous
- Weak
- Timid
- Lacking in self esteem
- Full of self confidence
- Capable of critical thinking
- Incapable of critical thinking
- Believes in, and blindly follows, media messages

Have you ever been forced or pressurized by friends to take a drink or smoke?

Reflect back and think of an incident when your friend/s tried to force you to do something you did not want to do – like smoke, drink, go to some place, bunk class etc. What did they say or do to persuade you?

Sometimes, the pressure is subtle and we don't recognize it as peer pressure. It can take the form of jokes, innuendoes or generalized comments.

These are some examples of peer pressure:

- Come on ya, it's my birthday! Have, just one drink.
- All of us are drinking. Not fair! You should also have some.
- We want to see you drunk one day.
- Don't worry we'll take care of you.
- You're always rigid and uptight. Learn to relax once in a while.
- You're an adult now.
- You and your religious beliefs! They are so outdated.
- She won't drink. She has been TOLD not to drink.
- Mamma's baby! Grow up!
- Just have a mint afterwards, nobody will realize.
- Oh, it gives an amazing kick!
- Prove that you're made of real stuff!
- If you don't try, you'll never know.

Why do you think peers often pressurize others to drink/ smoke or take drugs?

In your opinion, what would be the best way to ward off this pressure?

Here is a list of possible responses to ward off peer pressure:

- No thanks I don't drink.
- I don't like the taste of alcohol.
- I've tried it before. It doesn't suit me.
- Go ahead if you want to, but don't pressurize me.
- I don't like losing control over myself.

- It's my decision.
- You know I won't drink, then why are you forcing me?
- No thanks I'm perfectly fine as I am.
- I am enjoying myself. I don't need alcohol to have a good time.
- I lost a close relative to drunken driving.
- I expect some respect for my wishes here.
- I am not forcing you to stop, am I?
- How can lighting a cigarette or having a drink be considered a proof of courage and strength? It's more a sign of weakness / immaturity.

Choose statements that you think may help you to resist peer pressure

You can refer to the chapter on Stress (section on demands and assertiveness) for strategies, or discuss with your friends for more ideas.

Enfold India has been working in the space of child safety and gender empowerment since 2001, having now reached over 1,67,600 children, across 50 Indian cities through our programs.

We started with schools, created curriculum for 1-12th grade, facilitating age appropriate, value based sessions around personal safety, sexuality, and reproductive health, in order to enhance the physical, emotional and sexual safety of students.

In the last 17 years, Enfold has built successful partnerships at state and national level, actively participating in policy making, advocacy, and creating public awareness in the area of child safety and child rights.



Surakshith App: Children between 6 and 18 years of age learn No - Go - Tell, and understand that the responsibility of abusive actions lies solely with the perpetrator, in the form of illustrations and stories. The content also goes over blame & shame, internet safety, and digital citizenship for older children.



Bal Suraksha App: Essential information around the prevention and management of CSA to children and adult stakeholders, such as, Parents, Schools, Doctors, Nurses, Police, Lawyers and Media. How to interact with perpetrators of abuse, and the children who have faced abuse. Emergency numbers and support structures are also available.



Stri Suraksha App: How one can recognize and report violence against women in different places - home, public places, workplace and cyberspace. Relevant laws and IPC sections, resisting without aggravating, intervention and community based restorative justice. Emergency numbers for reporting and reintegration of Self exercises for recovery are also included.

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