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CONVERSATIONS WITH ADOLESCENTS
**LIFE SKILLS:
THE ART OF LIVING**

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We thank and salute all these friends who helped us
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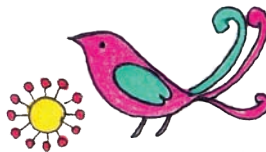
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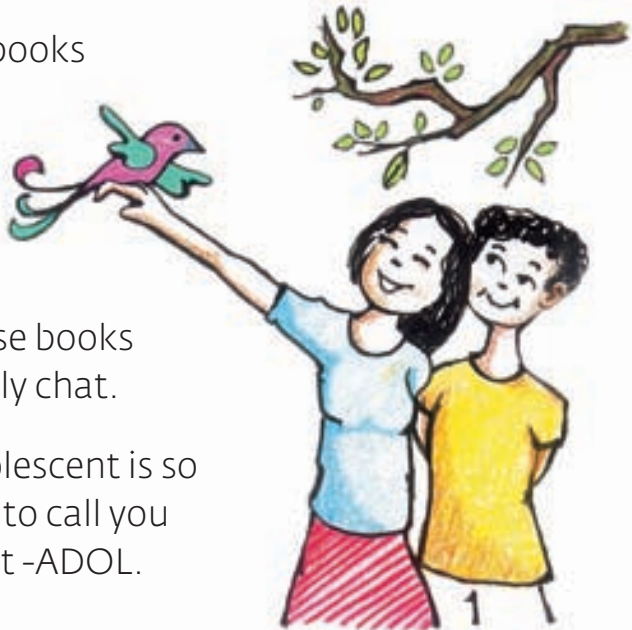




FOREWORD

We have written four books for adolescents on adolescence, that special phase in our life when we are between 10 and 19 years old. Actually these books are like a chat, a friendly chat.

Because this word adolescent is so long, we have decided to call you ADOL, sweet and short -ADOL.



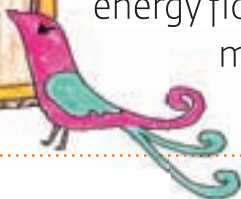
Hello adole !!

You adols may want to ask why we would like to have these friendly conversations with you since you have not invited us for this chat. Why are we running after you? The honest and only answer is, that when we think of our own adolescence, we feel our problems and worries would have been much less, if we had someone to talk to, someone who would listen to us and understand us. There were many adults ready to lecture us, tell us our faults, discourage us, but there was hardly anyone who would talk to us openly, lovingly and respectfully. We had to find the answers to all our questions and worries, either ourselves or with the help of others of our own age. How could those, who had no experience themselves, show us the way? We had many bitter experiences only because we did not have proper information and understanding.

This is why we thought we should chat to you adols. Tell us; is there anything wrong in us taking the initiative to start this dialogue?



Years ago, we too were adols. We too experienced what you are experiencing now. We had this energy flowing in our body and mind. We had dreams





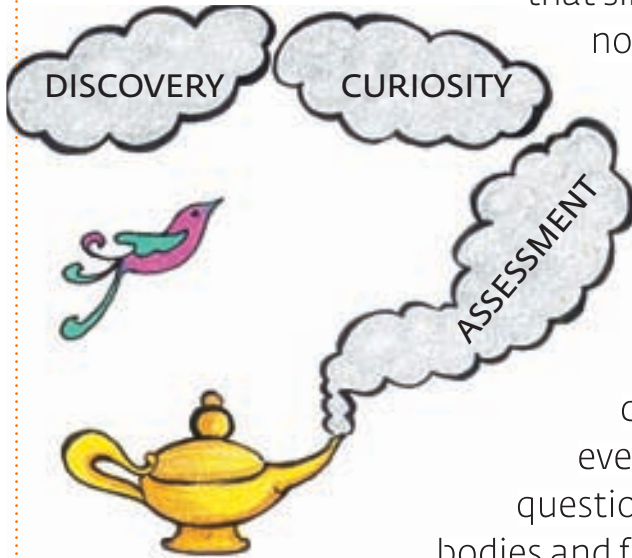
and the desire to do new things. We craved to have our own identity. Along with these feelings there was so much confusion and bewilderment. We felt wronged by our elders. We were filled with questions. We had so much to say, but everything remained inside, unspoken. Now at this age we feel

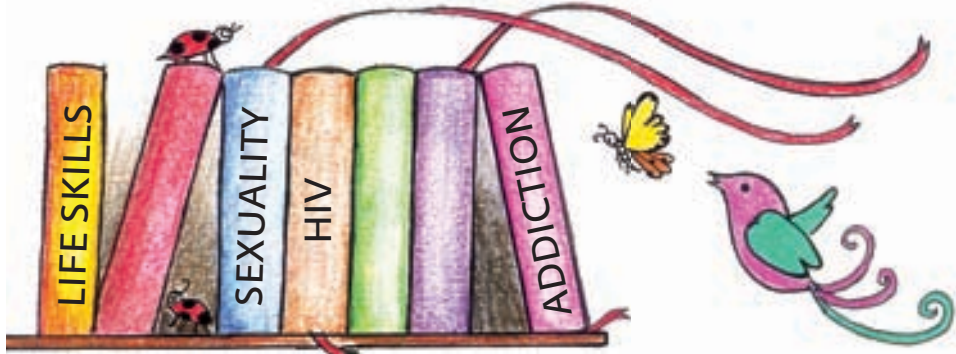
that silence was unfortunate, not good for us. Talking to someone more experienced would have helped.

Adolescence is the age of enquiry, questioning, an age to check out everything and everyone. There are so many

questions about our changing bodies and feelings. There is so much curiosity about friendship and love, about

sexuality and reproduction. It is important that all your questions be discussed openly and deeply, all your doubts be addressed thoroughly. We feel that information and comprehensive understanding will enable you to take well thought out and responsible decisions.





There is another reason for talking to you through these books. Many surveys have revealed that adols have limited information and understanding about important issues like gender, sexuality, HIV, alcohol and drugs. Many adols also said that they want more information and frank discussions on these issues.

So, here is an effort to reach out to you, to contribute towards making a positive difference to your experience of adolescence! Let us see if we succeed. You will be the judge. Let us wait and see what you think about these books and what grades you give us.

We will get good grades only if you are with us and will reach out to us. This way we will learn from each other.



So friends, these books are an invitation to talk with open hearts, to learn with open minds. These four books are about some important concerns and challenges of adolescence. To understand adolescence well, you should read all the four books, reflect, investigate your inner selves and have open conversations with friends and mentors.



The first book is “LIFE SKILLS: THE ART OF LIVING” In this we have talked about some principles of life and living together and about LIFE SKILLS



The second book is “UNDERSTANDING ADOLESCENTS AND SEXUALITY” In this book we have detailed conversations about all the changes that take place during adolescence, gender and gendering, sex and sexuality.

The third book is “HIV/AIDS AND ADOLESCENTS” In this book we have discussed many important aspects of HIV/AIDS and ways to prevent it.



The fourth book is on “SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND ADOLESCENTS” This book discusses substance abuse in detail and suggests ways to challenge this problem which many adols are dealing with.



Friends, the work of the author and the illustrators is over. It is now for you to read, reflect, discuss and move ahead fearlessly. Several opportunities are waiting for you. Good luck and HAPPY JOURNEY!



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1

SOME PRICIPLES OF LIFE AND THE ART OF LIVING TOGETHER

Before talking about adolescence we wish to discuss some principles or rules of life, which seem universal to us. It is wise to recognize and accept these rules of life. If the young and the old accept and live according to these principles and rules a lot of unnecessary misunderstanding, tensions and conflicts can be avoided.

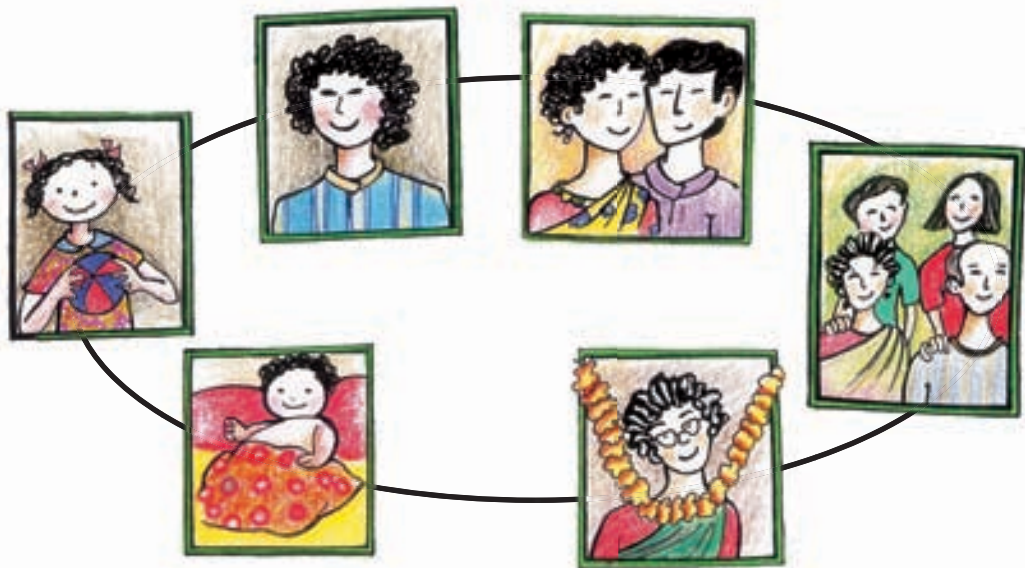
THE FIRST PRINCIPLE IS — **LIFE IS A FLOW.**
NOTHING REMAINS THE SAME

INSIDE us, around us and outside, everything is **ALWAYS CHANGING. ONLY ONE THING DOES NOT CHANGE** and that is change itself. Look at the outside world-seconds, minutes, hours, days, months and years keep changing. The seasons change- summer, rain, winter, spring. Nothing is constant. Everything is always changing.



Within our bodies things change all the time. Blood changes, breath and heart keep moving. We grow up. Adults slowly grow old. One day this body stops working. At age 2-3 we were different. Today we are different and tomorrow we will be different again. Our likes and dislikes, our ideas and ways of thinking also keep changing.

Our families keep changing. Children grow up. They get married, have children of their own, our elders pass away.



Societies and countries change. The British ruled over India till 1947. India's population at that time was 330 million or 33crores. Today India is a free country and her population in 2011 was 1.21 billion or 121 crores. The urban population has been growing faster than the rural.



Our life styles, laws etc. also keep changing. For example, in the past women and girls had limited rights and freedom. Today the situation is different. Women are doing all kinds of jobs and are mobile.



Adolescents and youth have been changing.

Earlier they had less voice and freedom. It was considered bad, if young people questioned or contradicted their elders. They could not take their own decisions. It was considered okay in schools and in homes to beat children for making mistakes.



Today the rights of women and children have been accepted.

Earlier, going from one place to another was tedious. Today, things and people can move fast. With the help of telephones, emails etc. in a few moments we can contact people living thousands of kilometers away.

In this constantly changing world, we have to accept and understand change. There is no way to avoid change. We will only get in to trouble if we try to avoid change.

Using traditions and customs as an excuse some adults refuse to change. They want young people to follow traditions without questioning them.

We believe culture is not a static or dead thing, which always remains the same. Culture should actually be like a flowing river, which constantly adjusts to changing situations and moves forward; forever fresh. If we accept change as inevitable, the conflicts between different generations will be less.

THE SECOND PRINCIPLE IS – UNITY

It is both impossible and boring to live without diversity. Nature **HAS IMMENSE DIVERSITY**. There are millions of kinds of plants, trees, birds, animals, insects; unlimited smells and colors. Somewhere there are mountains, oceans at other places; somewhere deserts, cold here, hot there; different kinds of agriculture.



People and societies are also diverse. Our bodies, features, likes and dislikes, professions and ways of thinking are so different. Societies have different ways of living, different traditions, costumes, food habits, festivals, religions.

Nature has created **DIVERSITY BUT NOT INEQUALITY OR DISCRIMINATION**. There is a big difference between the two. Diversity means differences. You and I are different. In this entire world of over seven billion people, no two persons are exactly the same.

Everyone is unique. Discrimination means superior-inferior, good-bad, right-wrong. Nature has not created inequality or discrimination. Nature does not say that rose is more beautiful and costlier than marigold; men are superior to women; white people are superior to black people; tall boys are better than short boys. All these inequalities or hierarchies are created by society, which means all of us. **WE BELIEVE THAT DIFFERENCE OR DIVERSITY IS NECESSARY AND BENEFICIAL. DISCRIMINATION IS UNJUST AND HARMFUL.**

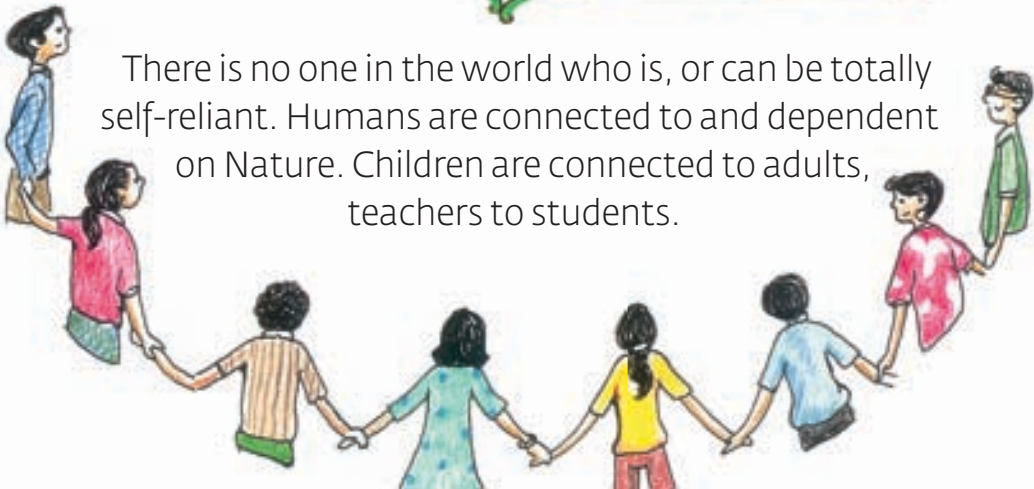
Everything or everyone is not the same, nor should they be the same, but they are all equal. We believe, **ALL OF US MUST UNDERSTAND, ACCEPT AND PROMOTE DIVERSITY.** It is necessary to understand and respect people who are different. Only when we understand and respect others who are different, will they understand and respect us.

UNDERSTANDING and **ACCEPTING** diversity creates unity. With unity we can live together in spite of all our differences.



The third principle that is unchanging,
is **our connection with one another and our inter
dependence**

There is no one in the world who is, or can be totally self-reliant. Humans are connected to and dependent on Nature. Children are connected to adults, teachers to students.



All our needs are fulfilled with the help of others. For example, the food we eat is produced by Nature and farmers. Traders and shopkeepers make this food available to us with the help of transporters. At home (mainly) women cook this food and only then our hunger is satiated. See, how long the chain of inter-dependence and relationships is. Everything is linked to other things; every being is linked to other beings.

We exist because of our parents and their ancestors. We are just a tiny link of a long chain and our life depends on so many others.

It is necessary to understand these connections and Inter-dependence. It is also necessary that we understand and appreciate the contribution of others to our lives. Therefore, in addition to our **RIGHTS** we need to understand our duties; we learn



to take and also to give. There is great fun and joy in this **INTERCONNECTEDNESS** and **INTERDEPENDENCE**.

IT IS YOUR TURN NOW TO THINK AND SPEAK



Do you agree with the writer when she says change is a Law of Nature? If yes, please explain why?



Please talk about all the changes going on within and around you.



What is the difference between diversity and discrimination?



Please give three examples from your life about inter-connectedness and inter-dependence between you and others.

2

PRINCIPLES AND RIGHTS WHICH BRIGHTEN OUR LIVES

At this point we wish to tell you that these four books and our discussions with you are based on some principles and values. Through these books and with your help, we wish to see these principles and rights in the lives of every adolescent and young person. We are certain that we can lead better lives if we follow these principles and respect human rights.

Today, most countries in the world believe in the following three principles. In some countries these principles have been given a legal status.



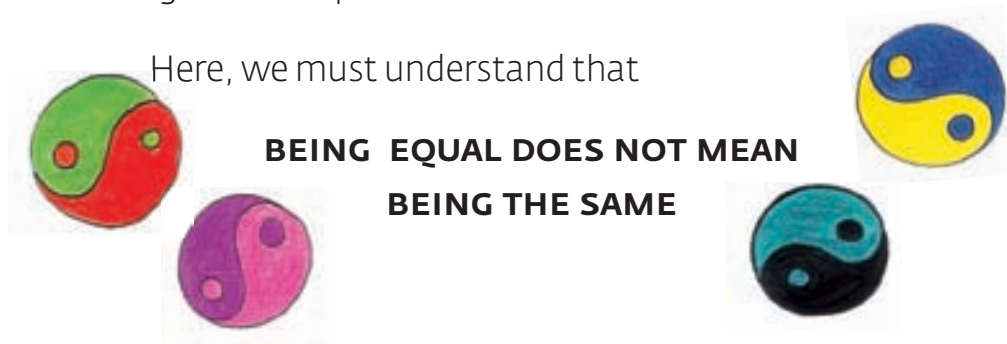
1. EVERY HUMAN BEING HAS RIGHTS

According to Article 1 of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, "All human beings are born equal and free, in **DIGNITY AND RIGHTS.**" There is no one without rights; no one can be oppressed or insulted. However, some responsibilities come with our rights.

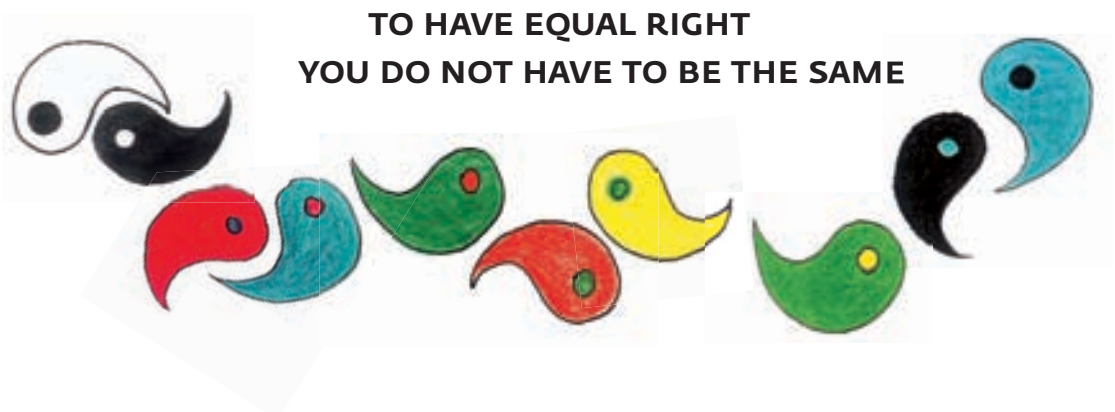
2. TODAY IN MOST COUNTRIES WOMEN AND MEN ARE LEGALLY EQUAL

Girls and women have the right today to study, work, and marry according to their own choice. They have the right to decide about their sexuality and having children. Legally nothing can be imposed on them.

Here, we must understand that

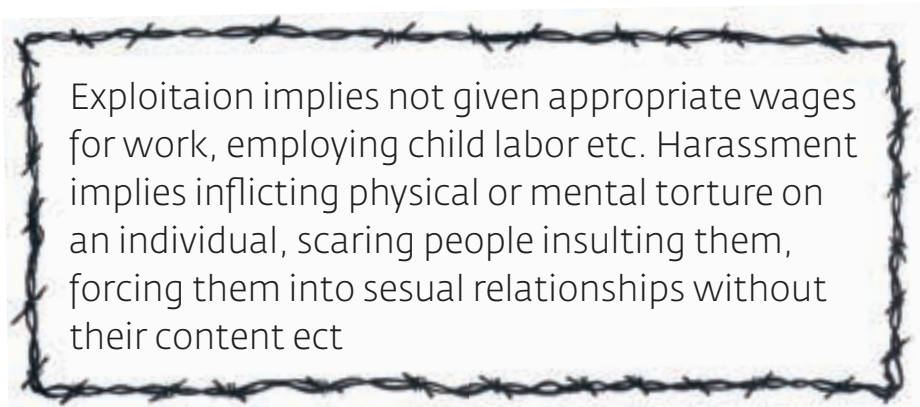


Girls and boys are not the same; there are a few biological differences, but they are equal; they have the same rights. Similarly tall and short, white and black, differently abled, people belonging to different castes and religions are different, but their rights are and should be the same.



3. CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH ALSO HAVE RIGHTS AND DIGNITY

Today not even parents and teachers have the right to beat children. Adolescents and youth have the right to get correct information about the issues that concern them. They have the right to get basic services and facilities like, health and education. They have the right to make choices about their life. Other people cannot impose their choices and decisions on children, adolescents and young people. Young people should also not be exploited or oppressed.



And now, do pay attention to this point – **EVERY RIGHT HAS RESPONSIBILITY ATTACHED TO IT.**

Just as you have rights, others also have rights. Your rights will be respected only if others act with responsibility. Others will enjoy their rights only if you act responsibly. For example, you have the right to be free of violence. You will actually have this right only when your parents or teachers or other elders understand their responsibility and do not beat you.

They should explain things and correct you without any violence. Similarly, your parents have a right to have peace and calm in the home. If you shout all the time, how can they enjoy this right? Similarly, you have a right to express yourself, but along with this right you have the duty to allow others to speak and to listen to them.

RIGHTS AND DUTIES ARE TWO SIDES OF THE SAME COIN

Let us take another example. Girls have the right to be on the roads, to travel in buses and trains without being harassed. They will enjoy this right only if boys and men behave responsibly and do not harass or perpetrate violence.



As adolescents you have rights and you must get them; but you have duties also. At this point in your life your main responsibility is to create the foundation for a bright future and a good life..



IT IS YOUR TURN NOW TO THINK AND SPEAK



Rights and duties are two sides of the same coin. Please explain this statement by giving examples from your own life.

3

ARE ADULTS ALWAYS RIGHT?

Some people believe only adols and younger people make mistakes; the elders are always right. We do not agree with this. Our experience tells us that although our elders love us dearly and they want us to do well, but sometimes they can create problems for adols. For example, some parents and / or grandparents **DO NOT LIKE CHANGE**; they are afraid of change. For some strange reason, they forget their own youth, when they wanted to live their own life; they did not wish to obey everything their parents said. These elders want the adols to live and behave like they did decades ago. Does it make any sense to follow the old ways in a new and ever changing environment? Our elders also need to understand and accept the changing world and change with the times.





Many elders like to control adols in the name of **CULTURE AND TRADITION**. Young people who marry someone they love but who is not from the "right" caste or religion, may even be killed!! The elders need to realize that the world is changing. Today, caste based discrimination is a crime in India. If there was discrimination in our culture, we should challenge and change it rather than stick to it. We need to keep the positive aspects of our culture, but not the inequalities and injustices. Conflicts between the generations can be minimized if all of us change with the times.



There is another problem with some elders. They do not talk to younger people, they only **LECTURE** them. They consider youth (people between 15 and 24 years of age are defined as youth by the World Health Organization) to be **IGNORANT**. They think young people should not talk, they should only listen.



If their children try to explain their point of view, the elders get irritated and say "You are questioning me?" "Disputing what I say?" This attitude of the elders forces young people to be silent or to tell lies. In this situation there is no possibility of creating an honest and equal relationship.



Some elders do not wish to **LEARN ANYTHING FROM THOSE YOUNGER** to them. They believe young people cannot teach them anything. The truth, however, is that that elders can also learn from the young. For instance the elders can learn things about mobiles and computers from the young. If elders learn from and respect adols then their relationship can be more equal and mutually enriching. Such positive attitudes of the elders towards young people will help increase the self confidence and courage among the young and they will become more responsible. Plus, such sharing can reduce the burden of responsibility of the elders. One big burden some elders carry is that they know everything and they are always right. They can get rid of such unnecessary burdens by seeking the opinions of young people and involving them in decision making.



Families need to be democratic. Everyone, young and old, should have the right to learn as well as teach and to express their opinions.



Some elders have another problematic attitude.

They are often

RESENTFUL OF THE FRIENDS THEIR CHILDREN HAVE.

They keep repeating

“your friends are spoiling you”. “I don't know what kind of friends you have!!” Yes, some of our friends can have a bad influence on us, but all friends are not bad. We believe good friends and friendships are good for us and we need to make time for them.



However, you adols have to accept that your elders have more experience. They have gone through the stage of life where you stand today. Therefore, it is useful to listen to what the elders say. Learn not to be upset with those elders you think are problematic. Just try and accept that elders also have weaknesses or shortcomings. They are



not perfect. So dear Adols, instead of finding faults with your parents, learn to appreciate their strengths and good qualities. Try never to forget that they love you and want the best for you. Keep trying to make a good and honest relationship with them.

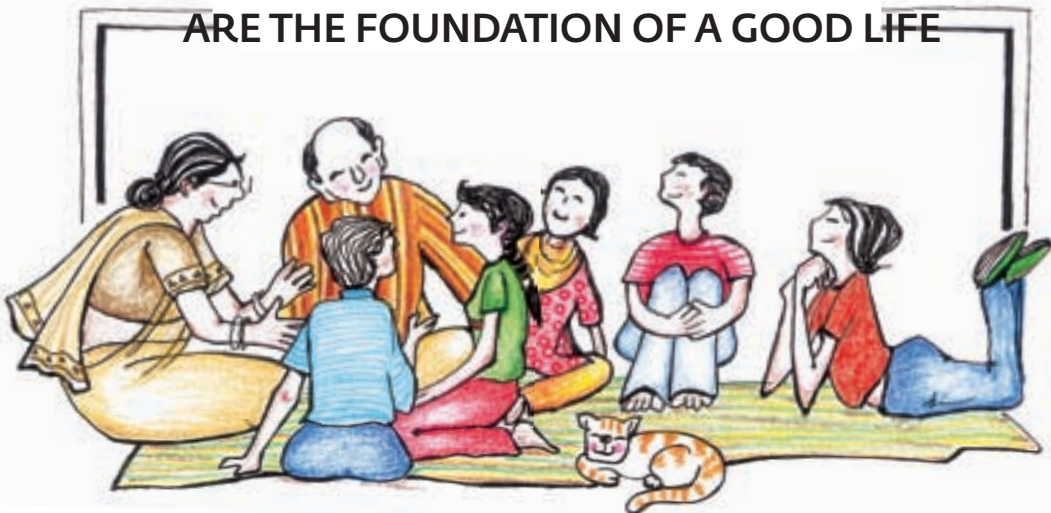


You too are responsible for creating a positive relationship. If your elders are upset with you, go and talk to them and talk things through.

Please try and remember that elders may be dealing with difficult situations; they may be carrying too many responsibilities. Therefore, they may be irritable; they may take out their frustrations on others. The father may scold the mother; the mother may take out her frustrations on the children and you may kick a dog or cat or someone younger than you.



**MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING
AND HONEST RELATIONS
ARE THE FOUNDATION OF A GOOD LIFE**





IT IS YOUR TURN NOW TO THINK AND SPEAK



Do the elders in your life sometimes make mistakes?



Can you unfold your heart to them and have a frank discussion?



Do the elders seek and respect your opinions and advice?



Do you have disagreements with your elders?
If yes, how do you sort them out?

4

LIFE SKILLS : THE ART OF LIVING

The most successful and famous people in the world are not those who got the highest marks in their studies. They are those who know the art of living. This art is called LIFE SKILLS. Without naming them we have mentioned these skills in these books. Let us now look carefully at life skills. Life skills are not limited to a good mind, good education and skills to make a living. They include social and emotional skills and abilities which teach us how to



Effectively use our knowledge, abilities, attitudes and values in our daily lives



Face challenges and take full advantage of opportunities.



Improve our reasoning and analytical skills and how to use them effectively in our lives.



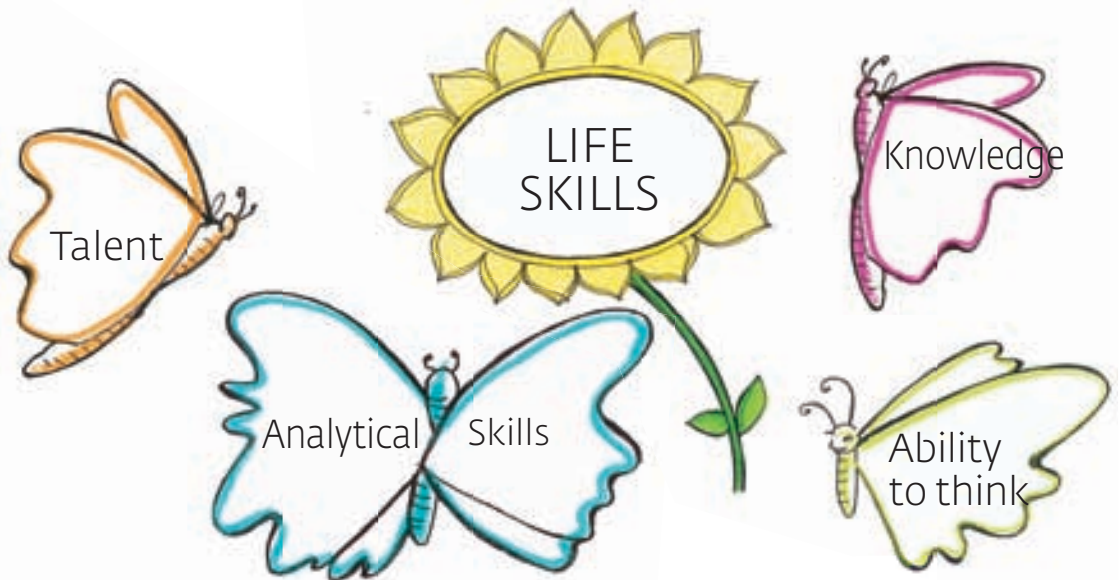
Understand our own emotions and those of others and maintain a balance



Develop abilities to deal effectively with one's own emotions and those of others



Create positive and long lasting relationships within our families and communities.

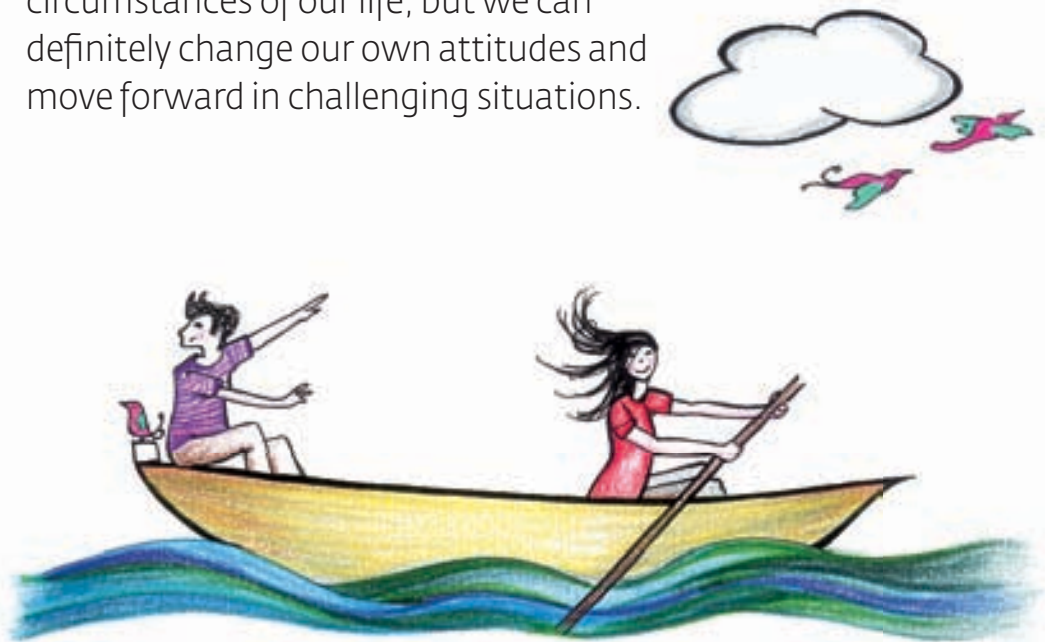


All human beings need life skills and most of us have developed them in varying ways to survive. A clear understanding, peaceful behavior, ability to get along well with others, the ability to remain calm even in difficult situations and take well thought out decisions, are all Life skills that enable us to respond to real life situations effectively.

The place of Life skills in our life is something like salt in our food. Salt improves the taste of food without being visible. Life

skills can also be compared with oxygen, which is all around us, gives us life yet it is not visible. Life skills are exactly like that. They are not visible but their presence makes our life easier and positive. They give us the courage to deal with challenges. They give us the art of living amicably with others. They teach us responsibility and patience. Life skills teach us what to do, how to do and when to do. Life skills can not remove difficulties and challenges but with their help we can learn to deal with and overcome difficulties. Life skills give us the ability to adjust the oars, rudder or sails to take our life boat forward even during storms. Good sailors cannot change the direction of winds, but they know how to change the direction of the rudder, oars or sails in stormy situations.

In the same way we cannot change other people or the circumstances of our life, but we can definitely change our own attitudes and move forward in challenging situations.



YOU CHANGE YOURSELF AND MOVE ON

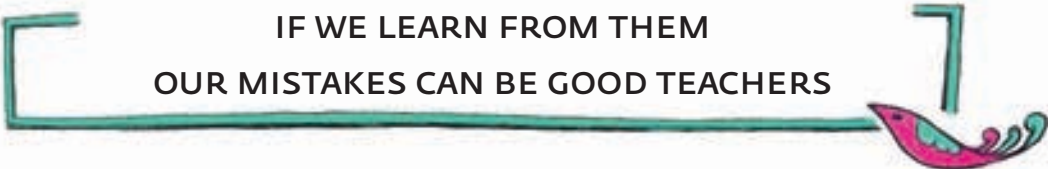
bhuddhists say the same thing in the following way –

The land (space) around is uneven. If we walk on it barefoot our feet will hurt. It is not possible for us to carpet the entire space around us. However, we can learn to wear footwear, save ourselves and walk around in reasonable comfort.



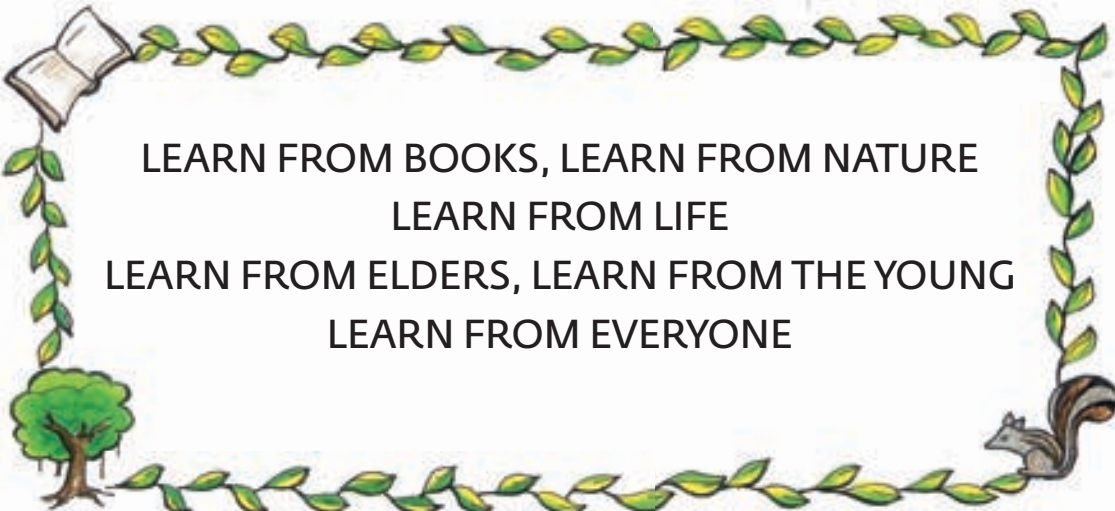
Life skills equip us with true wisdom and knowledge to lead a better life; they create and nurture positive thinking in us and give us the courage to cope with dangers and difficulties.

As we have written earlier, life skills cannot be acquired by getting good marks in exams. Life skills are learnt in REAL LIFE through real life experiences. We can learn a lot by looking at and reflecting on our experiences and the experiences of others. Our mistakes can also teach us a lot.



**IF WE LEARN FROM THEM
OUR MISTAKES CAN BE GOOD TEACHERS**

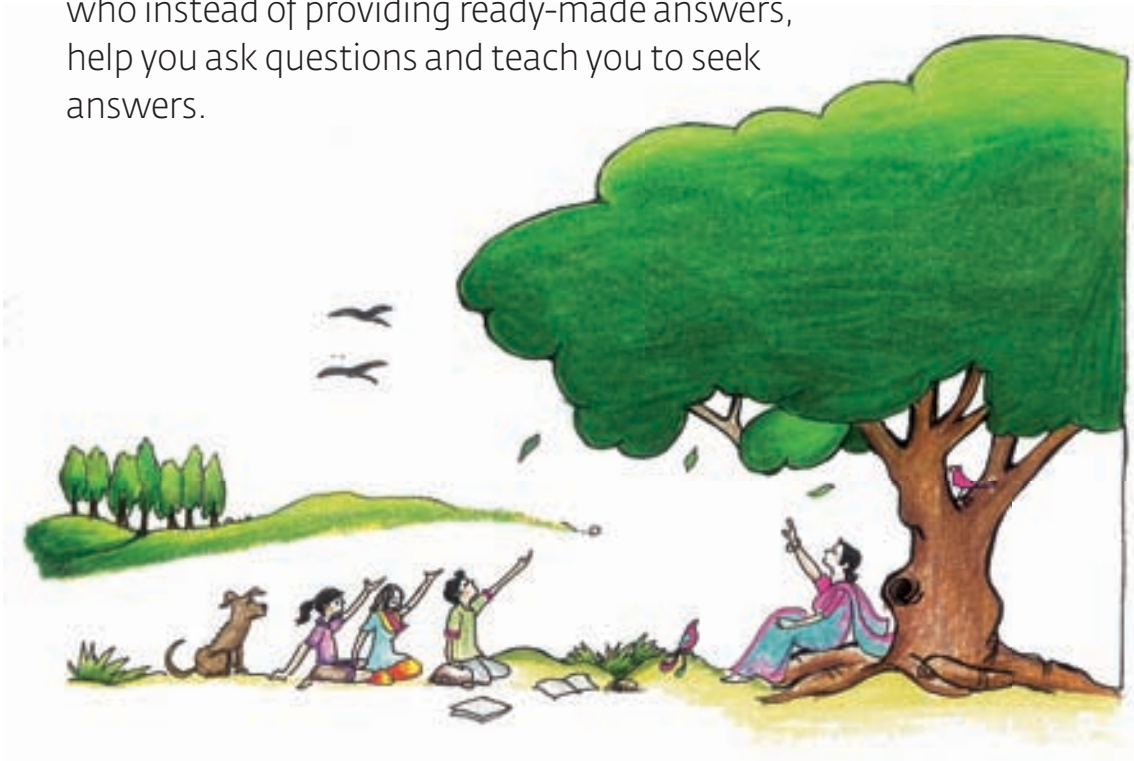
We learn life skills throughout our life. Only those people learn throughout their lives who do not consider themselves to be perfect; who are humble; who are willing to learn from everyone.



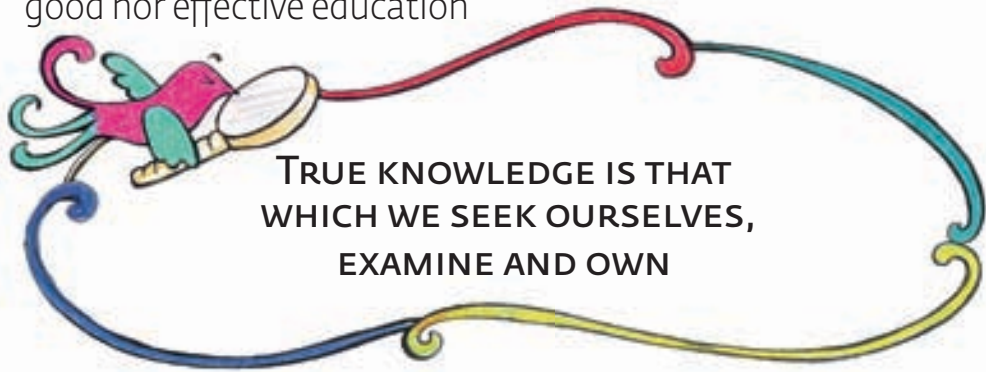
**LEARN FROM BOOKS, LEARN FROM NATURE
LEARN FROM LIFE
LEARN FROM ELDERS, LEARN FROM THE YOUNG
LEARN FROM EVERYONE**

Good books, games, acting, good conversations, any other thing done with an attitude to learn, can teach us life skills. This is experience based or experiential knowledge. Life skills are gained through living life and interacting with others. This art is learnt from life and it is meant for life.

The knowledge and art of life skills cannot be learnt from “bookish” teachers. You can learn life skills only from those teachers who link studies to life; who make you active participants in the process of learning; who think you may be young but you have ideas and experiences; you too have something to contribute. Only those teachers can help you gain life skills who consider learning to be a two way process, who instead of providing ready-made answers, help you ask questions and teach you to seek answers.



Rote learning or accepting readymade answers is neither good nor effective education



After gaining enlightenment the Buddha started sharing his thoughts with his disciples and others. The Buddha told everyone not to follow him blindly, but first to examine what he was saying. In Pali language, he said



Examine everything **KEEPING AN OPEN MIND**. This is the scientific way to learn.

Good teachers are those who teach less through their lectures, more through their practices, behavior and character. We learn by watching them, listening to them, and sitting around them. Try and find such teachers, elders and friends who teach through their actions and practice what they say, or **WHO WALK THEIR TALK!**

SOME IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF LIFE SKILLS

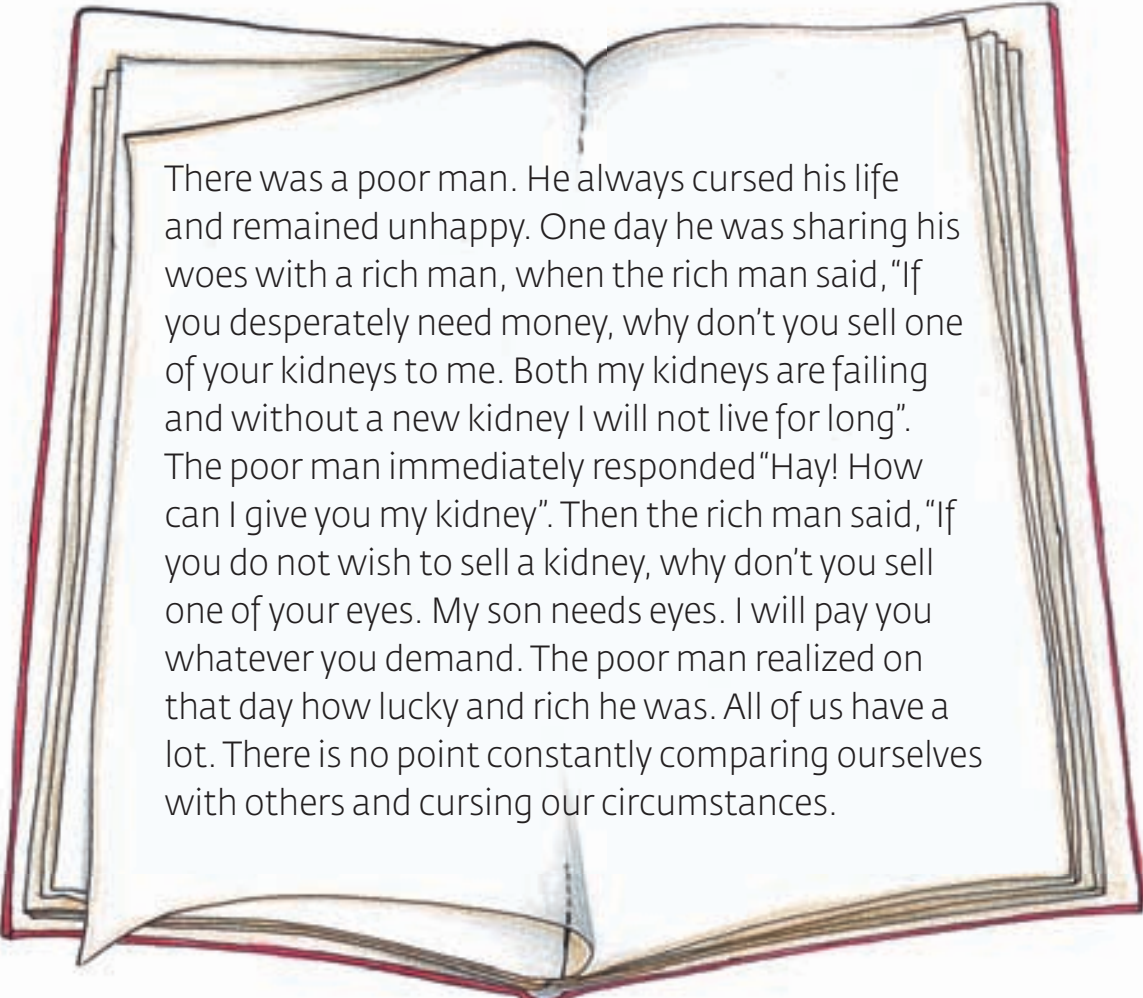
The subject of life skills is quite vast. Let us examine some important aspects here.

1. RELATING TO SELF AND OTHERS

A healthy and positive relationship with one self is most important. You are a unique person. There is no one exactly like you in the entire world. You are precious. Value and respect yourself; protect yourself.

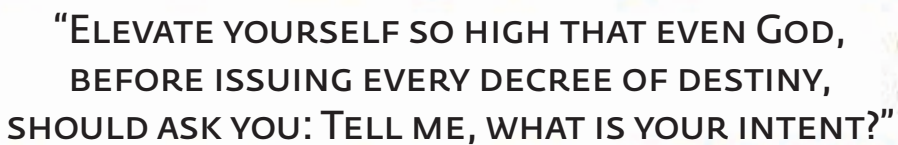
Get to know yourself, like yourself and take good care of yourself. Try and be healthy and prevent illnesses. Make yourself strong and capable of doing many things. Learn about both your strengths and weaknesses. Both are part of our life. Do not dislike, far less hate, any part of yourself – your body, mind, emotions or your circumstances. Be happy with and improve what you have.





There was a poor man. He always cursed his life and remained unhappy. One day he was sharing his woes with a rich man, when the rich man said, "If you desperately need money, why don't you sell one of your kidneys to me. Both my kidneys are failing and without a new kidney I will not live for long". The poor man immediately responded "Hay! How can I give you my kidney". Then the rich man said, "If you do not wish to sell a kidney, why don't you sell one of your eyes. My son needs eyes. I will pay you whatever you demand. The poor man realized on that day how lucky and rich he was. All of us have a lot. There is no point constantly comparing ourselves with others and cursing our circumstances.

Others will respect you only when you respect yourself. You keep working on yourself, improving yourself and you will find others liking and respecting you. Mohammad Iqbal, the great thinker and poet has said



**"ELEVATE YOURSELF SO HIGH THAT EVEN GOD,
BEFORE ISSUING EVERY DECREE OF DESTINY,
SHOULD ASK YOU: TELL ME, WHAT IS YOUR INTENT?"**

Here Iqbal Sahib is telling us that we are the creators of own destiny. With determination and faith we can achieve a lot.

Therefore friends, there is no use brooding about and cursing your mistakes and weaknesses and remaining dissatisfied and unhappy with yourself. You are human. Human beings make mistakes, they have shortcomings. Similarly, your friends, relations and teachers are also human. They too can make mistakes. So try and understand yourself as well as others.

If you are unique and important; so are all others. Therefore while respecting yourself, give full respect to others; appreciate them, take care of them, nurture them.

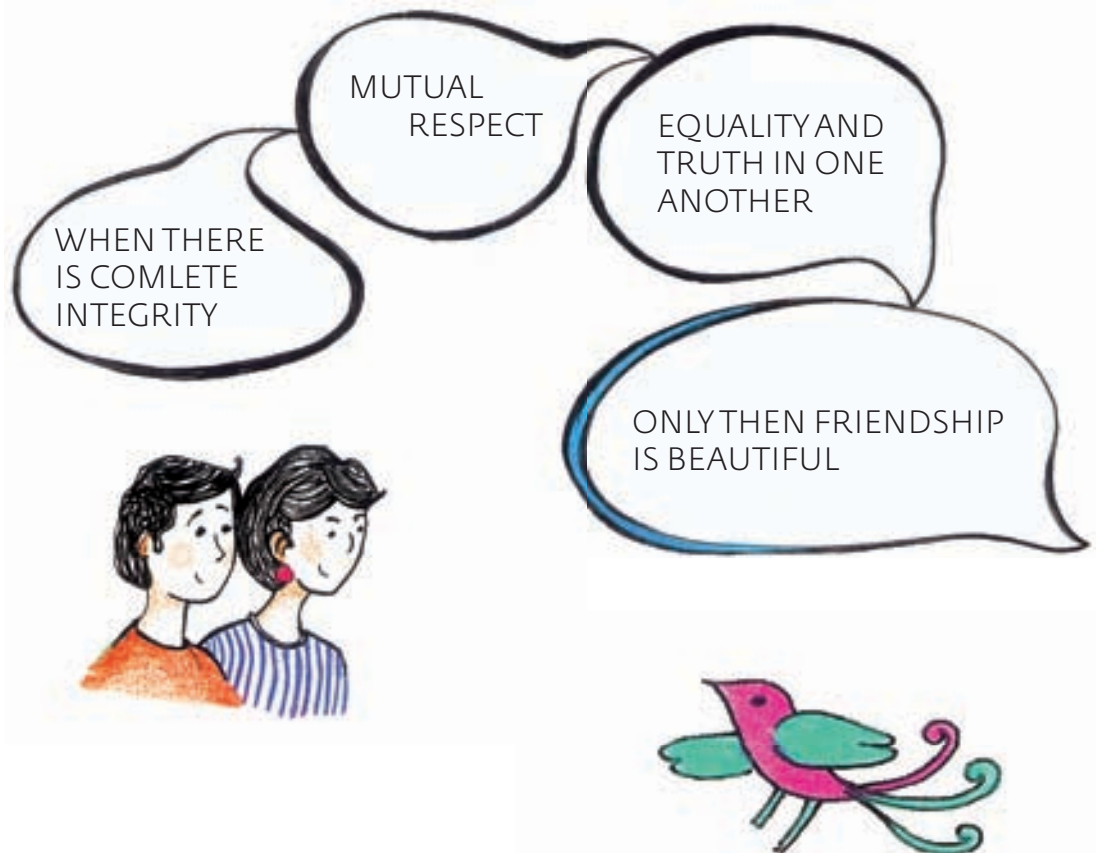
Many wise people have said we are not unconnected with others. Our pleasures and pains are inter- connected. It is very important to understand and appreciate our collective existence and interdependence.



**WE CAN GET ALL HAPPINESS IN THE WORLD BY
WISHING FOR HAPPINESS FOR EVERYONE.
WE CAN ALL THE MISERIES BY WISHING ONLY FOR
PERSONAL HAPPINESS**

2. FRIENDSHIP AND PEER PRESSURE

Friends, we are sure you agree with us when we say friendship is something essential and beautiful. Good friends can help us deal with all our problems. However, friendship is beautiful only if it is based on equality, mutual trust, honesty, mutual respect and the desire to help each other. People who mislead us, use us, exploit us are not friends. They are enemies.



LEARN TO RECOGNISE FRIENDS!

Do not accept inequality, pressure, control in any friendship, nor treat your friends in an unfair manner.

For creating good friendships, it is important to have self-confidence and assertiveness. If you do not say what you really feel honestly and assertively, your friendship will not be honest. Speak honestly and listen carefully. Respect your friends and expect respect from them.

Do not do anything which you think is not right, under pressure. Our inner voice is a good guide. Listen to it carefully.



3. RELATIONS WITH PARENTS AND GUARDIANS



As we have said earlier, as adolescents you would like to have your own identity, express your views freely, and want to participate when decisions are made. This is an age when you start relating to people outside the family. You are influenced by outsiders and their

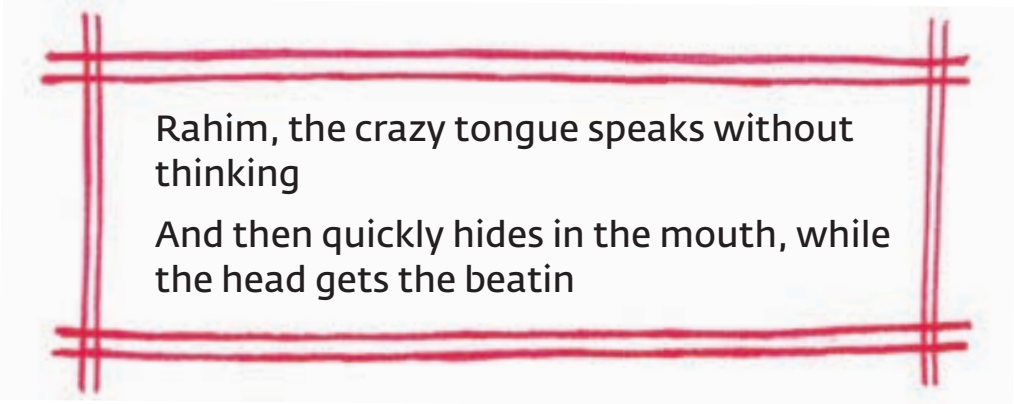


views. These changes influence your relationships with your parents and other family members. If your elders try and understand the changes you are going through and respect your changing personality and views you will have good relationships. But, if this is not the case, then there can be tensions and conflicts within the family.



Our elders too have the responsibility of creating equal and mutually respectful relationships, but this book is for you. Hence, we can make suggestions to you, not to your elders. We recommend that you do your best to understand your elders. You should know that they want you to be well and safe. It is possible that you do not agree with the way your elders think, talk and behave. If this is the case, then try to put forward your views clearly, honestly and in a peaceful way. If you want them to accept your views, if you wish to keep an honest dialogue going, then friends, it is really no good to shout and be aggressive. If you see yourself getting upset and

angry it is best to take a few deep breaths, count till ten and then talk. At such times keeping quiet is the best. Have you heard what Bhakti poet Rahimji has said about uncontrolled speech



Rahim, the crazy tongue speaks without thinking

And then quickly hides in the mouth, while the head gets the beatin

Isn't that naughty of the tongue to get you into trouble? Therefore we say, it is best to keep your speech under control in all situations.

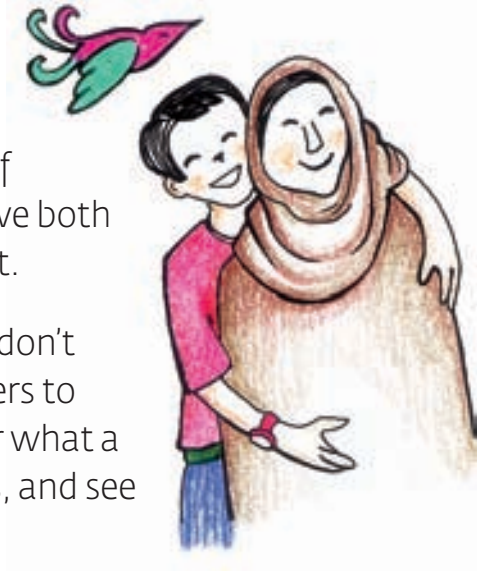
You have two ears and only one tongue. So, listen more than speaking. After listening think for a while and then talk.

4. SELF CONFIDENCE, SELF RESPECT AND POSITIVE THINKING

Self respect and self confidence help us develop a good personality. You need to tell yourself "I am capable" "I can do this". Do not consider yourself inferior to others, neither others inferior to you. Positive self image can do wonders.

Have faith recognise your capabilities and talents. Tell yourself what all you can do. This will improve both your self confidence and self respect.

You love it when others praise you, don't you? So, you should also praise others to make them happy. Tell your mother what a fine and hard working person she is, and see her face glow with joy !!



When you think well and respect yourself, you will start appreciating things around you. Your entire attitude will become positive.

Try this out and see.



When you have self confidence and self-respect, you are not afraid to look at your weaknesses. When we have an inferiority complex, we cannot tolerate criticism,. Inner strength gives us the courage to examine our own shortcomings and listen to criticism by others. Trees with strong roots are neither afraid of nor are they uprooted by storms. They survive.

If you have strong and positive relationships with your friends and relations, you can lovingly tell them about any disagreement with them or their behaviour which you do not appreciate.

To strengthen a clay pot, the potter beats it hard, but makes sure that he is holding the pot lovingly from the inside. Without this support the clay pot would crumble even with a soft touch. Love and support make us strong.



**IT IS YOUR TURN NOW
TO THINK AND SPEAK**



Why is it necessary to have a positive relationship with oneself?



What are the qualities of a good friendship?



How can adolescents create POSITIVE relationships with their parents and guardians?



Please explain in your own words this statement by the writer "Doubting one's own capabilities is like waging a war against oneself"

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND DEALING WITH EMOTIONS

Emotional intelligence is about understanding your own emotions and the emotions of others. This intelligence is no less important than mental intelligence because we humans are not just mental creatures. We also have emotions. Due to all the changes which take place during adolescence, we go through emotional upheavals or ups and downs. Our emotions create what we call "moods".

Tension, anger, jealousy, love, hate, fear, insecurity are all emotions. It is necessary that we are aware of, understand



and manage our emotions well. We get carried away due to lack of understanding of our emotions. Under the control of our emotions we may blurt out things, get out of bounds; we may not be aware of what we are saying and doing. Some of us start yelling; inflicting violence on ourselves or on others. ometimes we feel low or depressed; we feel sad. We do not feel like talking to anyone. Sometimes we feel joyous and elated; we want to smile at and hug everyone around us.

Sometimes we shower love on someone; at another time we get angry with the same person . These are all games that emotions play with us.

Some of you find it easy to open your heart to others. You share your feelings. There are others who keep it all within



them. It is difficult to know what they are feeling. Our society teaches you boys not to express your feelings. You are told not to cry, not to express your fears and weaknesses. You are expected to be always strong. For boys and men being emotional is considered a sign of weakness.

But women and girls can be emotional, because they are considered to be weak. When a boy cries we say“Look, he is crying like a girl”.

Friends, our emotions are a mirror of our inner self. If we listen to and understand our emotions we can see and know ourselves better. Actually, emotions are like the engine of a vehicle. Without that engine a big car or truck does not move. Our behavior is related to our emotions. We



feel strong when we have energy, love and zest. If we have a sense of inferiority, we feel, lonely and the body also feels weak.

Emotions make us swing
Sometimes up, sometimes down.

But without feelings we will not remain



human. We will become like a robot; no joy, no sadness, no laughter, no crying.



According to us emotions are important in life. Although some emotions make us happy, others make us sad; emotions are neither good nor bad. All emotions have their place and value in life. Anger and compassion, happiness and sadness, crying and laughing, all have their place.

us

Instead of hiding or suppressing your emotions, try to get to know and befriend them. Talk to your emotions. Talk about



your emotions. If you are feeling angry, if a storm is building up inside you, then PAUSE and look inwards, and try to understand these emotions. Ask

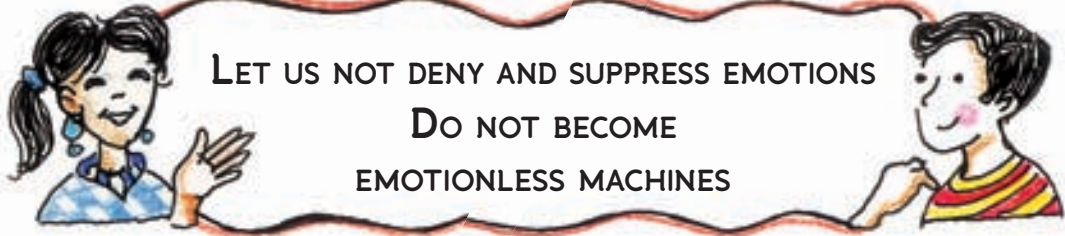


yourself why you are feeling like this. There must be a reason for your anger because you are not mad and do not get angry without any reason. What is the reason? It is not bad to get angry but we need to know how to handle this emotion called anger. When we are angry, we can either lose control of ourselves or we can take a few deep breaths and control ourselves. We can behave like a mad person when in love or in anger or can behave sensibly by understanding these emotions. Feeling emotional



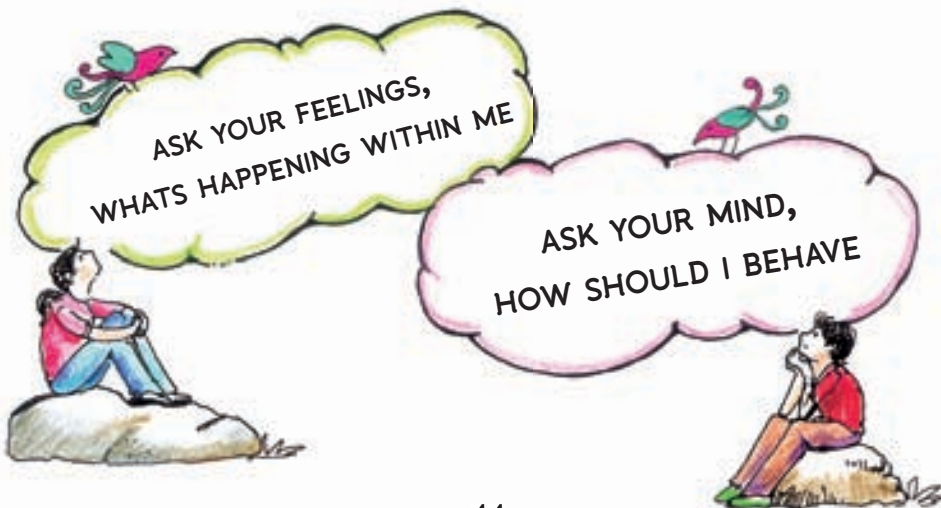
is not in our control, but it is within our abilities to understand these emotions and deal with them effectively.

Just as we learn other skills, we can make an effort and learn the skill to understand and handle our emotions. This skill is called emotional maturity.



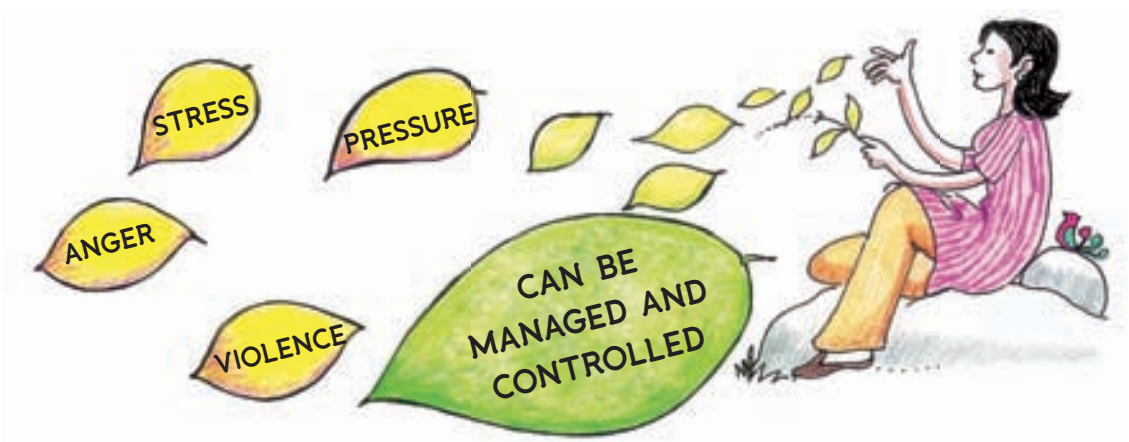
We humans should not become mechanical. We should not suppress our emotions. Suppression of anger, hate, jealousy can create a kind of poison in our bodies and minds. It can harm our health and we can fall ill. Some time suppressed emotions can turn in to a volcano and burst. Therefore, it is important to undersatnd our emotions and manage them well.

Two messages that make sense-



Our upbringing and childhood experiences influence our emotional life. We are emotionally more balanced if we have had a loving childhood in a family with good relationships.

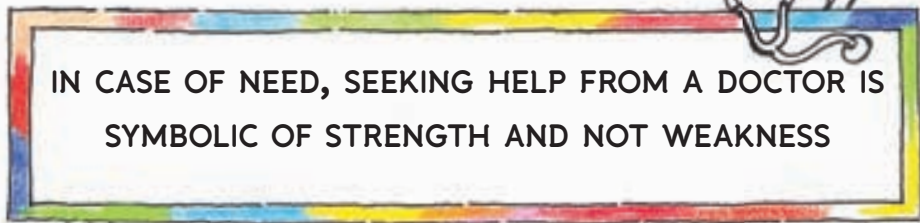
Experience of violence, neglect, lack of love in our childhood may produce strong feelings of anger, violence, hatred, anxiety etc. But, the good thing is that we are not helpless. We can re-program our emotions; by examining our selves we can channel our emotions. We are not slaves of our emotions. Tension, anger, violence, fear, all these emotions can be controlled. Gradually we can understand ourselves and others and improve our behavior. Wrong and harmful behavior, done under the influence of emotions can be corrected. This skill can be learnt.



However, there are times when we are not able to control our emotions. While in a rage we may get out of control; we may not be able to get out of depression. Our attachment with someone or something may become an obsession.

In these situations it is advisable to see an expert or a doctor. Just like our bodies, our emotions can also be unstable.

When ill we go to a doctor. Similarly, we can seek professional help if we have emotional problems. There is no shame in this.



During adolescence there is a lot of pressure on you to perform well. Your parents and teachers have a lot of expectations from you. If you do not perform well, you are pulled up and scolded. If in spite of your best efforts, you are not able to do well, it is not your fault.

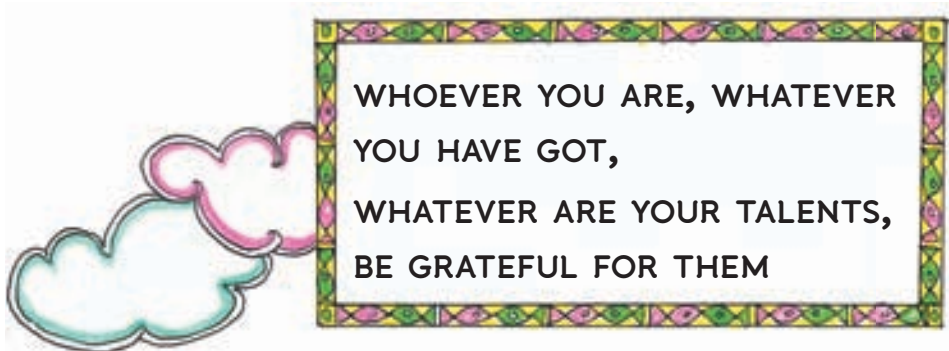


All of us have different abilities and skills. Someone is good at studies, another is a great player or musician or good at computers.

Some one loves to listen to others while someone else is a great story teller. We need to recognise our strengths and weaknesses and live accordingly. There is no point in always comparing ourselves to others and cursing ourselves.

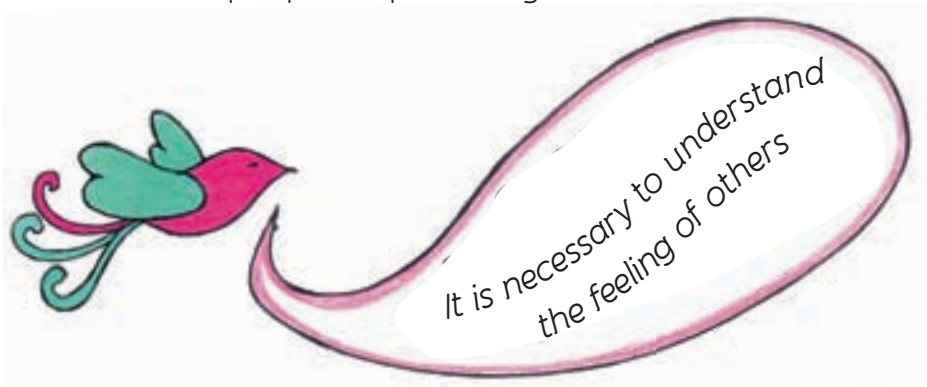


Our own abilities and performance should keep improving. Celebrate what you have and can do.



Some people try to use their emotions as a weapon to achieve what they want. Using our emotions, some of us

try and manipulate our parents or friends. Some people use tears to get attention or get what they want; others pretend to have depression to gain sympathy. We feel, this is wrong and does not benefit in the long run. Such tricks may work once or twice but not always. People who use such tricks lose out because people stop trusting them.



So far, we have talked about your feelings and emotions. It is equally necessary and useful to understand the feelings of others as it is to understand your own. Others also have the same emotions of anger, tension, jealousy, hatred, love etc, as you have. Like you, they also like praise. Just as you do not like harsh criticism, others also do not like it. If your parents or friends



are angry, try and understand why they are angry. Just as you do not get angry without any reason, others must also have a reason to be angry. When others are angry you should try to be calm. Anger on both sides is dangerous.



When there is fire somewhere, what you need is water, not more fire. If your parents are worried and fearful about your security or your future and this is the reason why they keep nagging you, try and understand their intentions; understand their love and their fears.



Intention is very important in our behavior. Why are we doing something? Are we doing it with the intention of helping, benefitting or pleasing someone or for harming and hurting them?

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION: HOW TO SPEAK, HOW TO LISTEN?



We are all social beings. We live in families and communities. Our life is connected to and dependent on others. Good relationships with people around us can improve our lives. This is why effective communication plays an important role in our lives. Through communication or dialogue we share our views and feelings with others and get to know the views and feelings of others. Communication is an art. With effort we can master this art and make good relationships.



Self-respect and respect for others are essential for effective communication and dialogue. Wherever there is mutual respect, equality and trust there is effective communication.



Honesty also helps in communicating. In addition to communicating through speech and language, we communicate through our expressions, gestures, hands etc. All these are called body language. By seeing the expressions, face and body language of the person we can know the impact of what we have said to them; whether they liked or disliked it, whether they are pleased or angry. However, it is not always easy to understand body language correctly. We can also mis-read the body language, because every one's body language is different.



We should pay attention also to our own body language. You can annoy the person you are talking to, by shrugging your shoulders, by not looking at the person, by sneering at them. By looking at you they will know whether you have paid attention to them, you agree with them or if you are disregarding or insulting them.



LISTENING WITH OUR EARS, EYES AND HEART



Listening is most important for good communication. We create a good foundation for a dialogue, by listening carefully, by looking respectfully at the speaker, by nodding or by responding through our eyes.

While listening to their words, pay attention also to their bodies and body language. While talking to someone, it is impolite not to look at the person, or to start reading or looking at something else. You would also not be pleased if someone else reacts like this when you are speaking.

YOU MAY KNOW THAT WRITTEN MANDARIN SCRIPT WAS PICTURES OR SYMBOLS. FOR THE WORD 'LISTENING' THERE ARE THREE PICTURES OR SYMBOLS. EARS, EYES AND HEART. HENCE, IN ORDER TO LISTEN WELL, WE NEED ALL THREE, EARS, EYES AND HEART.

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LISTEN



THE ART OF SPEAKING

You can express your own opinion effectively only when you consider

yourself and your opinions to be important. Concentration helps to speak

clearly. Some people repeat words, get stuck, look here and there while



speaking. This distracted way of speaking does not help in communicating clearly and firmly.



We can interact and communicate in three different ways :

Passive style is when we do not respect ourselves and our opinions. We look meek and speak meekly. We give importance only to what others are saying. We put ourselves down and do not seem to care for our own dignity and rights. We hold ourselves responsible for every mistake. Because of these attitudes and behavior, we remain tense and unhappy.



AGGRESSIVE STYLE is the opposite of passive style. Aggressive people do not respect others and their opinions. They give importance only to themselves and what they have to say. Their way of



speaking is aggressive and insulting.

They blame others for everything.

They talk much more than they listen.

This style also does not allow a two-way communication.



ASSERTIVE STYLE is when we respect both ourselves and others and pay attention to the views, feelings and needs of everyone concerned. In this way of communication, we talk and we listen. We speak honestly about our own faults and the faults of others. Thus, we assert our own rights and also respect the rights of others. This is the only way of communication in which a dialogue is possible and



through which good relationships can be

established. Try and be assertive. This way of being and behaving will be good for your entire life.



BECOME YOUR OWN OBSERVER

An observer is a witness. Normally we observe only others. We do not look at ourselves. To observe ourselves means becoming a witness of our own thoughts and emotions. We watch ourselves objectively as an outsider.



Gautam Buddha experimented with and taught the world this trick. Normally we become one with our emotions. When we are angry, our entire being is anger. This emotion becomes our Master and we behave under its influence. Similarly, emotions of love, jealousy, depression, hate also possess and control us. We become unaware. We lose control. The Buddha said



instead of being unaware, unconscious, we can be totally aware and conscious. How can we do this? The Buddha said we can do this by becoming a witness of our thoughts and emotions.



Becoming a witness of your thoughts and emotions, you create a distance between yourself and your thoughts and emotions. You are not your thoughts and emotions anymore, and therefore you can observe them. When you become a witness and observe yourself from a distance, then you do not lose yourself in



anger; you observe your anger. Now you know you are getting angry; your breathing is becoming faster; you are becoming aggressive. Since you are an aware, watchful observer, you can control your anger. Now you will not increase your anger by adding fuel to the fire of anger. The seed of anger in our mind can grow in to a tree only if we help and nurture the seed. If we do not help, the seed will not grow. It will die right there. Now you are not a slave of your anger or other emotions. You are the Master of your emotions, words and behavior.



s a Master of your mind and heart, you watch yourself. You do not get anxious or worried. All our tensions, problems, worries are the result of our being a slave to our thoughts and emotions. Most of us can control our hands and feet, but not our mind. The mind does what it wants. You may be sitting comfortably at a beautiful spot, enjoying yourself, suddenly your mind starts thinking of something horrible which happened ten years ago, and you become sad. Is this not slavery? You can get rid of this slavery by becoming a witness.



All wise and enlightened people have said we create our own miseries. This is why some people are satisfied with very little while others have endless desires and they are never satisfied. Since we create our own

unhappiness, we can also get rid of it. How? By becoming a witness; by analysing your thoughts and emotions; by becoming their Master.



Wise people have also said that happiness, satisfaction, joy are all INSIDE us. This wealth or treasure is within us but they

have been covered by the thick dust of our negative habits and tendencies. Our true nature has been covered by the mountains of anger, jealousy and greed. Joy will flow out if we get rid of the negativity and the harmful emotions.

Wise people keep repeating that we do not need to go anywhere to seek satisfaction and happiness.

Happiness is within us. We just need to recognise this. In our childhood, night watchmen walked the dark streets shouting "Jaagte Raho" or keep awake. In our daily life we just need to be AWAKE and AWARE; we need to constantly watch ourselves as an observer.



According to some well known psychologists, hate and anger are not natural tendencies. Love is natural. Hatred needs to be created, it needs to be taught. "Do not talk to them, they are from a lower caste", "Hate those people because they belong to another religion", "That neighboring country is our enemy". Such messages are repeated in our families, schools, newspapers and TV channels. Political leaders and even religious leaders speak this language of hate and sow the seeds of animosity, hatred and narrowness in young and old.

MOVE AHEAD WITH POSITIVE THINKING

It is best to get rid of negativity. If you have problems, look them in the face, analyse them, try and understand how you can get over these problems. With understanding, support from others and with a will to regain balance, you can move ahead.



Friends, we humans can make choices. It is up to us to decide how we think and act. You can decide to steal or not to steal; not to be angry ; not to be jealous. But you can make the right choices only when you are fully aware and in control of your thoughts and emotions.

Like other capabilities, the skill of witnessing oneself has to be learnt. It takes time and effort to develop this skill and make it part of your life.

All good habits have to be learnt and practiced. Being a witness is the key to a good life. Once you have this key, you will be fine; you will have a sense of well being. Just try. Make an effort and experience the changes that take place.

Friends, by understanding and internalising these seven skills, you can acquire life skills and the art of living; you can make meaningful relationships, face every challenge and create the foundation for a good life.





IT IS YOUR TURN NOW TO THINK AND SPEAK



“Ask your emotions what you are feeling. Ask your mind how you should behave”. Based on your own experiences, think and tell how often you are able to do this. If you often fail to do this, what steps will you take to manage your emotions? Please discuss this in a group.



For effective communication, why is it necessary to listen with our ears, eyes and heart?



Do you agree with the statement “Be the change you want to see”. If you do, please explain why.



After reading this book, would you like to change any of your habits? Which ones and why?

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