

Why it is imperative to impart Life Skills to the girl-child



Life Skills, in India as is the case with the rest of the world, are very important.

However, owing to the still largely patriarchal nature of Indian society, the Life Skills education imparted at home and in schools are highly gendered. Young boys are taught to be assertive, to think critically, and are empowered to make their own decisions – all skills that help them grow professionally. Girls on the other hand are encouraged to be empathetic, resilient, and to develop interpersonal skills at a very young age as this is learning they are expected to implement in their personal lives.

This deeply gendered system of training disadvantages all children as they grow into adulthood, but is strongly biased against girl children as it fails to equip them with the skills necessary to thrive in their professional lives. It places them on the backfoot.

To counter this bias, specific skills must be given special attention so that the girl child in India is able to handle complex situations, and when necessary, adapt to them as well. These include:

1. **Assertiveness:** As children, this will help young girls stand up to bullying/gossiping, and develop a sense of self-esteem. As adults, being assertive will enable women to use the vital skills of negotiation and refusal in every sphere of their lives.
2. **Decision making and critical thinking:** Empowering young girls to make decisions for themselves by evaluating the consequences of their choices today, will create a powerful generation of women capable of making the best decisions for themselves

with regard to their economic empowerment, their bodily autonomy, and their overall wellbeing.

3. **Coping and self-management:** Educating the girl child about stress management and emotional regulation will allow her to deal with difficult people and situations firmly, improving her self-image in particular, and her resilience on the whole.

The objective of Life Skills training is to create a generation capable of navigating through complex social relationships in a global society that is becoming more and more cohesive every day. As such, if we as a society do 49% of our population the disservice of not equipping them with these skills, we will all suffer.

It is for this reason that girls must receive a more comprehensive life skills education that includes an understanding of and familiarity with all ten important life skills listed by WHO. These skills will allow young girls to grow both personally and professionally.