

**Revisiting Social Life Skills in the Era of HIV/AIDS among Learners in Learning  
Institutions**

**HARRISON DAKA**

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## **DEDICATION**

This is my humble contribution to all students in higher learning institutions especially adolescents who undergo various pressures in their academic life within the challenges of HIV and AIDS. I also dedicate this to my wife Leastina Makowa Daka and my only daughter Mercy with her brothers: Blessings Jnr, Angel Gabriel and Emmanuel Bright.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

My gratitude goes to Lydia Mukuka Mulenga-Hagane whose input was so immense in this book and Paul Kakupa for peer reviewing the manuscript. Their comments were very useful. Special gratitude goes to Mr Henry J. Msango who encouraged me to develop interest in issues of HIV and AIDS in Education. I would also like to thank Professor Mary Shilulekey Ngoma for motivating me on the importance of social life skills in HIV and AIDS curriculum. She is the source of most of the ideas highlighted in this book.

## **FOREWORD**

The book **revisiting Social Life Skills in the Era of HIV and AIDS among Learners in Learning Institutions** is a master piece of academic literature. The books is divided into six chapters: Chapter One looks at Background to Life Skills, Chapter Two discusses Awareness of Self; Chapter Three touches on Understanding Adolescence; Chapter Four looks at Facts on Abstinence; Chapter Five concentrates on Anger Management and Emotional Awareness, Chapter Six deals with Coping With Stress and Assertiveness.

In the book the author discusses such as exploring life skills, self-awareness, problem solving, critical thinking, decision making, effective communication, interpersonal relationships, coping with stress, managing feelings, assertiveness, adolescents knowledge, attitudes and practices pertaining to HIV and AIDS, developing identity and managing emotions. Other issues include building relationships, resisting peer pressure, health concerns independence, identity, intimacy, integrity and gender. The author also discusses sexuality and myths related to it, including abstinence from sexual activities. Reverend Harrison Daka deals with emotional development as it relates to anger and how to manage it. The author has given students in educational institutions a lot of counseling on how to deal with issues related to their emotional development.

This book will fill the gap on the non-availability of literature to young people in educational institutions like the University of Zambia. I wish to recommend this book to all students and academicians who are interested in posterity.

Henry J. Msango, Senior Lecturer  
University of Zambia, School of Education,  
Department Educational Administration and Policy Studies.

## **PREFACE**

In this era of HIV and AIDS, acquiring life social skills of how to handle the challenges in learning institutions by learners cannot be over emphasised. Life skills are able to help learners manage different situations which they go through at home and even at school.

The World Health Organization (2011) has defined life skills as the abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life. In other words, Life skills are abilities that facilitate the physical, mental and emotional well-being of an individual. Over the years, the educational program has focused on life skills development, which has contributed to the reproductive and sexual health of adolescents and young people around the world.

The question I have been asking is; do we need social life skills today in this era of HIV and AIDS? It is from this context that I thought of writing this book.

The book is divided into five chapters: Chapter One gives the background of researches which have been carried out to show the importance of social life skills in different countries, while Chapter Two focuses on awareness of self. Chapters Three and Four will describe the understanding of adolescence and facts of abstinence. Chapter Five gives a situation of anger management in circumstances of irritations and frustrations. The last Chapter tries to offer some skills of coping with different types of stress. In addition, some practical examples of assertiveness are provided. At the end of each chapter, there are some self-reflection activities and an exercise. It is my hope that this book will help students studying in different colleges and universities.

Harrison Sainan Daka

University of Zambia

## CHAPTER ONE

### BACKGROUND TO LIFE SKILLS

#### Overview

Let us begin by looking at the background to life skills with some lessons learnt in different countries.

Life skills programs, family life education, and/or reproductive health programs for children and young people often face opposition from parents, religious and community leaders and from some youths themselves who do not understand that they are at great risk. Research shows that these programmes do not lead to more frequent sex or to the earlier onset of sexual activities, as opponents fear. Neither do they, in any way, lead young people into promiscuity.

Recent research in Kenya UNAIDS (2010) suggests that family life/sex education programmes yield significant and positive adolescent reproductive health benefits and behaviours. These findings about the behavioural change effectiveness of family life/sex education programmes are virtually similar to findings in other sub-Saharan countries, including Ghana and Ethiopia. Impact evaluations of such programmes concluded that young people do not engage in sex earlier or in more frequent sexual intercourse. In some cases, the information and skills acquired by young people help them to delay the initiation of sexual activity.

Life skills programmes provide an opportunity to address other social issues that young people encounter in their daily life. Sexual abuse and violence are serious problems that transcend racial, economic, social, ethnic and regional lines. Violence is frequently directed towards females and youths, who lack the social and economic status to resist or avoid it. Adolescents, children and young women and girls in particular experience increased abuse in the form of domestic violence, rape and sexual assault, sexual exploitation and/or female genital mutilation (UNICEF ESR, 1999). Violence against women is a widespread problem in ESAR (Eastern and Southern Africa Region).

Surveys conducted in Uganda (UNESCO, 2007) reveal that 46 percent of women report regular physical abuse. In Tanzania it is 60 percent, in Kenya 42 percent while in Zambia it is 40 percent. In a study in South Africa, 40-47 percent of sexual assaults are perpetrated against girls aged 15 or younger. Abuse takes place in both urban and rural environments. Studies conducted in a city

in Zimbabwe found that half of reported rape cases involved girls less than 15 years of age and that girls were most vulnerable to sexual abuse by male relatives, neighbours and school teachers. Also distressing is that for one out of 10 young women, the first sexual encounter occurs under force, threat or coercion. In a survey conducted by the Zimbabwe National Family Planning Council (ZNFPC), 16 percent of the women reported having forced sex (UNICEF ESR, 1997).

According to another study in South Africa (Baldo and Furnis, 1999), 30 percent of girls reported that their first sexual intercourse was forced. In rural Malawi, 55 percent of adolescent girls surveyed reported that they were often forced to have sex. Violence has a significant impact on the health and life expectancy of women. Domestic violence can have long term psychological effects. Children in abusive households also suffer from the effects of violence, whether or not they are physically abused.

Today we are living in a more complex world, which has resulted in increased stress, a phenomenon that is directly related to health. We need to have a number of skills to function as individuals and as members of social groups. Effective acquisition of life skills can influence the way we cope with stress and face the challenges present in our lives. For this and many other reasons today, the life skills approach has been recommended in educating our young people.

The life skills approach is an interactive educational methodology that not only focuses on transmitting knowledge, but also aims at shaping attitudes and developing interpersonal skills. The main goal of the life skills approach is to enhance adolescents' ability to take responsibility for making healthier choices, resisting negative pressures and avoiding risky behaviour.

### **Exploring Life-skills**

It is widely agreed that life skills are generally applied in the context of health and social events. They can be utilized in many areas including:

- relationship management,
- interpersonal communications
- consumer education
- environmental education
- livelihood and income generation



It is an accepted fact that young people have a right to life skills education, since it provides them with knowledge and enables them to acquire appropriate skills to protect themselves against abuse, exploitation, unintended pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS. Below are some of the skills that young people must develop to function effectively in this era.

a) **Self-awareness**

This includes recognition of one's 'self', of one's character, of one's strengths and weaknesses, likes and dislikes. Developing self-awareness can help one to identify the feeling of stress or of being under pressure. It is also often a prerequisite to effective communication and interpersonal relations, as well as developing empathy for others. Self-awareness should be encouraged in the light of realizing self-worth/esteem and confidence.

b) **Problem solving and Critical thinking**

Having looked at self-awareness, we can now look at problem solving. Problem solving enables a person to deal constructively with problems in his/her life. This is because problems left unresolved can cause mental stress and give rise to physical strain. Have you ever had a situation where you failed to solve a problem?

In solving problems, there are channels that have to be followed. For example, if a problem is academic, how can it be solved? What channels are available at your institution that you have to exhaust to ensure that you get what you want? Many students fail to follow channels because they are not even aware that such exist. For example, if you have a problem with your Lecturer, who should you approach for help? Or let us suppose you are a nurse and you accidentally prick yourself with an HIV infected needle, would we say this is a problem? What channels are there to sort this out? Of course we know there is a solution, for example, one needs to get help within 48 hours in such situations. This entails one being aware that he/she can be given Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis drugs.

Problem solving entails that firstly, you acknowledge that there is a problem, and that it has to be sorted out. Then you have to take measures to correct this situation. This however can only be done by seeking correct or appropriate avenues such as seeking medical help, talking to supervisors or seeking psychological counselling.

Critical thinking is a type of reasonable, reflective thinking that is aimed at deciding what to believe or what to do. Critical thinking is an important component of most professions. It is a part of the formal education process and is increasingly significant as students progress through university.

Although there is debate among educators about its precise meaning and scope, critical thinking is said to be an ability to analyse information and experiences in an objective manner. The weak-sense critical thinker is a highly skilled but selfishly motivated pseudo-intellectual who works to advance one's personal agenda without seriously considering the ethical consequences and implications. Conceived as such, the weak-sense critical thinker is often highly skilled but uses those skills selectively so as to pursue unjust and selfish ends.

Conversely, the strong-sense critical thinker skilfully enters into the logic of problems and issues to see the problem for what it is without egocentric and/or socio-centric bias. Thus conceived, the strong-sense mind seeks to actively, systematically, reflectively, and fair-mindedly construct insight with sensitivity to expose and address the many obstacles that compromise high quality thought and learning. Using strong critical thinking we might evaluate an argument, for example, as worthy of acceptance because it is valid and based on true premises. Upon reflection, a speaker may be evaluated as a credible source of knowledge on a given topic. In this discussion, we can therefore emphasise that critical thinking be applied in a stronger sense as is being alluded to above. This is so especially in the fight against HIV and AIDS where people have to consider others as well as many factors at play in its spread, control and management.

Stop and think; are there instances when you have needed critical thinking? Do you need this skill socially or just academically?

Critical thinking can occur whenever one judges, decides, or solves a problem; in general, whenever one must figure out what to believe or what to do, and do so in a reasonable and reflective way. Reading, writing, speaking, and listening can all be done critically or uncritically. Critical thinking is crucial to becoming a close reader and a substantive writer. Expressed in most general terms, critical thinking is "a way of taking up the problems of life."

We can therefore conclude here that Critical thinking can contribute to health by helping one to recognize and assess the factors that influence attitudes and behaviour, such as values, peer pressure, and the media. This skill is cardinal in making choices when faced with many pressures.

### **c) Decision-making and Creative thinking**

We live in a world where we have to make decisions every day; it could be about what we have to eat, or how we have to dress or who to make friends with. Decision-making therefore, helps us to deal constructively with decisions about our lives. We can also decide who we want to be friends with or who we can discard. Making right decisions contributes to one's self esteem. Making an appropriate decision generates ripples of positive consequences for the health and well-being of oneself. It is most rewarding when health behaviours are modified during youth, when habits are still being learnt.

Creative thinking contributes to both decision-making and problem solving by enabling us to explore the available alternatives and various consequences of our actions or non-action. It helps us to look beyond our direct experience, and even if no problem is identified, or no decision is to be made, creative thinking can help a person to respond most appropriately and adapt with flexibility to various situations/exigencies of our daily lives.

### **d) Effective communication and Interpersonal relationship**

Effective communication means that we are able to express ourselves, both verbally and non-verbally, in ways that are relevant to the situation and culturally appropriate. This means being able to express opinions and desires, but also needs and fears. And it may mean being able to ask for advice and offer help during time of need.

These skills are essential in creating lasting and respectful relationships. These skills help a person relate to the people surrounding him/her. This may mean being able to make and maintain friendly relationships, which can be of great value to our mental and social well-being. It may also mean having good relations with family members, who are an important source of social support. At university, you are less dependent on parents. You tend to shift dependence from parents to peers and from existing, to new belief systems in order to achieve independence. This shift is strong and

may manifest in the form of rebellion against parents and elders or guardians at times even authority.

When you look out for a renewed self-image and identity, you search for answers to the questions like: "Who am I? What can I be?" This process involves doubts and experimentation. But as you forge new relationships, remember that they have to be respectful and mutual. It is normal and natural to develop special interest in the opposite sex and also in other members of our peer group. Quite often we are driven towards search for intimate relationships, with a feeling of love and also a desire to be loved. Therefore, this intimacy must not come at a price as it is natural and hence, must be entered into with mutual understanding, respect and integrity. Despite external influences, ensure that you develop a foundation for sorting out values which were earlier inculcated by guardians or parents.

You should also be aware that the way you feel about yourself, your self-esteem, impacts your happiness level, and also can make life more or less stressful for you. For example, if you trust your ability to handle what comes, you will be more likely to see difficult situations as a challenge instead of as a threat; conversely, if you don't trust your own ability to handle things, you will be more likely to see new situations as threatening and stress-provoking.

One thing that has a major influence on a person's self-esteem is their 'self-talk', the way they talk to themselves, interpret things, and comment on life inside their heads. A thinking style that is habitually negative can perpetuate a negative view of one's life and self, as well as cause other problems. For this reason, for you to communicate effectively, you have to hold yourself in high esteem.

If, after being involved in communication, you leave and then start regretting or thinking about what you did not say means that you did not communicate effectively. If you express yourself clearly, honestly without harbouring any anger or regret or resentment, it means that you engaged in effective communication.

In this era of HIV and AIDS, people need to communicate effectively what they need in relation to either to have sex or not to engage in sexual relations. It is important to make parties involved in the relationships not to send ambiguous signals to their partners. This should be done in order to avoid misunderstandings. It has often been argued that women fail to negotiate for safe sex

because they usually give mixed signals. However this need not arise when communication is devoid of any hidden meanings. Effective communication is cardinal especially among peer educators to deliver messages to their peers.

Empathy is the ability to imagine a situation that another is experiencing despite not possessing familiarity with that situation. Empathy can help us understand and accept others who may be very different from ourselves. Empathy can significantly improve one's social interactions, for example, in situations of ethnic or cultural diversity, it facilitates in relating to people of various cultures and origin as well as being sensitive to their value system(s).

#### **e) Coping with stress and Managing feelings**

In Zambia, we have both economic and social woes that have an impact on the quality of our lives as citizens. Most people have low incomes, live in absolute poverty and have low life expectancy levels. What has compounded this situation is the advent of HIV and AIDS. The high prevalence rates in Southern Africa (UNAIDS, 2011) makes it clear that stress especially resulting from HIV and AIDS will have a bearing on the mental health of citizens in these affected areas. This may result from either the knowledge of being infected or affected by bereavement in the family.

Managing feelings is part of growing up. Since you are now adults, you may want to act like adults and make independent decisions. However, in your effort to become independent and develop your own instinctive identity you slowly distance yourself from parents and start taking your own decisions and start questioning others'. Your development of critical thinking skills enables you to discern what is sacred from what is profane. You form your own opinions that may be radically different from those of parents and elders or even your colleagues and in such a process, the moral values attitudes and religious beliefs are often questioned. As you venture in this direction, ensure that you develop skills to express feelings and emotions in a socially acceptable manner and essentially include control and management of anger and stress. Of course, learning new things and experimentation is a part of learning. Therefore, in the process of learning new things, avoid taking risks in the absence of information and new skills to deal with the situation. Do not try out new experiments, because of peer pressure and for the sake of experimentation, as these may be risky and even dangerous.

Coping with stress means that we take pro-active steps to reduce the sources of the stress, for example, by making changes to our physical environment or lifestyle. It also means learning how to relax so that tensions created by unavoidable stress do not give rise to health problems. How can one cope with stress at the university where there is often pressure of work?

Managing stress entails changing the way we manage our time. It also means having positive support social groups that can help alleviate stress. Stress levels may also be linked to how assertive you are. The next sub heading therefore discusses assertiveness.

#### f) **Assertiveness**

Assertiveness is the ability to express one's feelings and assert one's rights while respecting the feelings and rights of others. Assertive communication is appropriately direct, open and honest, and clarifies one's needs to the other person. Assertiveness comes naturally to some, but is a skill that can be learned. People who have mastered the skill of assertiveness are able to greatly reduce the level of interpersonal conflict in their lives, thereby reducing a major source of stress.

Sometimes people confuse aggressiveness with assertiveness, seeing that both types of behaviour involve standing up for one's rights and expressing one's needs. The key difference between the two styles is that individuals behaving assertively will express themselves in ways that respect the other person. They assume the best about people, respect themselves, and think "win-win" and try to compromise.

In contrast, individuals behaving aggressively will tend to employ tactics that are disrespectful, manipulative, demeaning, or abusive. They make negative assumptions about the motives of others and think in retaliatory terms, or they don't think of the other person's point of view at all. They win at the expense of others, and create unnecessary conflict.

Passive individuals don't know how to adequately communicate their feelings and needs to others. They tend to fear conflict so much that they let their needs go unmet and keep their feelings secret in order to 'keep the peace'. They let others win while they lose out; the problem with this (which we shall go into in more detail momentarily) is that everybody involved loses, at least to an extent.

#### **What Does Assertiveness Look Like?**

Here are some common scenarios, with examples of each style of behaviour:

Scenario A: A lecturer marks you down in your assignment. What would you do?

An aggressive response would be to assume they did it on purpose and angrily say, “You gave me this grade because you do not like me!”

A passive response would be to just keep quiet and let things be.

An assertive response would be to assume that they may not have read your work objectively hence you politely say, “Excuse me, but I think I must have been under marked, would you care to explain why I have such a low grade?”

### **Benefits of Assertiveness**

Assertiveness affects many areas of life. Assertive people tend to have fewer conflicts in their dealings with others, which translates into much less stress in their lives. They get their needs met and help others get their needs met, too. Having stronger, more supportive relationships virtually guarantees that they have people they can count on, which also helps with stress management, and even leads to a healthier body.

Contrasting with this, aggressiveness tends to alienate others and create unnecessary stress. Those on the receiving end of aggressive behaviour tend to feel attacked and often avoid the aggressive individual, understandably. Over time, people who behave aggressively tend to have a string of failed relationships and little social support, and they don’t always understand that this is related to their own behaviour. Ironically, they often feel like victims, too.

Passive people aim to avoid conflict by avoiding communication about their needs and feelings, but this behaviour damages relationships in the long run. They may feel like victims, but continue to avoid confrontation, becoming increasingly angry until, when they finally do or say something, which may come out aggressively. The other party doesn’t even know there’s a problem until the formerly passive individual virtually explodes! This leads to hard feelings, weaker relationships, and more passivity.

### **How Does One Become More Assertive?**

The first step in becoming more assertive is to take an honest look at yourself and your responses, to see where you currently stand. The answers to the following questions will help clue you in:

- Do you have difficulty accepting constructive criticism?
- Do you find yourself saying ‘yes’ to requests that you should really say ‘no’ to, just to avoid disappointing people?
- Do you have trouble voicing a difference of opinion with others?
- Do people tend to feel alienated by your communication style when you do disagree with them?
- Do you feel attacked when someone has an opinion different from your own?



## **REFLECTIONS**

1. Have you ever been in a situation where you think you did not communicate what you wanted or your points effectively? How did you feel?



2. If you have a lot of pressing issues which affect your academic life, how are you supposed to cope with stress? Are there any counselling centres or other diagnostic measures available in your institution?

### **EXERCISE**

1. Recent research in Kenya suggests that .....education programmes yield significant and positive adolescent reproductive health benefits and behaviours.
  - A. Abstinence
  - B. Condom
  - C. Faithfulness
  - D. Sex
  
2. According to another study in South Africa and Malawi, more girls in South Africa had forced sex than in Malawi.
  - A. True B. False
  
3. Which of the following areas can be utilised in the life skills and can be applied in the context of health and social events?
  - A. Relationship management,
  - B. Interpersonal communications
  - C. Market education
  - D. Environmental education
  - E. Incoming generation
  
4. Critical thinking is a type of reasonable, reflective thinking that is aimed at deciding what to believe or what to do.
  - A. Critical thinking
  - B. Self-awareness
  - C. Problem solving
  - D. Creative thinking

5. In Zambia, we have both economic and social woes that have an impact on the quality of our lives as citizens. Which of the following life skills are important in addressing this problem?
- A. Interpersonal relationships
  - B. Managing feelings
  - C. Effective communication
  - D. Coping with stress
6. Indicate the correct situation for the following response; “You gave me this grade because you do not like me!”
- A. Aggressive
  - B. Passive
  - C. Assertive
7. Indicate the correct situation for the following response; “Excuse me, but I think I must have been under marked, would you care to explain why I have such a low grade?”
- A. Aggressive
  - B. Passive
  - C. Assertive

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **AWARENESS OF SELF**

Adolescents are the main solution for creating awareness and preventing HIV/AIDS virus. Colleges and the institutions of learning should make them understand their responsibility and start taking steps.

### **A: Adolescent's knowledge, attitudes, and practices pertaining to HIV/AIDS**

Before looking in detail on self-awareness, let's recap on the role of governments in the mitigation of HIV especially among the young adults. It has been stated that all governments recognize that reaching young people with information on HIV/AIDS is an important step in dealing with the problem (MOH, 1997). Although studies have assessed children's awareness of HIV/AIDS (KDHS, 1999), their main focus has been on adolescents, a factor that may explain the tendency for HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns to target adolescents.

In most traditional African societies, parents played a minimal role in educating children on sexuality. This task was left to selected elderly women and men, grandparents, and persons who acted as guardians to initiates.

Parents continue to play a minimal role in providing these skills to their children. Previous studies done in Kenya (KDHS, 1999) found that children and youths are exposed to information about sexuality mainly through their peers, teachers, mass media, and other social networks. In a survey of 1,827 girls and 805 boys aged between 15 and 19, 24.9% of the girls and 15.8% of the boys did not know any way of avoiding HIV/AIDS. In the same survey, 10.2% and 9.7% of girls and boys, respectively held misconceptions about how HIV/AIDS can be avoided. Specifically, 24.1% of the girls and 15.5% of the boys thought that a healthy looking person cannot have the HIV/AIDS virus. Studies also show that young people in Kenya are sexually active at an early age. According to the KDHS (1999), only 56% of young women aged between 15 and 19 and 45.8% of young men in the same age bracket reported they had never had sex. The survey also showed that 17% of the young women sampled were already mothers while another 4% were pregnant at the time of the survey.

### **B: SELF-AWARENESS**

It is important in the first place to understand that self-awareness deals with concerns that you have as adolescents. There are a lot of concerns that you may have as an adolescent which can contribute

to loss of self-worth/esteem and confidence. Let us now go through together some of these concerns;

### **i) PSYCHOLOGICAL CONCERNS**

- **Developing an Identity**

Self – awareness helps you as an adolescent understand yourself and establish your personal identity. Lack of information and skills prevent you from effectively exploring your potential and establishing a positive image. For instance, adolescent girls are brought up with several stereotype gender roles; while boys build their ‘egos’ to assume masculine roles, “ Suffering in silence” is seen as a virtue among women and girls.

- **Managing Emotions**

As Adolescents you have frequent mood changes reflecting feelings of anger, sadness, happiness, fear, shame, guilt, and love. Very often, you are unable to understand the emotional turmoil. Sex hormones secreted during puberty affect changes in sexual and emotional behaviour. Lack of knowledge regarding bodily and emotional change cause stress and managing this is a challenge. You do not have a supportive environment in order to share your concerns with others. Counselling facilities are mostly not available for such type of cases.

- **Building Relationships**

As a part of growing up, you redefine your relationships with parents, peers and members of the opposite sex. Adults have high expectations from you and do not understand your feelings. Adults do not respect your right to choose with dignity and participate in decision- making processes. As adolescents you need social skills for building positive and healthy relationships with others including peer of opposite sex. You need to understand the importance of mutual respect and socially defined boundaries of every relationship

- **Resisting Peer Pressure**

As an adolescent you find it difficult to resist peer pressure. Some of you may yield to these pressures and take on to experimentation at greater risk. Some of these pressures include

aggressive self-conducts which involve unsafe sexual behaviour and drug use. These lead to involve greater risks with regard to physical and mental health. The experiment with smoking and milder drugs often leads to switching over to hard drugs and addiction at a later stage. The risk of contracting HIV and getting involved in anti-social behaviour are serious consequences of drug abuse.

## **ii) HEALTH CONCERNS**

- **Understanding the process of growing up**

Body image and rate of growth in relation to peers is a major concern among young adolescents. Misconceptions about menstruation, masturbation and nocturnal emissions cause stress. Social norms and inability to share your concerns with others make it even more stressful.

- **Acquiring Information, Education and Services on Reproductive and Sexual Health (AIERSH)**

Exposure to media and mixed messages from the fast changing world has left adolescents with many unanswered questions. The widening gap in communication between adolescents and parents especially on AIERSH is a matter of great concern. Teachers/lecturers still feel inhibited to discuss issues frankly, sensitively and interestingly. Services providers are judgmental and do not ensure confidentiality. As adolescents you seek information from your peer group who are also ill informed and some fall prey to quacks. Fear and hesitation prevent you from seeking knowledge on preventive methods and medical help if suffering with Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs).

- **Communicating and Negotiating safer sexual practices**

As sexually active adolescents, you face greater health risks. Your knowledge of contraceptive and use of condom to prevent Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) is limited. You have poor access to contraceptives and condom. You have poor skills to communicate, negotiate and assert. These increase vulnerability to STIs / HIV infection. The power relation in a sexual

relationship makes it difficult for female adolescents to negotiate for condom use. Adolescent females are more susceptible to such infections due to; biological structure, lower status within gender relationship and lack of financial power. Girls may also face mental and emotional problems related to too early sexual initiation. For unmarried mothers, there is social stigma, leading to horrifying consequences.

- **Poor health**

Nutritional intake among adolescents especially girls is still a matter of concern. Several families do not yet recognize food intake needs of a girl. Girls are not served adequate/nutritious food in comparison to male members/ siblings in the family etc. Besides, over nutrition and other lifestyle diseases like obesity and diabetes are emerging fast as major health problems among adolescents.

- iii) **Social practices concerns**

Adolescents, both girls and boys are forced into early marriage and have very little say in selecting their marriage partners. This is very common in the rural areas. Early marriage has far reaching consequences in terms of their development, fertility rate and reproductive health. Marriage curtails education and alters their choice of careers. Cultural norms may encourage early child bearing, posing risks to both infants and mother. If girls who are not fully developed become pregnant, they can experience damage to their reproductive tracts, delayed or obstructed labour, ruptures in the birth canal and increased risks of maternal mortality. Teenage parents lack experience, skills and resources needed to raise their children.

Many times, the resistance to Adolescence Education Programme (AEP) is due to the lack of earnest appreciation for the needs and concerns of adolescents and misplaced apprehensions among adults. To shed the veil of apprehensions with regard to Adolescent Education Programme and Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health Programmes, it is important to do a reality check vis-à-vis adolescents and their socialization and behaviour.

- iv) **Concern about Appearance**

During the phases of adolescence, a person goes through different phases of development. In each phase s/he witnesses change in his/her body and appearance. The notion of his or her

appearance largely depend upon the prevailing social, cultural notion of the society. A young boy may like to dress like a smart boy, be physically fit, good stylish hair, likeminded friendship etc. Similarly the girl may like to look beautiful, have good body structure, weight, likeminded friends etc. Although, if the adolescents do not see their appearance according to the norms of the society and with the accepted norms or current trends, he/she suffers from depression and may end up with loss of his/her confidence, morale and even self-esteem that affects their performance in the class, concentration and behaviours. Therefore, at the time of growth and development it is utmost important to make adolescents aware about the body change at different stages of life and impart them information that these changes are not similar to everyone. Some people may be tall, others small, others may have well-built body others may be thin, fairness of the skin may also differ from person to person. Hence, it should not affect our confidence, concentration and self-image.

During adolescences individuals feel attracted to people of the opposite sex. This is a normal process of growing up. However, all attraction cannot be categorized as sexual attraction. In the age of adolescence, a boy or girls may like to talk to each other, praise their intellect and beauty, share their books and notes all these are simply a likeness and friendship. In addition, at this age young people witness change in their body resulting into some behavioural change and that raises their curiosity to know the opposite sex. This normal human curiosity normally can't be categorized as sexual attraction for both boys as well as for girls. But if this curiosity is not handled in positive manner it may hamper the behaviour of the adolescent about the opposite sex negatively.

Therefore, adolescence is the right time to make you understand the process of change so that you can take it as normal and natural aspect of life and show mutual respect for each other.



## **REFLECTIONS**

Reflect on the developmental stages to adulthood you have gone through or which you are still going through. Which challenges are you facing or did you face and the steps are you taking or you took to overcome them?

## **EXERCISE**

1. Self-awareness involves recognizing one's own strengths and weakness.  
A. True      B. False
2. In Kenya a study revealed that more boys than girls thought a healthy looking person could not have the HIV/AIDS.  
A. True   B. False
3. Which of the following is not a psychological concern which can lead to loss of confidence?  
  
A. Managing emotions  
B. Failed relationships  
C. Physical Appearance  
D. Peer pressure
4. Which of the following is not a reasonable factor in making adolescents more vulnerable to HIV/AIDS infections;  
  
A. Inability to use condoms  
B. Inability to control their sexual feelings  
C. Poor skills to negotiate for safer sex  
D. Imbalanced power relations in sexual relationships
5. Building relationships is not a psychological concern of youths.  
  
A. True   B.   False

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **UNDERSTANDING ADOLESCENCE**

#### **A) Developmental Milestones**



At this level let us now understand more specifically the adolescent stage and refer to issues of sexuality, stigma, behaviour and gender. As you read this chapter, reflect on your adolescent stage and think of the challenges you went through or you are going through.

From a young age, children are exposed to sexual imagery and language in their environment. Their bodies are experiencing and developing sexual responsiveness and of course their curiosity is inevitable. Adolescence is a particularly stressful and confusing time both physically and cognitively as aspects of sexual expression begin to align and opportunities for personal decision making expand.

Adolescence is often described, as an exciting transitory phase in the human life cycle but is perhaps the most challenging stage as well. This is a time when adolescents evolve into adults with newly discovered independence and renewed responsibilities. This is very common for those in High Schools and Tertiary Learning Institutions (Kelly, 2008). They are constantly in search of their own new identity. They tend to question and appreciate the values of the adult world and try to assert their identity. During adolescence they develop skills that will help them to grow into caring and responsible adults. When adolescents are supported and encouraged by caring adults, they thrive in unimaginable ways, becoming resourceful and contributing as members of their families and societies.

Vibrant with enthusiasm, resilient with energy, and filled with curiosity, adolescents are responsive and responsible given the positive contextual environment. They have the immense potential to change negative societal patterns of behaviour and break cycles of stereotyped dispositions. With their creativity and energy, adolescents can change the present world in astonishing ways, making it a better place not only for themselves but also for all.

Developmental milestones are a set of functional skills or age-specific tasks that an individual can do in a certain age range. Although each milestone has an age level, the actual age when a normally developing child reaches that milestone can vary quite a bit. **NOTE! Every child is unique!**

Self-control can be defined as the ability to control your body, thoughts and behaviour. We can even relate it to the word ‘will power’, which we use very frequently. If we have control over our *mind* and our senses, we can protect ourselves from desires and temptations, which may be harmful for us. We are so flooded with thoughts, emotions and sexual feelings during adolescence that we

feel like breaking through all the barriers that are placed by our parents, society, and teachers. Self-control is what then acts as a dam to control the overflowing thoughts and emotions. It also helps us take more self-enhancing and fulfilling decisions. Our mind is like a container, which contains our thoughts, emotions, intellect, logic, and reasoning. It keeps on expanding as we give it more exposure and shrinks when it is devoid of experiences. Self-control is all about first being aware of your internal reactions and responses to an experience, then thinking through it critically and then taking a decision to react appropriately to the situation. Self-control through self-awareness, critical thinking and decision making, allow you to have more choices about how to react when you are faced with a temptation.

### **B) Intellectual stage**

Let us now look at some developmental stages which adolescents go through while at the University or High School. The stage which will be discussed is intellectual.

The development of advanced intellectual processes or cognitive development begins during early adolescence. Between the ages of 10 and 15, many young people begin to develop the ability to think abstractly and reflectively. Younger children think concretely.

Young adolescents may think about “what might be” instead of “what is.” They begin to develop the ability to understand abstract concepts and to reason about ideals like justice, religion, or love. These behaviours are linked to these new cognitive abilities. For example, adolescents may question accepted rules and may argue whether rules are reasonable and fair. They may question others’ beliefs and values because they are able to comprehend that not everyone thinks the same way as they do about social or moral issues. Young people start to see the future in terms of years, so they may relate their interests and present circumstances to the roles they will play as adults. These cognitive abilities develop slowly, so students may behave in a way that shows both abstract and concrete thought. There are five I’s in intellectual development, these are:

**Independence:** Adolescents need to become less dependent on parents. The dependence begins to shift from parents to peers and from existing to new belief systems in order to achieve independence. This shift is strong and may manifest in the form of rebellion against parents and elders or guardians.

**Identity:** Adolescents usually look out for a renewed self-image and identity. They search for answers to the questions like: "Who am I? What can I be?" This process involves doubts and experimentation.

**Intimacy:** Adolescents develop special interest in the opposite sex and also in other members of their peer group. They are quite often driven towards search for intimate relationships, with a feeling of love and also a desire to be loved.

**Integrity:** Adolescents develop a foundation for sorting out values. Parents provide a base for this. However, there is a tremendous amount of other inputs at this phase peers, media, school, etc. Adolescents engage themselves in deciding what to believe in and how to behave.

**Intellect:** The adolescent's intellectual capacity develops and changes from concrete thinking to abstract thinking. Adolescents become capable of conceptual thinking and understanding logic and deductive reasoning. This increased ability tends to heighten self-esteem. Some adolescents tend to see things from an idealistic point of view.

If you reflect on the five I's above and relate to what you are going through at your institution, you may discover that you met some challenges of these developments.

### **C) Gender and Gender Roles**

These are concepts that we need to be aware of in order for us to understand ourselves and others. Let us take time to go through and discuss these concepts.

**Gender relations** are roles and responsibilities men and women play or are expected to play in a society. It defines the activities of men and women according to the social situation. It largely affects both males and females in different ways. In this section of the chapter, you will be made to understand how the concept of gender affects our own opinion, our role, and perceptions about us and about the others, our attitude and its larger impact on ourselves, our body, and mind and at society at large. The fundamental aim of this section is to not only make us aware of the disparities and differences but to empower adolescents with social life skills. These skills will help them deal and work through the situations as they aspire to make a more equal and happy world.

**Sex** has to do with biological and genetic characteristics. For instance, the ability to become pregnant and give birth is a biological characteristic associated with being female. Having a nocturnal emission is a physiological characteristic of being a male.

**Gender** refers to women's and men's roles and responsibilities that are socially determined. It is related to how we are perceived and expected to think and act as men and women because of the way the society is organized, not because of our biological differences. For example, many consider farming to be a manly (or masculine) occupation, while nursing is often perceived as a womanly occupation. Or, many believe that being emotional is typically a female characteristic, while being strong is typically a male characteristic.

Gender describes whether someone is masculine or feminine according to behavioural differences, for example, how they dress, their work and their status in society. Gender roles are ideas about how men and women should behave. They are created by society, cultures and traditions. As they grow up, girls and boys learn from their parents, community, religious institutions, schools, and the media about the way women and men should behave (Kelly and Bain, 2003). Gender roles are also different for people of different ages – for example, young girls may be given very different tasks and levels of responsibility than their grandmothers. Gender roles vary from one society to another and change as society changes. Because gender roles are created by society, it is possible to change them.

### **Gender Discrimination and its impact on the health of both men and women.**

**For women:** Gender has important consequences for women's health. The negative impact of gender begins at or even before birth when a preference for sons may put baby girls at risk of infanticide—or with new ultrasound technology, at risk of sex-selective abortion. Throughout childhood and adolescence, girls also are more likely than boys to be sexually abused by male authority figures.

After marriage, women's low status continues to limit their ability to control their own lives, including their fertility and their access to health care. A woman may not be able to determine how

many children to have or which family planning methods to use. In communities where having a large family is a woman's only way to improve her social status women may feel pressured to have many, closely spaced children despite the toll it takes on their health. As a result, women cannot protect themselves against unwanted pregnancies, STIs, and their adverse health consequences.

**For men:** In many societies, boys are expected to be sexually active. They may be under pressure from their peers to experiment sexually which may put them at risk of infections. Boys are also expected to have knowledge about sexual matters. Boys frequently pretend to be sexually experienced and to be very knowledgeable about the reproductive process. However many of them do not have a reliable source of information and are reluctant to ask for information because they do not want to appear uninformed or inexperienced. They may also take risks to prove their 'manliness'. Alcohol and other substance use often accompany the early sexual experiences of young men and increase the risk of STI, HIV infections and unwanted pregnancies.

#### **D) Adolescence and Sexuality**

It is vital that before we come to the end of this chapter, we look at sexuality and adolescence. It has been said that at this age the most challenging thing to avoid or manage is the sexual act. As you read through this section, relate all what is discussed below to what you have gone through or what you are going through.

It is an accepted fact that development should be about increasing people's well-being. It has been recognized that social and legal norms and economic structures based on sexuality have a huge impact on people's physical security, bodily integrity, health, education, mobility, and economic status.

We have policies, programs, laws and services to cater for an array of problems from poverty, ill health to social ills but seldom has 'Sexuality' been contemplated as one of the causes hampering the underlying wellness of people irrespective of age, sex, gender or class. However linkages between sexuality and different issues suggest that we can constructively engage with sexuality as a development issue to address the larger development agenda.

In many parts of our country, a girl is stopped from going to school the day she starts menstruating, while a boy with feminine characteristics or not such of a 'macho man' type will drop out from

school for fear of harassment, from peers and inferiority complex. People including children who diverge from sexual norms are often stigmatised or ostracized (including single/ unmarried persons, intersex, homosexuals) while those who keep to the rules (mainstream heterosexual norm) are well accepted.

Sexuality needs to be understood beyond physical relationship and reproduction; especially in the context of gender, gender identities; gender roles, friendships; interpersonal relations and social relations as well.

Reproductive Sexual Health is a very important component of overall health and well-being. Sexual health is a significant part of personal health and healthy living. As stated by many authors "Since health is a fundamental human right, so must sexual health also be a basic human right".

Sexuality can also be a positive force that can lead to empowerment, enjoyment, and well-being, and can enhance human relations with shared intimacy or pleasure. It is when we are comfortable with our physical body and emotional changes that we will be comfortable with our sexuality. Sexuality determines our sexual behaviour, including high-risk behaviour resulting in unwanted pregnancy, STI and HIV infection –at times to manifesting as sexual coercion and violence. Sexuality precedes Reproductive Health. For you to understand more about this, let us look at some of the myths and misconceptions around sexual health.

### **E) Myths and Misconceptions**

In concluding this chapter, let's be aware of the myths and misconceptions. These myths and misconceptions are in relation to reproductive and sexual health.

The key objective of this section of the chapter is to dispel people's wrong beliefs, myths and misconceptions about their reproductive and sexual health. This is because wrong ideas can lead to confusion and experimentation sometimes (so that they can confirm it for themselves). For example, a young boy can have a misconception that taking drugs once or twice do not lead to an addiction. He then indulges in a risk taking behaviour by taking drugs and to be accepted by the peers. This experimentation can have serious and damaging lifelong implications for him. Thus the objective of this section is to equip students with scientific knowledge, facts and figures while also empowering them with skills to make informed choices / decisions.

**i) Those who have sexual thoughts get pimples - Myth**

During puberty, pimples appear due to hormonal changes in the body that lead to the sweat glands being overactive. The sweat glands grow more rapidly than the ducts that carry out the secretions (sweat). As a result, the pores can get clogged and closed. If not kept clean, inflammation and infections take place, resulting in blackheads and pimples. Thus our thoughts or fantasies have nothing to do with getting pimples.

**ii) A boy who is short is less manly- Myth**

The height of a boy has nothing to do with his capacity to execute any of his life time responsibilities as a man. No person's height or weight can determine their inner strength or beauty. A person's worth is valued with his/her qualities as human beings not by their external appearance.

**iii) A girl who hasn't started her period by the time she is 16 should seek medical Advice- True**

A girl who does not menstruate by the time she is 16 and does not have breast development should seek medical advice as this indicates delayed puberty. There can be various reasons for this delay including genetic or hormonal reasons.

**iv) Menstruation is unclean and unhealthy- Myth**

Menstruation is part of a normal physiological process in the life of a girl or a woman. This involves the preparation of the uterus for the implantation and growth of the fertilized ovum in case conception was to occur. However, if fertilization does not occur, the inner layers of the uterus are shed along with blood. This is called menstruation and this is a normal and natural process.

**v) A boy who started growing a moustache by the time he is 14 should be worried -Myth**

The onset of puberty and the changes associated with them can vary for each individual. This is also true for appearance of facial hair (moustache). Some boys may begin to experience these

changes earlier than other boys. However this should not be a cause for undue concern as all boys will sooner or later experience these changes.

**vi) Nocturnal emissions make men weak - Myth**

The loss of semen through a wet dream or, masturbation does not lead to weakness. The sperms and the semen are replenished in the body regularly.

**vii) It is the Right of individuals to have physical intimacy and relationship at any age, even during adolescence - Myth**

The pivotal point of adolescence is the discovery of sex. In this phase of life, teenagers should be encouraged to realize that sex is not only a physical adventure but also a truly fulfilling if it is practiced in the context of a mature emotional relationship. The kind of relationship you want to have might change around puberty.

You might start feeling sexually attracted to other people. Most people feel attracted to people of the opposite sex. Some people feel attracted to people of the same sex. Both of these feelings are natural, but our family and society's values make a big impact on our expression of these feelings.

Starting to feel sexually attracted to other people happens partly because of the sexual changes that take place in our bodies. Most sexual feelings have physical signs. There is no reason to act upon one's sex drive every time it is felt. One of the key skills to master at this stage of development is 'self-control'

Adolescents, at times may be impulsive and do not hesitate to take risk. They may take decisions without realizing the consequences. They are easily attracted to each other physically and get infatuated (falling in love blindly). Therefore, adolescents need to be convinced that certain social norms have innate protective qualities. Social acceptance of sex within marriage is one of them. Such relationships are enjoyable and fulfilling only after marriage.

**viii) Once a male is sexually aroused, he must have sexual intercourse or it could be harmful to his health - Myth**

An erection with or without sexual stimulation (when standing with friends, at a meeting, in classroom, when walking, sleeping....) is a perfectly natural reaction of the body. It is not



necessary to have sexual intercourse following an erection. Similar to the egg/ovum of the female, the unused sperm is disintegrated/ destroyed in the body as part of the natural process and there is no build-up of semen in the scrotum.

**ix) A 14 year old girl and a sixteen year old boy know what true love is and can have a meaningful intimate relationship and can do as they please -Myth**

Relationships play an important role in one's life. They are the heart and soul of human experience, which is necessary for the survival of man as a social animal. Therefore, relationships need to be handled carefully. Healthy interpersonal relationships that are cooperative, interdependent and mutually supportive are sources of security and enjoyment for every individual.

Curiosity about sex is a natural part of growing up and is a part of preparing for adulthood. The walls of a boy's bedrooms are often plastered with sensual images of women while girls' bedrooms are similarly covered with current images of masculine heroes. The pivotal point of adolescence is the discovery of sex. In this phase of life, teenagers should be encouraged to realize that sex is not only a physical adventure but also a truly fulfilling if it is practiced in the context of a mature emotional relationship. The kind of relationship you want to have might change around puberty. There is no reason to act upon one's sex drive every time it is felt. One of the key skills to master at this stage of development is 'self-control'

**x) Physical manipulation of the sexual organ by the individual (male/female) (masturbation) is harmful -Myth**

There is scientific evidence that physical manipulation is not harmful. One should not feel guilty for masturbating as it is natural. However it is often said that one should canalize oneself into more interesting activities like sports, games, music, and art so as to avoid involving oneself in such act.

**xi) The female partner determines the sex of the baby - Myth**

The sex chromosomes of the male are X Y. So the spermatozoa produced contain either X or Y chromosomes. The sex chromosomes of the female are XX, so the ovum contains only the X chromosome. When the X ovum unites with X spermatozoa, a female child (XX) is born. And when the X ovum unites with the Y spermatozoa, a male child (XY) is born. Hence the spermatozoa and hence the male partner determines the sex of the baby.

**xii) Abstinence is the only method of birth control that is 100% effective - Fact**

Abstinence means no sexual relations whatsoever – therefore there is no opportunity for fertilization of the ovum and the sperm. However it should be understood that abstinence is a behavioural trait and not a contraceptive method.

**xiii) Education of Human Sexuality in schools and colleges will lead to excessive sexual experimentation - Myth**

Adolescents and teenagers are adventurous and like to experiment and experience new things. This may apply to sex also. The aim of human sexuality education is to provide accurate and correct knowledge about human sexuality and the hidden dangers involved in reckless experimentation. This will help them to take informed and correct decisions at the appropriate time. Available data on sexuality and HIV education programmes shows that these programmes do not lead to increased sexual activity, and that the percentage of youth involved in sexual activity markedly decreases after such programmes. In addition such programmes increase abstinence among adolescents and also delay sexual debut.

By this time you must be aware of yourself in different areas of life. It is important at this level to use the skills and knowledge so far learnt to apply in your life and help others too. In the next unit you will look at the life/social skills which can be applied when you meet different challenges in life.



## **REFLECTIONS**

Take time to reflect on the five I's of Intellectual development you have read in this chapter and relate to what you are going through at your educational institution. How have you managed to meet the challenges of these developments?

## **EXERCISE**

- 1 Which of the following factors is not responsible for making female adolescents more vulnerable to HIV/AIDS
  - A. Higher status within gender relationships
  - B. Their biological makeup
  - C. Lack of access to factors of production
  - D. Early exposure to sex
  
- 2 Cultural norms, such as early marriages pose a serious health risk among adolescents.
  - A. True
  - B. False

3. Misconceptions about menstruation, masturbation and nocturnal emissions are not a major health concern which can cause stress among the adolescents.  
A. True B. False
4. By the age of 13, many adolescents are capable of thinking abstractly and reflectively.  
A. True B. False
5. Which of the five intelligent developmental stages do adolescents develop a foundation for sorting out values?  
A. Identity B. Intimacy C. Intellect D. Integrity
6. To make rational decisions, youths must develop self-control.  
A. True B. False

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **FACTS ON ABSTINENCE**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter discusses life/ social skills. In chapter one, you looked at life skills as a foundation to the whole book. In this chapter, we will discuss life/social skills in line with managing situations which you can be going through. Some of these are; abstinence, sexual abuse and tips to cope sexual abuse.

#### **What is Abstinence?**

Firstly let's define Abstinence. This is in literal terms a deliberate decision to avoid something. People choose to abstain from many different things, such as sweets, meat, candy, tobacco products, voting, alcohol and/or other drugs, and/or sexual activities. People choose to abstain for many different reasons, such as health (avoiding sweets or fat), personal religious beliefs (avoiding meat, alcohol), commitment to a cause or person (abstaining from voting and/or participating in some behaviours), fear (of punishment, of negative consequences), and disinterest.

Now let us define sexual abstinence. People define sexual abstinence in many different ways. For one person, it may mean no physical contact with potential partners—no kissing, no holding hands. For another, it may mean abstaining from one particular behaviour, such as avoiding intercourse.

Abstinence is the only 100 percent effective method for avoiding unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV (Kelly, 1999). Teens—especially young teens—should be encouraged to delay sexual initiation. Adolescents should be encouraged to delay sexual behaviours until they are physically, cognitively, and emotionally ready for mature sexual relationships and their consequences.

### **Why Abstinence?**

Abstinence education is important for the youth and must be imparted with the objective of:

- i. Teaching the social, psychological, and health gains to be realized by abstaining from sexual activity.
- ii. Teaching abstinence from sexual activity outside marriage as the expected standard for all school age children.
- iii. Teaching that abstinence from sexual activity is the only certain way to avoid out of wedlock pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, and other associated health problems.
- iv. Teaching that a mutually faithful monogamous relationship in the context of marriage is the expected standard of human sexual activity.
- v. Teaching that sexual activity outside of the context of marriage is likely to have harmful psychological and physical effects.
- vi. Teaching that bearing children out-of-wedlock is likely to have harmful consequence for the child, the child's parents, and society.
- vii. Teaching the importance of attaining self-sufficiency before engaging in sexual activity.
- viii. The teacher/lecturer should acknowledge the importance of abstinence and provide the youth with the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to make abstinence work. Even the youth who pledge to remain abstinent need information about contraception and

condoms to help them prevent unintended pregnancy, HIV and other STIs when they do become sexually active.

### **Sexual abuse – awareness building and sensitizing**

The University of Zambia has formulated a harassment policy which deters its community members to be sexually abused (UNZA, 2010). If you have not come across it, you pass through the HIV Response centre and you will be advised where to access it. This was like a follow-up from the HIV and AIDS Policy which was released in 2003. Let us go through together this section on sexual abuse and relate to what you have gone through or you are going through.

#### **REMEMBER: KNOWLEDGE IS POWER!!!!**

Abuse can be physical, sexual, emotional or verbal; it is intimidation or manipulation of another person or an intrusion into another's psyche; the purpose is to control another person. It is generally a long-term pattern of behaviour although specific short-term interactions can be labelled abusive. Abuse may coexist with neglect, which is defined as failure to meet a dependent person's basic physical and medical needs, emotional deprivation, and/or desertion. Neglect is sometimes described as passive abuse. It is a grievous violation of trust and it leads to disorientation, fear, depression, and suicidal ideation.”

When a person is used as a sexual object without consent, it is called sexual abuse. Child sexual abuse often begins with nonsexual touches like patting, pinching, touching, or hugging. The child accepts it as non-threatening. But gradually the abuser may increase the methods of abuse. Often adolescents can make out “what a good touch is and what a bad touch is”. Once an adolescent senses a “bad touch” by another person, it is better to keep a distance from those persons.

#### **The difference between sexual abuse and sexual harassment (example of eve-teasing).**

**Sexual abuse** includes any situation in which children are being used for someone’s sexual gratification, ranging from hands- on abuse, such as fondling or exposing to disturbing sexual material. Sexual abuse can be traumatic to children since it is an overwhelming, out of the ordinary experience and elicits feelings of helplessness and instinctual arousal.

It should be emphasized that sexual abuse can take place within the family, by a sibling or other relative; or outside the home, for example, by a friend, neighbour, an elderly person whom you respect, or a stranger. More often the abuser is someone you already know.

**Sexual harassment** is any unwanted sexual attention/ behaviour which a girl or boy experiences in various situations. The behaviour may be intentional or unintentional with implicit or explicit sexual connotations. It can be verbal, non-verbal or physical harassment. Sexual harassment is a type of sexual abuse. The subtle difference is that in sexual harassment, there is no sexual contact and the harassment is often done anonymously in public places. However, a known person can be involved in sexual harassment.

**Eve-teasing** is a form of harassment that usually takes place at public places ie parks, public transport, roads, crowded places, cinema halls, colleges etc. Most of the times, females are at the receiving end. The word "Eve" being a reference to the biblical Eve, the first woman. Considered a problem related to delinquency in youth, it is a form of sexual aggression that ranges in severity from sexually suggestive remarks to brushing in public places. Sometimes it is referred to with a coy suggestion of innocent fun, making it appear innocuous with no resulting liability on the part of the perpetrator. Sexual harassment by strangers, as with any type of harassment, has been a notoriously difficult crime to prove, as perpetrators often devise ingenious ways to harass women, even though Eve-teasing usually occurs in public spaces, streets, and public transport

### **Tips for avoiding abuse**

Be aware of your circumstances and at all times take the necessary steps. Consider the following tips for avoiding abuse;

- i) If you feel you are being followed, go to a public building and call Police Help line Number or someone who lives close by for help. Do not take a chance.
- ii) In case, someone tries to take advantage of your situation in public places, resist then and there if possible. Try to shout /scream for help or attract the attention of those around you.
- iii) Be assertive- don't let anyone violate your space.
- iv) Indicating that one is aware of harassment & practices ways to deal with them.

- v) Predicting and avoiding the harasser.
- vi) Watching out for unwanted visitors.
- vii) Informing to a supportive sibling, friend, parents or teacher if the harassment is repetitive.
- viii) Avoid walking alone especially at night and unknown places

### **Practical tips of avoiding situations of sexual abuse**

- i) If someone tries to invade your personal space or tries to touch your body and do things that make you uncomfortable, say a firm NO to that person and do it right away.
- ii) Respect your elders but that does not mean blind obedience to adults and to authority.
- iii) Remember that most often the abuser is someone you know well and respect.
- iv) Never allow strangers to enter your home without showing some sort of identification.
- v) Do not let strangers or other people know that you are alone at home. Do not be out alone particularly if you know that it is unsafe or it is a new place.
- vi) If you are in a situation where you recognize that you have been abused or likely to be abused, share this information with someone older, whom you trust. Do not be threatened by the situation, even if you are afraid or feel embarrassed / humiliated. The abuser will only feel more confident of their act if they can prevent you from sharing this with others.





## REFLECTION

In this generation, is it possible for unmarried people to abstain or for married people to be faithful to their partner?

## EXERCISE

1. Sexual abstinence means...
  - A. Avoiding kissing
  - B. Avoiding sexual intercourse
  - C. Not being in a relationship
  - D. Avoiding flirting
  
2. A condom is more effective than abstinence in avoiding unwanted pregnancy, Sexually Transmitted Infections (STDs) including HIV/AIDS.
  - A. True B. False
  
3. Sexual abuse occurs when...
  - A. two people agree to have sex
  - B. a person is used as a sexual object without consent

- C. when a person is physically touched
  - D. sexual relations occur between unmarried people
4. Sexual abuse and sexual harassment are different sides of a single coin?
- A. True B. False
5. One cannot avoid being sexually abused by...
- A. Watching out for unwanted visitors
  - B. Walking alone in unknown places
  - C. Predicting and avoiding the harasser
  - D. Always being assertive
6. Memories of traumatic events can cause anger in an adolescent. A.
- True B. False
7. Sexuality must be understood beyond physical relationships and reproduction.
- A. True B. False
8. Which of the following is true?
- A. Female partners determine sex of a baby
  - B. Sex education can lead to indulgence in sexual experimentation
  - C. Nocturnal emissions make men frail
  - D. Menstruation is unhealthy and dirty
  - E. Condoms are not as effective as abstinence in birth control

## CHAPTER FIVE

### ANGER MANAGEMENT AND EMOTIONAL AWARENESS

#### Introduction

Failure to manage anger and emotions has led to many people getting involved in either go on to infect others (those who were infected unknowingly) or blaming themselves of what they are going through. Let us therefore go through some of the stages in managing anger.

As you reflect on your on situations, you should bear in your mind that anger involves the following:

- We become easily angry when we are highly stressed
- We are not always angry for the reasons we think
- We often get angry when we see a trait in others we do not like in ourselves
- Underneath many current angers are old traumas, hurts and disappointments
- We get angry when a current event brings up an old unresolved situation from the past

Let us now define anger.

Collier's Dictionary defines anger as '...a feeling of displeasure resulting from injury, mistreatment, opposition, etc., and usually showing itself in a desire to fight back at the supposed cause of this feeling...' The dictionary goes on to look at various words which relate to anger and points out that, '...anger is broadly applicable to feelings of resentful or revengeful displeasure...'

Anger is generally defined as a negative emotional reaction associated with other bad feelings such as fear, disgust, shame, irritability, outrage, hostility and even violence.

### **Causes of anger**

Certain characteristics make us prone to anger. Some of these are:

- A deep belief that our way is the only way
- A deep fear of being wrong
- A need to control others
- An inability to say, “I don’t know” and “ I was wrong”
- Fear of hearing new information that threatens our beliefs
- Fear of letting go. Sticking to the familiar. Being rigid.
- Pre-occupied with winning. Approval from others
- A need to always be seen as tough, powerful and strong
- Pride at always being rational and logical
- Uncomfortable with expression of feelings
- Fear of being vulnerable
- Worrying or brooding about personal problems
- Memories of traumatic or enraging events

### **Levels of anger**

There are three levels of anger and these are;

- Level 1: Irritation, Annoyance, Frustration, Rage then Fury
- Level 2: As we go towards fury, we experience increased levels of anger
- Level 3: Pile up of irritations, annoyance, frustrations, leads to higher levels of anger

### **Benefits of Anger**

- Evidence that we feel strongly about something
- Helps us to become more aware of what we strongly feel about
- Helps us to know which emotional needs are important to us

### **Negative Effects of Anger**

- Disrupts and destroys relationships
- Affects thinking and behaviour patterns
- Leads to poor decisions
- High blood pressure
- Heart problems
- Headaches, skin disorders and digestive problems
- Poor morale, high staff turnover
- Anxiety and depression

### **Why do people choose anger?**

The following are some of the reasons people choose anger;

- Habit
- Control
- Get what we want
- Hide real feelings
- Get others to help us
- Avoid responsibility
- Protection against real or imagined threats

### **Expression of anger**

Anger is expressed in various ways:

- Passive-aggressiveness; Suppression and turning inward.
- Active-aggressiveness; External displacement and direction at the source of the threat

### **Recognising Anger**

The physical responses to anger include:

- Increased muscle tension
- Accelerated heart beat
- Rapid breathing

- Dry mouth
- Digestive irregularities
- Increased body temperature
- Trembling
- Raised tone of voice

Anger can be dealt with either **destructively** (passive-aggression or active aggression) or **constructively** (awareness, time-out, selecting a way, appropriateness, take responsibility for your emotions and calming thoughts).

### **Anger Management and Emotional Intelligence**

An Emotionally Intelligent Person is one who:

- is aware of his/her own emotions
- can manage his/her emotions
- is aware of the emotions of other people
- has the ability to engage in a mutually satisfying relationship with another person

Anger Management enables us to become emotionally intelligent because we are able to manage our anger

Our growth towards the emotionally intelligent personality is slowed down by 2 major barriers which are:

- Anger
- Stress

### **DEVELOPING EMOTIONAL AWARENESS**

Emotional awareness means knowing what you are feeling and why. It's the ability to identify and express what you are feeling from moment to moment and to understand the connection between your feelings and your actions.

Emotional awareness also allows you to understand what others are feeling and to empathize with them.

**Emotional awareness involves the ability to:**

- Recognize your moment-to-moment emotional experience
- Handle all of your emotions without becoming overwhelmed

**Why emotional awareness matters**

Have you ever felt that depression, anxiety, or anger was controlling you? Do you often act impulsively, doing or saying things you know you shouldn't, only to regret it later? Do you feel disconnected from your feelings or emotionally numb? Do you have a hard time communicating with others and forming meaningful connections? Do you feel like your life is an emotional rollercoaster—all extremes and no balance? All of these challenges are related to a breakdown in emotional awareness.

Our emotions, not our thoughts, motivate us. Without an awareness of what you're feeling, it's impossible to fully understand your own behaviour, appropriately manage your emotions and actions, and accurately "read" the wants and needs of others.

**Emotional awareness helps you:**

- Recognize who you are: what you like, what you don't like, and what you need
- Understand and empathize with others
- Communicate clearly and effectively
- Make wise decisions based on the things that are most important to you
- Get motivated and take action to meet goals
- Build strong, healthy, and rewarding relationships

## HOW TO PUT THINGS IN BALANCE WHEN YOU ARE EMOTIONALLY AFFECTED

SITUATION (HOW YOU FEEL)	SOLUTION (WHAT TO DO)
<b>My life is an emotional rollercoaster</b>	Life doesn't have to be about high highs and low lows. Becoming more in touch with your emotions can help moderate the extreme up and down swings.
<b>I can't seem to get ahead, even though I'm smart and work hard</b>	Sometimes, getting ahead at your career requires more than book smarts and effort. Becoming more emotionally aware can help you communicate better and advance your position.
<b>People call me a robot</b>	There is such thing as <i>too</i> much control over emotions. If you've reined yourself in so much that you show no emotion whatsoever, you might benefit from becoming more balanced with your feelings.
<b>I have no energy</b>	Got the blahs? When there is nothing physically wrong with you, and you still don't have any 'get up and go,' you might be depressed. When you are more emotionally aware, you can tune into these feelings and make a change for the better.



<b>The people I'm interested in aren't interested in me</b>	Relationships are hard, but you can have an easier time meeting people and creating lasting bonds when you become more emotionally aware.
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**Evaluating your emotional awareness**

Although emotional awareness is the basis of emotional health, good communication, and solid relationships, many people remain relatively unacquainted with their core emotional experience. It is surprising how few people can easily answer the question: “What are you experiencing emotionally?”

**What is your level of emotional awareness?**

- Can you tolerate strong feelings, including anger, sadness, fear, disgust, and joy?
- Do you feel your emotions in your body? If you are sad or mad, do you experience physical sensations in places like your stomach and chest?

- Do you ever make decisions based on “gut feelings” or use your emotions to guide your decisions? When your body signals that something is wrong (stomach tightening, hair standing on end) do you trust it?
- Are you comfortable with all of your emotions? Do you allow yourself to feel anger, sadness, or fear without being judgmental or trying to suppress them?
- Do you pay attention to your every-changing emotional experience? Do you notice a variety of emotions throughout the day or are you stuck in only one or two emotions?
- Are you comfortable talking about your emotions? Do you communicate your feelings honestly?
- Do you feel that, in general, others understand and empathize with your feelings? Are you comfortable with others knowing your emotions?
- Are you sensitive to the emotions of others? Is it relatively easy for you to pick up on what other people are feeling and put yourself in their shoes?

If you didn't answer “usually” or even “sometimes” to most of these questions, you're not alone. Most people are not emotionally aware, but you can be, even if you have avoided some of your feelings for a long time.

### **When we can't manage stress, emotions may overwhelm us**

You can't manage emotions until you know how to manage stress. Emotions are unpredictable. We never know what will trigger an emotional response, and when stress strikes, we don't always have the time or opportunity to get back into balance by going for a run, for example, or taking a relaxing bath. What you need are tools that allow you to manage stress quickly and in the moment.

### **Emotional awareness depends on your ability to rapidly relieve stress**

The ability to quickly reduce stress allows you to safely face strong emotions, confident in the knowledge that you'll be able to stay calm and in control—even when something upsetting happens. Once you know how to calm yourself down once you start to feel overwhelmed, you can begin to explore the emotions that seem uncomfortable or even frightening.

## **Emotion is a double-edged sword that is meant to help but can also hurt**

If you're a person who doesn't know how to manage your emotions, or have lived with such a person, feelings can seem frightening and overwhelming. Fear and helplessness may cause you to freeze, act out, or shut down—inhibiting your ability to think rationally and causing you to say and do things you later regret.

## **Common ways of controlling or avoiding uncomfortable emotions**

Many addictive and inappropriate behaviours are rooted in an inability to take emotionally stressful situations in your stride. Instead, you may try to control or avoid difficult emotions by:

- **Distracting yourself** with obsessive thoughts, escapist fantasies, mindless entertainment, and addictive behaviours. Watching television for hours, playing computer games, and surfing the Internet are common ways we avoid dealing with our feelings.
- **Sticking with one emotional response** that you feel comfortable with, no matter what the situation requires. For example, constantly joking around to cover up insecurities or getting angry all the time to avoid feeling frightened and sad.
- **Shutting down or shutting out intense emotions.** If you feel overwhelmed by your emotions, you may cope by numbing yourself. You may feel completely disconnected from your emotions, like you no longer have feelings at all.

## **The upside of unpleasant emotions**

- **Anger can be both deadly and restorative.** Out-of-control anger can run amok endangering others and ourselves. But anger can also protect and preserve life by mobilizing us and inspiring determination and creative action.
- **Sadness can lead to depression but also supports emotional healing.** Sadness is a call to slow down, stop thinking and surrender to what we are experiencing emotionally.

Sadness asks us to open up, trust and allow ourselves to be vulnerable in order to heal and recover from loss.

- **Fear can be debilitating but fear also triggers lifesaving reactions.** Fear is a deeply rooted emotion—often the cause of chronic anger or depression. Overwhelming fear can be a barrier that separates us from others, but fear also supports life by signaling danger and triggering life-preserving action.

### **Why avoiding unpleasant emotions isn't the answer**

We are all born with a capacity to freely experience the full range of human emotions—including joy, anger, sadness, and fear. Yet many people are disconnected from some or all of their feelings.

People who were traumatized in early life often disconnect from their emotions and the physical feelings they evoke. But when you try to avoid pain and discomfort, your emotions become distorted, displaced, and stifled. You lose touch with your emotions when you attempt to *control* or *avoid* them, rather than *experience* them.

### **The consequences of avoiding your emotions:**

- **You don't know yourself.** This is one of the most important consequences. It includes understanding why you react to different situations, how much or how little things mean to you, and the difference between what you think you want and what you really need.
- **You lose the good, along with the bad.** When you shut down negative feelings like anger, fear, or sadness, you also shut down your ability to experience positive feelings such as joy, love, and happiness.
- **It's exhausting.** You can distort and numb emotions, but you can't eliminate them entirely. It takes a lot of energy to avoid having an authentic emotional experience and keep your feelings suppressed. The effort leaves you stressed and drained.
- **It damages your relationships.** The more you distance yourself from your feelings, the more distant you become from others, as well as yourself. You lose the ability to build strong relationships and communicate effectively, both of which depend on being in touch with your emotions.

### **By avoiding emotions we dislike, we distance ourselves from pleasant emotions**

When we disconnect from emotions we dislike – emotions that we find uncomfortable or overwhelming - we automatically shut down intensely positive emotions like joy, laughter, and playfulness that sustain us in difficult and challenging times. We can overcome loss and great challenges, but only if we retain our ability to experience joy. These pleasant, uplifting emotions remind us in the worst of times that life is worthwhile and can be wonderful as well as painful.

### **Make friends with all your emotions**

If you've never learned how to manage stress, the idea of reconnecting to unpleasant emotions may be uncomfortable. But even traumatized people can heal by learning to change the way they experience and respond to their emotions.

The process of raising emotional awareness involves reconnecting with all of the core emotions, including anger, sadness, fear, disgust, surprise, and joy via a process of self-healing. As you start this process, keep the following facts in mind:

### **Emotions quickly come and go, if you let them**

You may be worried that once you reconnect to the emotions you've been avoiding, you'll be stuck with them forever, but that's not so. When we don't obsess about our emotions, even the most painful and difficult feelings subside and lose their power to control our attention.

When our feelings are freed, the core emotions of anger, sadness, fear, and joy quickly come and go. Throughout the day, you'll see, read, or hear something that momentarily triggers a strong feeling of some sort. But if you don't focus on the feeling, it won't last, and a different emotion will soon take its place.

### **Your body can clue you in to your emotions**

Our emotions are closely aligned to physical sensations in our bodies. When you experience a strong emotion, you probably also feel it somewhere in your body. By paying attention to these physical sensations, you can understand your emotions better. For example, if your stomach tightens up every time you spend time with a particular person, you can conclude that you feel uncomfortable in their presence.

With the exception of a headache, physical feelings are usually experienced somewhere *below the bridge of the nose*. Examples include:

- Sensations in your stomach
- Tension in your muscles
- Subtle urges to move body parts
- Flashes of insight or “gut feelings”

It can be important to end this section with some words from the Holy Scriptures:

**“He that is soon angry dealeth foolishly” Proverbs 14:17a**



### **REFLECTION**

How do you handle situations where you experience angry feelings? What mostly lead you to get angry? Is it possible to avoid such situations?

### **EXERCISE**

1. Which of the following are the benefits of anger?
  - A. Evidence that we feel strongly about something
  - B. Helps us to become more aware of what we strongly feel about
  - C. Helps us to know which emotional needs are important to us

- D. Disrupts and destroys relationships
2. There are two major barriers to emotional intelligence. These are;  
A. Stress B. Laughter C. Jokes D. Anger
  3. Anger can be dealt with either destructively through....  
A. passive-aggression B. Active aggression C. Awareness D. Selecting a way
  4. Anger can be recognised physically through four of the following;  
A. Accelerated heart beat  
B. Rapid breathing  
C. Eating a lot  
D. Dry mouth  
E. Getting low grades  
F. Digestive irregularities
  5. Which of the following are the reasons people choose anger;  
A. Get what we want  
B. Expressing confidence  
C. Hide real feelings  
D. Showing responsibility  
E. Get others to help us

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **COPING WITH STRESS AND ASSERTIVENESS**

#### **Tips of coping with stress**

After looking at anger, let us now shift to how to cope with stress. In any learning institution, learners undergo different situations which might lead to stress. It is important to be aware of how you can cope with stress so that you do not do wrong things which can lead you to sexual acts.

As you read this chapter, avoid some disturbances of phone calls and noise as these might even lead to stress before you even read. Some of the things you can do to cope with stress include the following;

- **Improve your Coping Skills**

Learn to relax, control breathing, combat negative thoughts, change your diet, meditate, exercise, do yoga, and think through problems, talk and share worries – the list is endless.

- **Keep an Eye on Personal Stress**

See what you can do to remove or reduce sources of pressure in your life. Meanwhile, deal with the effects of stress by relaxing more and using other, positive coping methods.

- **Set realistic goals**

Setting realistic, achievable goals is a good way of keeping your spirits up and moving forward. Don't feel bad if you have to change your plans along the way as long as you're clear on the reasons why. Remember to congratulate yourself every time a goal is reached!

- **Work with others**

### **Get involved**

Don't stand on the side-lines! Find a way to get involved and make a contribution, however little, at home, at work or in the community. People are often happiest when helping others.

### **Listen Up**

Often, the very best help you can give is simply to encourage friends to talk and then listen in a supportive way.

Try not to interrupt too much and don't feel that you have to give advice or solve their problems for them.

- **Go outside**

### **Go for Green**

Get out for a walk or bike ride. Take a detour through the park on your way to class/work. To get the full effect and benefits of the outdoors, you actually have to be out in it, not just looking out at it.

### **Change the Scene**



A change of scene can help improve our mood, clear our heads and make it easier to see negative or trouble-some thoughts for what they are. Try moving to a different room for a while or, even better, go out for a walk or meet a friend.

- **Communicate**

### **Talk it Out**

Everyone can feel low, anxious or unable to cope from time to time. They're all normal responses to life's challenges. Asking for help is a sign of strength and can be the first step to solving a problem.

### **Keep in touch with friends and loved ones**

Close relationships have a huge impact on how we feel on a daily basis. A phone call, emails, or a few texts, can help us feel connected to those we love.

- **Volunteer**

### **Do good**

Do something to help someone else. Random acts of kindness help others but also make us feel good and the effects stay with us. We are often happiest when doing something for others.

### **Keep Active**

Physical activity is a proven way to keep you mentally well. Exercise makes us feel better immediately through the release of uplifting chemicals into our bodies.

Even just half an hour's brisk walk every other day can make all the difference. Going to the gym or taking up a sport are also great ways to meet new people and to see new places and things.

- **Keep Your Body Physically Healthy**

### **Sleep Well**

Aim for 7-9 hours of shut-eye every night.

### **Drink sensibly**

Even though it might make you feel good in the short term, alcohol is a depressant drug.

Avoiding alcohol is crucial for both your emotional and physical health.

### **Eat well**

A balanced diet is essential to maintaining good mental health. A growing body of research shows direct links between what we eat and how we feel.

### **Different ways of relaxing**

- Go for a walk.
- Spend time in nature.
- Call a good friend.
- Sweat out tension with a good workout.
- Write in your journal.
- Take a long bath.
- Light scented candles
- Savour a warm cup of coffee or tea.
- Play with a pet.
- Work in your garden.
- Get a massage.
- Curl up with a good book.
- Listen to music.
- Watch a comedy
- Pray
- Kite Model
- Visualization

Let us also look at the unhealthy ways of relaxing.

The following are some of the unhealthy ways of relaxing. Many people have tried them and ended up over using them resulting into more damage;

- Smoking
- Drinking too much
- Overeating or under eating
- Zoning out for hours in front of the TV or computer
- Withdrawing from friends, family, and activities

- Using pills or drugs to relax
- Sleeping too much
- Procrastinating
- Filling up every minute of the day to avoid facing problems
- Taking out your stress on others (lashing out, angry outbursts, physical violence)

### **Assertiveness**

You recall that we discussed something on assertiveness in chapter one. This section tries to differentiate in detail behaviour in three broad ways and relate them to assertiveness. Let us start by looking at the three ways that behaviour is expressed. These three are; **Passive, Aggressive and Assertive (PAA)**. For instance; the behaviour attitudes can be expressed as follows;

**Passive attitude** – “I am not important other people are important”

**Aggressive attitude:** “I am important and you are not”

**Assertive attitude:** “I am important and you are also important”

As stated in chapter one, assertiveness is;

- Being able to express yourself without violating the rights of others.
- Ability to communicate your views directly in an open and honest manner.

Let us now give some characteristics of an assertive person. **An assertive person;**

- Relates meaningfully with people around them.
- Has a sense of worth and believes in his/her right to enjoy life whilst according the same to the next person. As you respect your own personal space, you are mindful of the fact that this is also necessary for the other person. You are in win-win situation.

An assertive person has assertive rights also. These include;

- The right to your own values, beliefs, opinions and emotions. You do not have to be apologetic about it.
- The right not to justify or explain your actions or feelings to others.
- The right to tell others how you want to be treated
- The right to say no
- The right to change your mind
- The right to like and love yourself despite your imperfections

- The right to change, enhance or develop your life in a way that you choose
- The right to enjoy your successes without feeling bad about it
- The right to respect other people and their rights
- The right not to take responsibility for the behaviour of other adults.

An assertive person will have the following benefits;

- Helps you to develop as a person – you can set your own goals and be able to pursue them.
- You do not have to explain yourself to people.
- Helps other people to understand you.
- It helps you to appreciate yourself

Even though being assertive is desirable, there are a number of things that hinder people from developing assertiveness skills. Below are some of them.

- Fear of causing a fuss
- Cultural orientation, it is better to conform than to be seen to be different
- Gender roles and expectations; Women who are assertive are usually seen in negative light compared to their male counterparts.
- Anxious about embarrassing others by saying what we want.

In ending this unit and section we can safely say that an emotionally intelligent person gets the balance between submission and aggression right. That is what assertiveness is all about. It is also important to note that assertiveness is not always the best way to get what you want or get things done. In that case consider the appropriateness of being assertive. Knowing when and where to be assertive is as important as knowing how to be assertive.

**Passiveness** makes you a victim and a target of oppression. You surrender yourself to chance and luck.

**Aggressiveness** predisposes you to confrontations. It makes you infringe on other people's rights.

**Assertiveness** is an active approach to life as;

- it allows you to receive attention and respect
- it provides the best opportunity to resolve conflicts satisfactorily

- it boosts self- esteem and confidence
- it allows you to function in the ego state
- Assertiveness is clearly summarized by the word HARD (Honest, Appropriate, Respectful, Direct). It means you are honest, appropriate, respectful and direct in your interactions with others.

**YOU CAN NOW SAY WITH JOY THAT;**

- ✓ I will never put myself down.
- ✓ I will act with confidence even if I do not actually feel confident
- ✓ I have taken a stand not to be always apologizing even for things I am not responsible for.
- ✓ From now onwards I will accept compliments without feeling I do not deserve them.

**God bless you as you use these skills to achieve more in this life of many challenges due to the advent of HIV and AIDS**



**REFLECTION**

If you relate yourself to passive, aggressive and assertive attitudes, which one do you mostly fall in? From what has been discussed so far, how do you define assertiveness then?

**EXERCISE**

1. Which of the following does not underscore the importance of being assertive?
  - A. It leads to appreciation of oneself
  - B. It helps other people understand you

- C. It helps one's personal development
  - D. It makes one to explain themselves to others
2. Intellect, influence, intimacy, integrity and independence constitutes the five 'I's of intellectual development.
- A. True B. False
3. Choose four from the following list as ways of relaxing;
- A. Go for a walk.
  - B. Spend time in nature.
  - C. Sleep in bed alone
  - D. Call a good friend.
  - E. Go to a noise place
  - F. Write in your journal.
4. Setting realistic, achievable goals is a good way of keeping your spirits up and moving forward, true or false?
- A. True      B.      False

## **CONCLUSION**

Life skills programs aim to foster positive behaviours across this range of psycho-social skills, and to change unacceptable behaviours learned early, which may translate into inappropriate and risky behaviour at a later stage of life. Life skills programs are one way of helping children and youth and their teachers to respond to situations requiring decisions which may affect their lives. Such skills are best learned through experiential activities which are learner centred and designed to help young people gain information, examine attitudes and practice skills. Therefore life skills education programs promote positive health choices, taking informed decisions, practicing healthy behaviours and recognizing and avoiding risky situations and behaviours.

Life skills programs provide a variety of exercises and activities in which children do something and then process the experience together, generalizing about what they learned and ideally, after much practice in the programs, attempt to apply it to future real life situations. Life skills therefore help young people to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life and to respond to the difficulties encountered in everyday life. They help children become socially and psychologically competent and to function confidently and competently with themselves, with other people and with the community.

One of the most important skills young people need to acquire is the ability to analyze situations, the behaviour of individuals, and the consequences of their own actions, prior to engaging in those actions. They also need to learn how to avoid certain situations. They need to understand what risky behaviour entails and how to manage or avoid risky situations.

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