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Level - UP

**Setting the ground for a multi-level approach on developing soft skills
in Higher Education**

Deliverable: O2

‘Life Skills 101 Course Guidebook’

Responsible (IO, partner): IO2, University of Cyprus

Dissemination level		
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CO	Confidential, only for members of the consortium (including the Commission Services)	
CI	Classified, information as referred to in Commission Decision 2001/844/EC	

First Edition

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LIFE SKILLS 101

INTELLECTUAL OUTPUT	IO2: LIFE SKILLS 101. COURSE GUIDEBOOK		
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legal disclaimer

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course overview

People in their daily lives look for ways to become successful and happy, but often they face obstacles to do so. So, what are the secrets to a successful life? What are the characteristics of successful people? What skills can enhance people's quality of life and contribute to coping with the daily difficulties they face, as well as their professional development?

The aim of this course is to provide answers to the above questions and to motivate students to grow through self-awareness and development of a personal development plan. This course covers cutting-edge research on how people acquire self-regulatory skills enabling them to achieve personal, academic, and professional goals. Students will learn, how these discoveries relate to needs, cognitions, emotions, and behaviors, and what tools can be used to achieve their goals.

This course focuses on introducing transversal or life skills, such as the ability to set goals and achieve them, emotion regulation, conflict resolution, assertiveness, creativity etc. The aim is to help students understand how, through the acquisition of these skills, they can develop flexibility, adaptability, and manage challenges of everyday life.

The course focuses on the transition from traditionally focused teaching of purely theoretical content, to a scientifically supported education oriented towards the development of skills, knowledge, and ways of application in everyday life. In the context of this methodology, students will have the opportunity to evaluate their skills and to be trained in a systematic self-observation of their behavior. More specifically, the course will be delivered in a way that will help students apply their knowledge in their daily lives through applied personal development exercises. At the same time, as they acquire new knowledge, students will have the opportunity to understand the basic elements that consist of the specific skills, to debunk myths, as well as to link this knowledge with their personal and professional development, by creating an individual self-development plan.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

It is expected that upon completion of the seminar, learners will be able to:

1. Recognize major theoretical perspectives, and figures in psychology and their link to trends in contemporary research.
2. Use basic psychological terminology, concepts, and theories related to soft skills.
3. Explain why each skill is important and how it is linked to success.
4. Predict how individual differences influence skills competence.
5. Identify principal methods and types of questions that emerge in specific content domains.
6. Describe examples of relevant and practical applications of these skills to everyday life.

LAYING THE FOUNDATION; SELF-REGULATION AS A CORE SOFT SKILL

Lesson 1



90 minutes



Activity



Group Discussion



Homework

OVERVIEW

This lesson sheds light on the key ability of the human species to regulate behaviors using self-reflection and self-management.

Through this course we will examine how self-regulation contributes to individuals' autonomous growth, wellbeing, in managing employability and maintaining life success.

LESSON WALKTHROUGH

1. Which are the factors leading to success? Success' factors can be predetermined (e.g. genes, prior experience) and modifiable (e.g. skills, attitudes, beliefs, knowledge).

[Lyubomirsky, S., Sheldon, K. M., & Schkade, D. \(2005\). Pursuing happiness: The architecture of sustainable change. Review of general psychology, 9\(2\), 111-131.](#)

2. To improve success rates, we can alter the 'modifiable' factors. How? Through Self-regulation. Self-regulation (SR) is a 'metaskill' that allows us to understand and manage our behavior. Self-regulation is a higher skill that activates other skills.

[Fujita, K. \(2011\). On conceptualizing self-control as more than the effortful inhibition of impulses. Personality and social psychology review, 15\(4\), 352-366.](#)

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Through this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Define Self-regulation as part of self-growth and describe its key components.
2. List the positive effects of self-regulation, enhancement, and inhibiting factors.
3. Reflect on their own level of competence for self-regulation skills.
4. Describe examples of self-regulation into everyday life.

[Ludwig, V. U., Brown, K. W., & Brewer, J. A. \(2020\). Self-regulation without force: Can awareness leverage reward to drive behavior change?. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 15\(6\), 1382-1399.](#)

[Inzlicht, M., Werner, K. M., Briskin, J. L., & Roberts, B. W. \(2021\). Integrating models of self-regulation. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 72, 319-345.](#)

3. Two of SR main components are a) Self-awareness and b) self-management. During this course we will present aspects of both components, but with special emphasis on self-awareness development. Self-awareness is our unique ability as humans to think about our own thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. Self-management is the ability to change thinking patterns and behaviors and regulate emotions.

Reeve, J. (2009). *Understanding motivation and emotion*, 5th ed. John Wiley & Sons.

Shah, J. Y., & Gardner, W. L. (Eds.). (2008). *Handbook of motivation science*. Guilford Press.

Peterson, C., & Seligman, M. E. (2004). *Character strengths and virtues: A handbook and classification* (Vol. 1). Oxford University Press.

Vohs, K. D., & Baumeister, R. F. (Eds.). (2016). *Handbook of self-regulation: Research, theory, and applications*. Guilford Publications.

[Duckworth, A. L. \(2011\). The significance of self-control. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 108\(7\), 2639-2640.](#)

4. Self-Regulation is associated with better life outcomes (physical health, adjustment, mental health, social relationships etc.)

[Duckworth, A. L. \(2011\). The significance of self-control. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 108\(7\), 2639-2640.](#)

[Duckworth, A. L., & Seligman, M. E. \(2017\). The science and practice of self-control. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 12\(5\), 715-718](#)

Peterson, C., & Seligman, M. E. (2004). *Character strengths and virtues: A handbook and classification* (Vol. 1). Oxford University Press.

5. Challenges in self-regulation. Developing self-regulation

TAKE HOME MESSAGE

Success is not predetermined, since there are factors that impact our success, and they are modifiable. These factors can be changed through self-awareness and self-management.

is an ongoing process. Additionally, due to capacity limits, self-regulatory challenges are inevitable sometimes. Self-compassion is a critical aspect of self-regulation development process.

[Muraven, M., & Baumeister, R. F. \(2000\). Self-regulation and depletion of limited resources: Does self-control resemble a muscle?. *Psychological bulletin*, 126\(2\), 247.](#)

[Biber, D. D., & Ellis, R. \(2019\). The effect of self-compassion on the self-regulation of health behaviors: A systematic review. *Journal of Health Psychology*, 24\(14\), 2060-2071.](#)

6. Which self-regulation strategies are the most adaptive? It depends on the context. Introducing the concept of 'Self-regulatory flexibility'.

[Hennecke, M., Czikmanti, T., & Brandstätter, V. \(2019\). Doing despite disliking: Self-regulatory strategies in everyday aversive activities. *European Journal of Personality*, 33\(1\), 104-128.](#)

[Bürgler, S., Hoyle, R. H., & Hennecke, M. \(2020\). Flexibility in using self-regulatory strategies to manage self-control conflicts: The role of metacognitive knowledge, strategy repertoire, and feedback monitoring. *European Journal of Personality*, 0890207021992907.](#)

[Bonanno, G. A., & Burton, C. L. \(2013\). Regulatory flexibility: An individual differences perspective on coping and emotion regulation. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 8\(6\), 591-612.](#)

7. The aim of this course is to help participants increase one of the two SR components: 'Self-awareness'. Introducing "Mindfulness" as moment-to-moment, non-judgmental awareness.

[Shapiro, S. L., Carlson, L. E., Astin, J. A., & Freedman, B. \(2006\). Mechanisms of mindfulness. *Journal of clinical psychology*, 62\(3\), 373-386.](#)

[Kabat-Zinn, J. \(2015\). Mindfulness. *Mindfulness*, 6\(6\), 1481-1483.](#)

[Kabat-Zinn, J. \(2012\). *Mindfulness for beginners: Reclaiming the present moment—and your life*.](#)

8. POST LESSON ACTIVITIES

Participants fill self-assessment and homework activity 1 (see Activity 1 in appendices). Instructors fill the fidelity questionnaire (see Fidelity questionnaire in appendices).

VALUES AND COMMITTED ACTIONS TOWARDS THEM

Lesson 2



180 minutes



Activity



Group Discussion

OVERVIEW

This lesson focuses on presenting the core guiding principles that shape what is good, desirable, or important in our daily life.

Additionally, it introduces learners on how to translate these guiding values into meaningful and consistent actions.

LESSON WALKTHROUGH

1. What Values are? Values are 'desired qualities of behaviour' (What sort of employee, manager, co-worker, friend, partner etc.).

Boniwell, I. (2012). Positive Psychology In A Nutshell: The Science Of Happiness: The Science of Happiness. McGraw-Hill Education (UK).

Harris, R. (2009). ACT made simple: An easy-to-read primer on acceptance and commitment therapy. New Harbinger Publications

Luoma, J. B., Hayes, S. C., & Walser, R. D. (2007). Learning ACT: An acceptance & commitment therapy skills-training manual for therapists. New Harbinger Publications.

2. [Why values are important for our lives?](#) Discuss the importance of values in our lives and how and why following

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Through this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Describe what values are.
2. Define their own values.
3. Distinguish values from goals.
4. Understand the positive impact of values and goal setting in our lives.
5. Reflect on their own level of competence for goal setting skills

TAKE HOME MESSAGE

Values are like our built-in Compass that help us to understand what really matters in our life.

Becoming aware of our values can inform our life goals and align our goal-directed behavior with happier and more successful life

From [Getting Clear About Values](#) – Working with ACT)

our values benefits our lives.

Harris, R. (2009). ACT made simple: An easy-to-read primer on acceptance and commitment therapy. New Harbinger Publications

Luoma, J. B., Hayes, S. C., & Walser, R. D. (2007). Learning ACT: An acceptance & commitment therapy skills-training manual for therapists. New Harbinger

3. Values Clarification. Using an activity to help students identify their own values and where they stand now:

[CLARIFYING YOUR VALUES](#) (Adapted From Tobias Lundgren's Bull's Eye Worksheet)

[A Quick Look at Your Values](#)

4. Values are not goals. Values cannot be achieved because they are moment to moment choices. However, we can set goals towards them. Introducing 'SMART goals'.

Doran, G. T. (1981). There's a SMART way to write management's goals and objectives. Management review, 70(11), 35-36.

Boniwell, I. (2012). Positive Psychology In A Nutshell: The Science Of Happiness: The Science of Happiness. McGraw-Hill Education (UK).

5. What does it mean if we are facing challenges to achieve a goal, we have set? Values-based goal setting and self-compassion are critical to handle failure.

[Terry, M. L., & Leary, M. R. \(2011\). Self-compassion, self-regulation, and health. Self and identity, 10\(3\), 352-362.](#)

[Neff, K. D., Hsieh, Y. P., & Dejitterat, K. \(2005\). Self-compassion, achievement goals, and coping with academic failure. Self and identity, 4\(3\), 263-287.](#)

Breines, J. G., & Chen, S. (2012). Self-compassion increases self-improvement motivation. Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 38(9), 1133-1143.

6. POST LESSON ACTIVITIES

Participants fill self-assessment and homework activity 1 (see Activity 2 in appendices).

Instructors fill the fidelity questionnaire (see Fidelity questionnaire in appendices).

IT IS THE WAY WE SEE THE WORLD; HUMAN COGNITION, BIASES AND PERSPECTIVE TAKING

Lesson 3



180 minutes



Activity



Group Discussion



Homework

OVERVIEW

We will briefly examine how different cognitive processes such as attention, memory and interpretation affect the way we interpret the world and how they are involved in our daily lives.

We will learn what 'unhelpful thinking styles' are and how these inflexible patterns of thinking affect our psychological and social well-being.

LESSON WALKTHROUGH

1. Human brain works as a processor that builds our reality. Reality is many times subjective because the brain is developed based on individual differences in biological basis, cultural setting, prior experiences, knowledge etc. Also, the human brain, despite its huge capacity, it has restrictions (e.g. attentional, perceptual, memory limits etc.). These restrictions are a result of evolution (imbalance of neocortex with limbic system/primary brain, but also subliminal processing for survival), but also due to ecological processing (the brain limits its processing in learned behaviors/familiar contexts).

Activities related to limits of cognitive processes

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uO8wpm9HSB0>

[The Invisible Gorilla: And Other Ways Our Intuitions Deceive Us](#)

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Through this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Identify the effects of cognitive processes and biases on wellbeing, happiness and success.
2. Explore how cognitive distortions differ from flexible thinking (perspective taking).
3. Discuss evidence-based interventions for combating cognitive distortions.
4. Reflect on examples of having inflexible thinking styles into everyday life.

Diener, E., & Biswas-Diener, R. (2008). *Happiness: Unlocking the mysteries of psychological wealth*. John Wiley & Sons

Roediger, H. L., & McDermott, K. B. (1995). Creating false memories: Remembering words not presented in lists. *Journal of experimental psychology: Learning, Memory, and Cognition*, 21(4), 803.

[Laliberte, E., Yim, H., Stone, B., & Dennis, S. J. \(2021\). The Fallacy of an Airtight Alibi: Understanding Human Memory for "Where" Using Experience Sampling. *Psychological Science*, 32\(6\), 944-951.](#)

Koriat, A., Goldsmith, M., & Pansky, A. (2000). Toward a psychology of memory accuracy. *Annual review of psychology*, 51(1), 481-537.

2. What does this mean? Cognitions (representations of the world) are the way we interpret and give meaning to the world. Due to limited capacity, the brain falls into many fallacies (biases, distortions, inflexible thinking patterns and hasty conclusions).

[Williams, C., & Garland, A. \(2002\). Identifying and challenging unhelpful thinking. *Advances in Psychiatric Treatment*, 8\(5\), 377-386.](#)

Yurica, C. L., & DiTomasso, R. A. (2005). Cognitive distortions. In *Encyclopedia of cognitive behavior therapy* (pp. 117-122). Springer, Boston, MA.

Compton, W. C., & Hoffman, E. (2019). *Positive psychology: The science of happiness and flourishing*. Sage Publications.

3. How can we stop that? By adopting a more flexible way of thinking meaning to not rush to get conclusions. 'Perspective taking' is a high order skill that allows us to self-reflect on our thoughts and additionally find alternative explanations. According to that approach there is no right or wrong, but multiple perspectives. We have the capacity to see alternative perspectives, through a voluntary process.

[Video and Group Discussion](#)

Studer, B., & Knecht, S. (2016). *Motivation: Theory, Neurobiology and Applications*. Academic Press.

Branch, & Willson, (2010). *Cognitive behavioural therapy for dummies*. John Wiley & Sons.

TAKE HOME MESSAGE

Cognitions (mental representations of the world) are the way we interpret the world.

All of us are susceptible to cognitive biases (systematic thinking errors). Cognitive biases can lead to errors in decisions and judgments and become detrimental for our happiness and success when misplaced.

Recognizing and minimizing the frequency of misplaced cognitive biases are linked to psychological well-being, and success.

Norton, P. J. (2012). Group cognitive-behavioral therapy of anxiety: A transdiagnostic treatment manual. Guilford Press.

Riggenbach, J. (2012). The CBT toolbox: A workbook for clients and clinicians. PESI Publishing & Media.

4. Flexible thinking is not positive thinking. A balanced, realistic perspective (not a predominantly positive) is linked to well-being, happiness, and success.

[Forgeard, M. J. C., & Seligman, M. E. P. \(2012\). Seeing the glass half full: A review of the causes and consequences of optimism. *Pratiques psychologiques*, 18\(2\), 107-120](#)

Branch, & Willson, (2010). Cognitive behavioural therapy for dummies. John Wiley & Sons.

Norton, P. J. (2008). An open trial of a transdiagnostic cognitive-behavioral group therapy for anxiety disorder. *Behavior Therapy*, 39(3), 242-250.

Norton, P. J. (2012). Group cognitive-behavioral therapy of anxiety: A transdiagnostic treatment manual. Guilford Press.

Riggenbach, J. (2012). The CBT toolbox: A workbook for clients and clinicians. PESI Publishing & Media.

[Shepperd, J. A., Waters, E. A., Weinstein, N. D., & Klein, W. M. \(2015\). A primer on unrealistic optimism. *Current directions in psychological science*, 24\(3\), 232-237.](#)

Scenario Activity adapted from [Mahalik, J. R. \(1999\). Incorporating a gender role strain perspective in assessing and treating men's cognitive distortions. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 30\(4\), 333.](#)

[Lilienfeld, S. O., Ammirati, R., & Landfield, K. \(2009\). Giving debiasing away: Can psychological research on correcting cognitive errors promote human welfare?. *Perspectives on psychological science*, 4\(4\), 390-398](#)

5. POST LESSON ACTIVITIES

Participants fill self-assessment and homework activity 1 (see Activity 3 in appendices).

Instructors fill the fidelity questionnaire (see Fidelity questionnaire in appendices).

GATHERING INFORMATION ON WHAT IS HAPPENING WITHIN OUR ENVIRONMENT; THE POWER OF EMOTIONS

Lesson 4



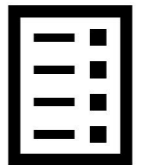
180 minutes



Activity



Group Discussion



Homework

OVERVIEW

We will address and define what exactly emotions are and their defining characteristics; what purpose and function do they serve; how emotions relate to thoughts, behaviors and mental health, as well as how emotion modulation is associated to individuals' wellbeing and success.

LESSON WALKTHROUGH

1. Define emotion as a multidimensional and multilayered construct (physiology, arousal, valence etc.). Make a distinction between emotional experience and emotional response.

Definition: [emotion – APA Dictionary of Psychology](#)

Hofmann, S. G. (2015). Emotion in therapy: From science to practice. Guilford Publications.

2. Describe how emotions are elicited and their association with cognitions and behaviors.

Rolls, E. T. (2005). Emotion explained. Oxford University Press, USA.

Rolls, E. T. (2007). Emotion elicited by primary reinforcers and following stimulus-reinforcement association learning. In The handbook of emotion elicitation and assessment,

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Through this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Define 'emotion' and describe its core components.
2. Describe the importance of emotions for human survival, and daily function.
3. Reflect on emotion beliefs and how these have implications for emotion regulation.
4. Discuss evidence-based interventions for emotion regulation.

137-157. Hofmann, S. G. (2015). *Emotion in therapy: From science to practice*. Guilford Publications.

[Moors, A. \(2009\). Theories of emotion causation: A review. *Cognition and emotion*, 23\(4\), 625-662.](#)

3. Emotions are key ingredients for our life. By feeling it means we are alive, also emotions can be key informants on what is happening in our context (survival, protection), through emotions we can communicate intentions to others, they act as motives to set and achieve goals. Emotions are neither good or bad. Each emotion has its own utility.

Boniwell, I. (2012). *Positive psychology in a nutshell: The science of happiness: The science of happiness*. McGraw-Hill Education (UK).

[Rimé, B. \(2009\). Emotion elicits the social sharing of emotion: Theory and empirical review. *Emotion review*, 1\(1\), 60-85.](#)

Hofmann, S. G. (2015). *Emotion in therapy: From science to practice*. Guilford Publications.

4. Emotions guide us to act, but they can be affected (frequency, intensity and duration) by thinking styles (cognitive biases) and behavioral habits (dysfunctional behavioral patterns). Introducing the concept of Emotion Regulation (ER) as a self-regulated skill for emotion modulation.

[Verduyn, P., & Lavrijsen, S. \(2015\). Which emotions last longest and why: The role of event importance and rumination. *Motivation and Emotion*, 39\(1\), 119-127.](#)

Leahy, R. L., Tirsch, D., & Napolitano, L. A. (2011). *Emotion regulation in psychotherapy: A practitioner's guide*. Guilford Press

Definition: [emotion regulation – APA Dictionary of Psychology](#)

5. Presenting scientific evidence on Adaptive and Maladaptive ER and highlighting the importance of flexible use of emotion regulation strategies based on contextual demand and individual differences.

[Aldao, A., Nolen-Hoeksema, S., & Schweizer, S. \(2010\). Emotion-regulation strategies across psychopathology: A meta-analytic review. *Clinical psychology review*, 30\(2\), 217-237.](#)

[Aldao, A., & Nolen-Hoeksema, S. \(2012\). The influence of](#)

TAKE HOME MESSAGE

Emotions are vital signals for our survival and growth.

Emotion's intensity, duration and usefulness depend on how we appraise and respond to them.

Flexible implementation of emotion regulation strategies in line with contextual demands is associated with better mental health, wellbeing and success.

[context on the implementation of adaptive emotion regulation strategies. *Behaviour research and therapy*, 50\(7-8\), 493-501.](#)

[Burton, C. L., & Bonanno, G. A. \(2016\). Measuring ability to enhance and suppress emotional expression: The Flexible Regulation of Emotional Expression \(FREE\) Scale. *Psychological assessment*, 28\(8\), 929.](#)

[Dixon-Gordon, K. L., Haliczner, L. A., Conkey, L. C., & Whalen, D. J. \(2018\). Difficulties in interpersonal emotion regulation: Initial development and validation of a self-report measure. *Journal of Psychopathology and Behavioral Assessment*, 40\(3\), 528-549.](#)

6. Stress can actually be good for us. It is an adaptive mechanism aiming to protect us from immediate physical danger and motivate us for behavioral activation. The key is to keep stress in an optimum level.

Weiten, Dunn, & Hammer, (2014). *Psychology applied to modern life: Adjustment in the 21st century*. Cengage Learning.

[Seegerstrom, S. C., & Miller, G. E. \(2004\). Psychological stress and the human immune system: a meta-analytic study of 30 years of inquiry. *Psychological bulletin*, 130\(4\), 601.](#)

7. Practical ways for stress management.

Craske, M. G., & Barlow, D. H. (2006). *Mastery of your anxiety and worry*. Oxford University Press.

Activity: [Learn Diaphragmatic Breathing](#)

Video and Group Discussion: [How to make Stress your friend](#)

8. POST LESSON ACTIVITIES

Participants fill self-assessment and homework activity 1 (see Activity 4 in appendices).

Instructors fill the fidelity questionnaire (see Fidelity questionnaire in appendices).

THE ART OF CONNECTING WITH OTHERS; SOCIAL SKILLS

Lesson 5



180 minutes



Activity



Group Discussion



Homework

OVERVIEW

Through this lesson learners will understand why social skills are important and how they impact our life.

In addition they will be introduced in core components of social skills that enable human interaction in an effective and positive manner.

LESSON WALKTHROUGH

1. Humans are social beings and social connection is related to survival, wellbeing and success.

[Holt-Lunstad, J., Smith, T. B., & Layton, J. B. \(2010\). Social relationships and mortality risk: a meta-analytic review. PLoS medicine, 7\(7\), e1000316](#)

[Holt-Lunstad, J., Smith, T. B., Baker, M., Harris, T., & Stephenson, D. \(2015\). Loneliness and social isolation as risk factors for mortality: a meta-analytic review. Perspectives on psychological science, 10\(2\), 227-237](#)

[Holt-Lunstad, J. \(2021\). The Major Health Implications of Social Connection. Current Directions in Psychological Science, 30\(3\), 251-259.](#)

[Geerling, D. M., & Diener, E. \(2020\). Effect size strengths in subjective well-being research. Applied Research in Quality](#)

[of Life, 15\(1\), 167-185.](#)

[Van Lange, P. A., & Columbus, S. \(2021\). Vitamin S: Why Is Social Contact, Even With Strangers, So Important to Well-Being?. Current Directions in Psychological Science, 09637214211002538](#)

2. Communication is a key element that enables us to interact with others. Individual differences lead to different communication styles and conflicts. Which are the key principles of effective communication? Everything matters in communication. Communication is based on multiple channels (verbal, nonverbal, prosody etc.)

[Anderson, C., Sharps, D. L., Soto, C. J., & John, O. P. \(2020\). People with disagreeable personalities \(selfish, combative, and manipulative\) do not have an advantage in pursuing power at work. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 117\(37\), 22780-22786.](#)

Solomon, D., & Theiss, J. (2012). Interpersonal communication: Putting theory into practice. Routledge.

Jones, R. (2013). Communication in the real world: An introduction to communication studies. The Saylor Foundation.

3. Key components of communication: 1) Active Listening, 2)Paraphrasing, 3)Clarifying, 4)Reflection, 5) Giving Feedback, 6)Non-verbal communication.

[McNaughton, D., Hamlin, D., McCarthy, J., Head-Reeves, D., & Schreiner, M. \(2008\). Learning to listen: Teaching an active listening strategy to preservice education professionals. Topics in Early Childhood Special Education, 27\(4\), 223-231.](#)

[Weger Jr, H., Castle Bell, G., Minei, E. M., & Robinson, M. C. \(2014\). The relative effectiveness of active listening in initial interactions. International Journal of Listening, 28\(1\), 13-31.](#)

McKay, M., Davis, M., & Fanning, P. (2009). Messages: The communication skills book. New Harbinger Publications.

4. How can we build and maintain healthy social interactions with others? How to achieve that? A) Clear Communication: when you are not sure about something, ask, when you need something, ask. B) Manage conflicts in a non-violent way, meaning to transfer messages in an impactful way, that is respectful to others. If we don't do that probably the other will focus on our emotions or disregard instead of the message. C) Be assertive (How to disagree and express a different opinion while you show validation, and respect to others).

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Through this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Describe why being social is good for us.
2. List the key components of a good social interaction.
3. Use techniques of effective communication in daily life problems.

TAKE HOME MESSAGE

When we communicate, we often focus on verbal communication. However, communication is based on multiple channels (verbal, non-verbal, prosody etc.).

Additionally, effective communication is more about listening instead of what we say.

Maintaining good social interactions/ relationships is about making a win-win situation.

Anyone can be an effective negotiator. Make it a win-win situation.

[Kang, S. K., Galinsky, A. D., Kray, L. J., & Shirako, A. \(2015\). Power affects performance when the pressure is on: Evidence for low-power threat and high-power lift. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 41\(5\), 726-735.](#)

Solomon, D., & Theiss, J. (2012). *Interpersonal communication: Putting theory into practice*. Routledge.

Jones, R. (2013). *Communication in the real world: An introduction to communication studies*. The Saylor Foundation

McKay, M., Davis, M., & Fanning, P. (2009). *Messages: The communication skills book*. New Harbinger Publications.

5. POST LESSON ACTIVITIES

Participants fill self-assessment and homework activity 1 (see Activity 5 in appendices).

Instructors fill the fidelity questionnaire (see Fidelity questionnaire in appendices).

SEEING PROBLEMS AS OPPORTUNITIES; CRITICAL THINKING, ANALYTICAL REASONING, AND PROBLEM-SOLVING SKILLS

Lesson 6



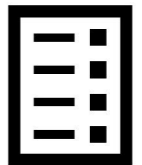
180 minutes



Activity



Group Discussion



Homework

OVERVIEW

We will focus on high order mental processes by which individuals attempt to choose between alternatives in order to overcome difficulties.

LESSON WALKTHROUGH

1. Critical thinking is a key component for making smart decisions and solving problems and overcoming confirmation Bias

Activity: [Denton, A., W. & Vrantsidis, T. \(2018\).](#)

[Wilkinson, T. J., Dik, B. J., & Tix, A. P. \(2008\). The Critical Thinking Lab: Developing Student Skills Through Practical Application. *Teaching Critical Thinking in Psychology: A Handbook of Best Practices*, 263-265.](#)

[Lilienfeld, S. O., Ammirati, R., & Landfield, K. \(2009\). Giving debiasing away: Can psychological research on correcting cognitive errors promote human welfare?. *Perspectives on psychological science*, 4\(4\), 390-398.](#)

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Through this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Describe why critical thinking, problem solving, and decision making are important for our wellbeing and success.
2. To become more confident about their abilities to cope with difficult problems and challenges in life.
3. To better understand how to use reasoning to identify, develop, defend, and judge arguments about a topic or alternatives of a problem.

[Dunn, D. S., Halonen, J. S., & Smith, R. A. \(2008\). Engaging minds: Introducing best practices in teaching critical thinking in psychology. Teaching critical thinking in psychology: A handbook of best practices, 1-8.](#)

[Lantian, A., Bagneux, V., Delouvé, S., & Gauvrit, N. \(2021\). Maybe a free thinker but not a critical one: High conspiracy belief is associated with low critical thinking ability. Applied Cognitive Psychology, 35\(3\), 674-684.](#)

Cottrell, S. (2017). Critical thinking skills: Effective analysis, argument and reflection. Macmillan International Higher Education.

2. Following a stepwise approach to Problem solving and Decision making.

Dobson, D., & Dobson, K. S. (2018). Evidence-based practice of cognitive-behavioral therapy. Guilford publications.

D’Zurilla, T. J., & Nezu, A. M. (2010). Problem-solving therapy. Handbook of cognitive-behavioral therapies, 3, 197-225.

Snyder, C. R., & Lopez, S. J. (Eds.). (2002). Handbook of positive psychology. Oxford university press.

3. Using creativity to boost problem solving. Challenges will help us grow: While cultivating self-compassion for the emotional burden that may go with this, embrace difficult challenges and failures, and accept them as part of life and an opportunity to learn/self-develop.

Video and Group Discussion: [Living Beyond limits](#)

[What exactly is creativity?](#)

[The science of creativity.](#)

[Epstein, R., Schmidt, S. M., & Warfel, R. \(2008\). Measuring and training creativity competencies: Validation of a new test. Creativity Research Journal, 20\(1\), 7-12.](#)

Carr, A. (2013). Positive psychology: The science of happiness and human strengths. Routledge.

Compton, W. & Hoffman, E. (2013). “Positive Psychology: The Science of Happiness and Flourishing, Second Edition” USA: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning.

Peterson, C., & Seligman, M. E. (2004). Character strengths and virtues: A handbook and classification (Vol. 1). Oxford University Press.

TAKE HOME MESSAGE

Facing a problem usually increases the burden of stress.

However, once the burden of stress/ pain subsides we may see that surviving the problem led to us evolve and grow.

3. POST LESSON ACTIVITIES

Participants fill self-assessment and homework activity 1 (see Activity 6 in appendices).

Instructors fill the fidelity questionnaire (see Fidelity questionnaire in appendices).

THE NEED TO LOOK AHEAD; EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING SKILLS

Lesson 7



90 minutes



Activity



Group Discussion



Homework

OVERVIEW

This lesson is an introduction to skills that provide the context for individuals to manage all their responsibilities and maximize efficiency.

LESSON WALKTHROUGH

1. Daily life is full of things we need/want to do, and they are all important. Time management, planning, and setting priorities can be used to use time effectively and in a productive manner.

[Aeon B. Faber A. Panaccio A \(2021\) Does time management work? A meta-analysis. PLoS ONE 16\(1\): e0245066](#)

Self-assessment Activity: [How good is your time management?](#)

2. You cannot manage time; you manage the events in your life in relation to time. How you use that time depends on skills learned through self-analysis, planning, evaluation, and self-control. Key components of time management: 1) Time-Self-awareness, 2) Setting priorities, 3) Scheduling.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Through this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Define the concept of time management.
2. Describe the benefits of good time management in people's life.
3. Raise awareness on their own time management skills.
4. List and describe a number of techniques relevant to effective time management.

TAKE HOME MESSAGE

Daily life is full of things we need/want to do, and they are all important.

The key is to learn on how to set realistic expectations and priorities (based on your values).

[Chapman, S. W., & Rupured, M. \(2014\). Time management: 10 strategies for better time management.](#)

[Rimmer, A. \(2019\). How do I improve my time management skills?. BMJ, 366.Sainz, Ferrero, & Ugidos, 2019](#)

[Sainz, M. A., Ferrero, A. M., & Ugidos, A. \(2019\). Time management: skills to learn and put into practice. Education+ Training.](#)

[Claessens, B. J., Van Eerde, W., Rutte, C. G., & Roe, R. A. \(2007\). A review of the time management literature. Personnel review.](#)

Video and Group Discussion: [Setting Priorities](#)

[Covey, S. R., Merrill, A. R., & Merrill, R. R. \(1994\). First things first. Executive Excellence, 11, 3-3.](#)

[Where do the hours go? \(apa.org\)](#)

3. POST LESSON ACTIVITIES:

Participants fill self-assessment and homework activity 1 (see Activity 7 in appendices).

Instructors fill the fidelity questionnaire (see Fidelity questionnaire in appendices).

CONNECTING THE DOTS; ADAPTABILITY & FLEXIBILITY

Lesson 8



180 minutes



Activity



Group Discussion



Homework

OVERVIEW

The final lesson will be a review connecting all previous lessons by going over points that were taught or learned previously.

LESSON WALKTHROUGH

1. Self-development is a continuous, non-linear process. Failures, even the small ones, are crucial for life-long learning and growth. We cannot self-develop if we cannot be exposed in something new. Challenges will help us grow: While cultivating self-compassion for the emotional burden that may go with this, embrace difficult challenges and failures, and accept them as part of life and an opportunity to learn/self-develop. Introducing the concepts of adaptability and flexibility.

VandenBos, G.R. (2007)(Ed). American Psychological Association Dictionary of Psychology. Washington DC: American Psychological Association.

[Waldeck, D., Pancani, L., Holliman, A., Karekla, M., & Tyn-dall, I. \(2021\). Adaptability and psychological flexibility: Overlapping constructs?. Journal of Contextual Behavioral Science, 19, 72-78.](#)

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Through this lesson, students will be able to:

1. Define the concepts of adaptability and flexibility
2. Combine several skills learned from previous lessons to solve new hypothetical scenarios.

Hayes, S. C., Luoma, J. B., Bond, F. W., Masuda, A., & Lillis, J. (2006). Acceptance and commitment therapy: Model, processes and outcomes. *Behavior Research and Therapy*, 44, 1-25.

[Martin, A. J., Nejad, H. G., Colmar, S., & Liem, G. A. D. \(2013\). Adaptability: How students' responses to uncertainty and novelty predict their academic and non-academic outcomes. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 105\(3\), 728.](#)

[Radical Acceptance | Psychology Today](#)

[Adaptability: The New Competitive Advantage \(hbr.org\)](#)

2. POST LESSON ACTIVITIES:

Participants fill self-assessment and homework activity 1 (see Final Activity-Individual Self-Development Plan in appendices).

Instructors fill the fidelity questionnaire (see Fidelity questionnaire in appendices).

course summary

We can regulate ourselves by becoming more self-aware and developing self-management strategies.

Self-regulation is based on a self-determined awareness of our own values and relevant goal setting towards them.

Through this trajectory of achieving our goals we need to be adaptive to unusual and unpredictable situations by adopting:

A flexible perspective taking. Use critical thinking to evaluate information you receive.

A mindful emotional awareness and flexible use of a repertoire of emotion regulation strategies

An open stance toward others, allowing time and space to listen and understand

An honest interaction with others by giving respectful feedback and managing conflict in a positive manner

A learning orientation in challenges, through creative problem solving.

A good plan and a monitoring system to review.

Self-compassion in times of failure.

APPENDICES

Lesson 1

SELF - ASSESMENT

Think of a ladder (see image) as representing where people stand in **self-regulation**. At the top of the ladder are the people who are best off. At the bottom are the people who are worst off. The higher up you are on this ladder, the closer you are to people at the very top and the lower you are, the closer you are to the bottom. Where would you put yourself on the ladder? Choose the number whose position best represents where you would be on this ladder.



HOMEWORK

STEPS

1. Pick 3 different moments throughout the week to practice 54321 technique.

2. Select typical day-to-day activities.

e.g. while brushing your teeth, bathing, sitting in the yard, etc.

Let your mind wander into the senses of the present.

3. Do you notice anything new? Note down anything new you discover.

Lesson 2

SELF - ASSESMENT

Think of a ladder (see image) as representing where people stand in **values clarification**. At the top of the ladder are the people who are best off. At the bottom are the people who are worst off. The higher up you are on this ladder, the closer you are to people at the very top and the lower you are, the closer you are to the bottom. Where would you put yourself on the ladder? Choose the number whose position best represents where you would be on this ladder.



Think of a ladder (see image) as representing where people stand in **goal setting**. At the top of the ladder are the people who are best off. At the bottom are the people who are worst off. The higher up you are on this ladder, the closer you are to people at the very top and the lower you are, the closer you are to the bottom. Where would you put yourself on the ladder? Choose the number whose position best represents where you would be on this ladder.

SELF - ASSESMENT

Think of a ladder (see image) as representing where people stand in **perspective taking**. At the top of the ladder are the people who are best off. At the bottom are the people who are worst off. The higher up you are on this ladder, the closer you are to people at the very top and the lower you are, the closer you are to the bottom. Where would you put yourself on the ladder? Choose the number whose position best represents where you would be on this ladder.



HOMEWORK

1. Strengths and things needed to be improved: Your goal to discover what makes you stand out from other people.

2. Which are your qualities?

Think about both your academic and personal skills, e.g. abilities, personality factors, interests.

To help identify your strengths, you can use the questionnaire at the link below:

<https://www.viacharacter.org/survey/account/register>

Answer the questions below.

What are you really good at?

What are you proud of yourself of?

What skills do others recognize to you and what things do they reward you for?

3. Things to be improved.

Think about things you're not so good or about areas that you can improve. Try to show self-compassion while you do that. Try to be mindfully aware of them without criticizing yourself, all people have areas needed to be improved.

What skills do you have difficulty getting?

4. Are there any aspects of your personality that keep you behind achieving your goals?

5. What do others often recognize to you as areas for improvement?

SELF - ASSESMENT

Think of a ladder (see image) as representing where people stand in **emotion awareness and emotion regulation**. At the top of the ladder are the people who are best off. At the bottom are the people who are worst off. The higher up you are on this ladder, the closer you are to people at the very top and the lower you are, the closer you are to the bottom. Where would you put yourself on the ladder? Choose the number whose position best represents where you would be on this ladder.



HOMEWORK

STEPS

1. Monitor your emotional states using an affect grid at 3 particular times during the week (choose non-significant events). In specific:

Name/Label the emotion	Reflect on thoughts/thinking styles having in parallel with the emotional experience	Reflect on your emotional response

SELF - ASSESSMENT

Think of a ladder (see image) as representing where people stand in **interpersonal interaction**. At the top of the ladder are the people who are best off. At the bottom are the people who are worst off. The higher up you are on this ladder, the closer you are to people at the very top and the lower you are, the closer you are to the bottom. Where would you put yourself on the ladder? Choose the number whose position best represents where you would be on this ladder.



HOMEWORK

STEPS

1. Monitor your active listening skills (paraphrasing, reflection, feedback) using a 5-point scale (1-Poor, 5-excellent) at 3 interpersonal situations during the week (choose typical events, e.g. chatting with a friend).

1-Poor	2	3	4	5-Excellent
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2. In addition, reflect on what you did to improve interpersonal interaction, what you could do, and how the other person reacted.

SELF - ASSESMENT

Think of a ladder (see image) as representing where people stand in **analytical skills (problem solving, decision making, critical thinking)**. At the top of the ladder are the people who are best off. At the bottom are the people who are worst off. The higher up you are on this ladder, the closer you are to people at the very top and the lower you are, the closer you are to the bottom. Where would you put yourself on the ladder? Choose the number whose position best represents where you would be on this ladder.



SELF - ASSESMENT

Think of a ladder (see image) as representing where people stand in **planning/organizational skills**. At the top of the ladder are the people who are best off. At the bottom are the people who are worst off. The higher up you are on this ladder, the closer you are to people at the very top and the lower you are, the closer you are to the bottom. Where would you put yourself on the ladder? Choose the number whose position best represents where you would be on this ladder.



HOMEWORK

STEPS

1. Audit your time

Take a week to keep track of exactly how you spend your time.

Every activity should be tracked (e.g. showering, eating or doing laundry, etc.)

Any new insights?

By looking at your calendar is there anything you can reprioritize?

Lesson 8

SELF - ASSESMENT

Think of a ladder (see image) as representing where people stand in **adaptability and flexibility**. At the top of the ladder are the people who are best off. At the bottom are the people who are worst off. The higher up you are on this ladder, the closer you are to people at the very top and the lower you are, the closer you are to the bottom. Where would you put yourself on the ladder? Choose the number whose position best represents where you would be on this ladder.



FINAL HOMEWORK

STEPS

Individual Self-Development Plan (ISDP): Developing the best possible self.

1. Imagine your 90th birthday party. Two or three people will talk about who you are, what you mean to them, and the role you play in their lives.
2. In an ideal world, where you lived your life as your best ideal self, who would like to talk about your life and what would you like to hear from them?
3. Which characteristics/strengths/skills would you like them to describe (e.g. good listener in friendly relationships, good problem solver etc.)?
4. Which parts of yourself that you have improved/developed, you would like to be mentioned?
5. Which of your values would you like to be mentioned?
6. Which important personal goals you have managed to achieve in line with these values?
7. Any difficulties/hardships you have encountered in achieving these objectives? How did you manage to resolve these difficulties?
8. What thoughts go through your mind as you hear them describing yourself? How do you feel?

FIDELITY QUESTIONNAIRE

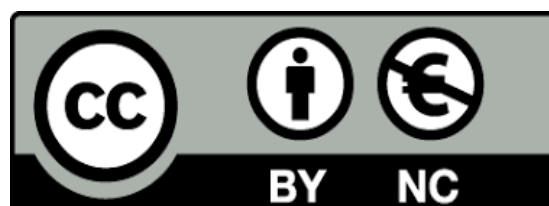
Lesson Title: _____

Lesson Plan Reviewer: _____ Date: _____

Components	Not at All	Very Little	Somewhat	To a Great Extent	N/A
Define the concept and key terms					
Provide specific examples and non-examples of the concept					
Make efficient time management					
Promote discussion					
Listen well and pay attention to the students					
Be non-judgmental of the students					
Provide opportunities for students to practice					
Summarize at the each of each session & provided practice activity/task					
Provide closure/next steps at end of sessions					
Were any issues?					
Any ideas for improving the lesson?					

Level UP

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