

Responsible Living

Unit 5 Contents

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Population and Family Life

Unit 5 : Responsible living

Unit Introduction

The youth of any country is a critical population as the future development of that country rests on them. At this stage they have to make increased number of choices and crucial decisions. These choices are not only about their education and future careers. They have to take decisions that could make or mar their future life. They have to consider the quality of life that they would like to have and take the necessary steps. During adolescence, the boy or girl is faced with many situations that appear pleasurable but which are potentially harmful. It is in situations like these when there is a lot of pressure, that one is driven to make a decision that will have a long term effect on oneself. This unit has been included to make the student aware of some potentially dangerous situations and to equip him/her with positive attitudes and values to overcome such situations. The end product of inculcating the right values results in a responsible human being who can contribute richly to both family and society.

Learning objectives of this unit

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- comprehend the value system and its role in every day life
- familiarise yourself with the concept of self -esteem.
- recognise individuals with high or low self-esteem.
- enhance your skills and ability to make right decisions

Role of values in responsible living

Values are qualities, characteristics or ideas, which we hold in high esteem. They are preferences and hence entirely subjective and personal. Values are learnt from one's family, culture and religion. They have an important bearing on one's personality goals and behaviour. They determine the quality of a person's life. A person is normally known and acknowledged by his or her values. For instance, an honest man, a disciplined woman etc.

Importance of inculcating the right values

Values are subjective and hence may differ from one individual to another. However, there are some core values that have universality in their contribution toward making a well-rounded and healthy person.

Sometimes values may be preached but not practised. A person may profess to believe in them but may not follow in real life. Such a person will never be able to make others follow or see any value in what he/she preaches. They will follow only what she/he does and not what he states. For a value to be effective, it has got to be lived. When values are put into action and practised they develop into a way of life. When beliefs become part of the person they never change. For a person with values that she/he lives by, life becomes very simple: No conflicts cloud his mind because there is no discrepancy between his thoughts and actions. Such a person becomes a good role model for his children. In course of time "lived" values become a part of the person. A child who sees his parents talking respectfully may not even be aware of the benefits that he is going to derive from the particular value, which he has imbibed. When he grows up, he will find out the benefits of this value as other people too will show him respect in return.

The values guide our behaviour

Whether a child is punctual to school and looks well groomed depends on the role model in his family whom he follows unconsciously and through training he receives from his parents.

The socially liked values make person become respected amongst his/her peers and socially disliked values make the person unpopular or isolated amongst peers e.g. the youth using foul language in the class or behaving rudely to elders.

In unit 2 'Family', it was pointed out that the family plays a significant role as an agent of the society and culture of a country, which perpetuates the values of that culture. Thus the values which are passed on to the children are the values which are helpful to the survival of the children. However we all know that human beings are very complex organisms and human brain acts and reflects differently to external factors. One person may earn money through hard work and another person

may simply live on his parents or relatives earnings and still a third person may indulge in illegal and antisocial activities to get rich quick. Therefore the question of learning positive values is not as simple as it appears.

What we have learned so far is that values differ from culture to culture and from individual to individual. The following are the case studies to illustrate these points :

Case Study 5.1

The father beat his teen age daughter severely and broke her leg because he had seen her talking with a boy in the park when she was supposed to be in school.

Do you think father did the right? Think and answer.

Your answer will depend on your personal values either you are likely to side with the father or if you belong to more liberal culture you will side with the girl because talking to a boy is a very normal behaviour.

Case Study 5.2

There are nomadic tribes living in Pakistan and India who excel in horsemanship and cattle lifting; especially their young men can not get married unless they have stolen one or more buffaloes without getting caught by police. A young man gets arrested stealing a buffalo. Do you think he has committed a crime and should be punished? Again, If you were a member of his tribe, will you consider him not guilty but was unlucky to have got arrested or will you feel that it was good he was arrested and he would mend his ways after punishment ?

The above two case studies illustrate two points; one, that values differ from culture to culture and second, that it is not necessary that all values which each individual has are positive or socially approved values. However it is possible for young people to know what type of their behaviour is liked by others and which behaviour does not get approval of people at large. Following is a list of some values and practices that are generally expected by the society to be followed for becoming successful and respected members of any community.

honesty
responsibility
discipline
punctuality
helpfulness

We have listed only some core values, which do not constitute a comprehensive list. Students can add some more values, which they feel, are important in guiding one's life.

Decision making

Decision making, particularly at crucial situations, is sometimes a difficult task; especially when such situations involve the decision maker or someone very close to him or her. Many a times decisions tend to be biased, and an alternate decision may appear to be more just and correct. There is also a notion that right and wrong are very relative terms and what may appear to be right in certain situations, may actually prove to be wrong in others. Nevertheless decisions have to be situation-dependent and it may not always be possible to sit on value judgement on the decisions taken. Following are some steps that may be of help in decision making.

- Identify the situation or problem - recognise that a problem or a situation exists that call for a decision.
- Collect information - collect all relevant information such as, what are the facts? What are your beliefs and values in relation to this situation?
- Identify possible solutions - think carefully of all the possible alternatives which you could choose from.
- Examine each alternative - look at each of the possible solutions and think carefully about the advantages and disadvantages of each one, and how you feel about each of them. Sometimes we find it difficult to make a decision because other people won't like it. In such cases, it can be helpful to think about what is the worst possible thing that could happen as a result.
- Choose one alternative - select one based on your values and the information you have.
- Evaluate the decision -check whether your decision is the right one. Is the problem resolved? Do you feel happy with the result of your decision? If necessary, go back and look at other alternatives and consider whether you should choose another.

Saying "no" to peer pressure

When your peers pressure you to do something that is against your values and your better judgement, the best options are:

- Say no and keep repeating it. Don't offer reasons or excuses for saying no.
- Take the offensive. State how the person's continued pressuring is making you feel.
- Refuse to discuss the matter further. Walk away from the situation.



Activity 5.1

Imagine that you have gone to a party arranged by your friends. Your friend asks you to smoke a 'joint'. You refuse but he is insistent. What would you do? How do you feel about your decision?

Self-esteem and Self-management

In this section we look in to the definition of self esteem and how important it is for one to realise one's own strengths and weaknesses. Self-esteem is a 'commodity' to be commanded by ones own deeds and thoughts. Self-management is an essential trait that has to be cultivated and imposes on individuals a lot of self-confidence. It also enables the individuals to be independent and very decisive.

Definition of self-esteem

The self-esteem has been defined by experts as "appreciating my own worth and importance and having the character to be accountable for myself and to act responsibly towards other".

Appreciating self-worth, worth and importance

Appreciating the self-worth and importance means to be aware of and to recognise one's inherent worth and place in the world. The sense of inherent worth is recognised when each individual's unique abilities are recognised, developed and used to enrich our society.

Appreciating self-worth does not mean comparing oneself with others nor it means measuring the qualities or quantities of one's ability. It is the kind of pride one feels by healthy self-regard, based on a realistic grasp of one own strengths and weaknesses and giving the same regard to others for having their own unique qualities. Self esteem does not mean false pride or pseudo self-importance-an all too common condition in which vanity and arrogance overshadow a person's true self and identity. In brief it is recognising one self along with one's strengths and weaknesses and to be able to correct ones' weaknesses through appropriate actions.

Self-accountability

Self-accountability would mean, accepting responsibility for one's action and for the consequences of one's behaviours. The sensibility we bring to our health through diet and exercise is also an example of being accountable. Persons who are accountable for themselves value their own worth as capable, choice making persons. They do not blame others for their sorrows. They accept responsibility for their own life, choices they make and take of themselves.

In learning to evaluate our own rights and wrongs, we learn to appreciate and encourage the human values in others. If we appreciate our own self and are confident about our worth, then there is no room for envy and jealousy which are characteristic of a defensive person who feels himself insecure.

Setting Realistic Expectations

Once we decide to change, it helps to set expectation for ourselves. We need goals that are appropriate and attainable. Expecting too little of ourselves does not dignify our human spirit. On the other hand, unrealistically high expectations steal the beauty and joy from our achievements. Expecting too much of ourselves also damages our human spirit.

Self-esteem and gender

The Asian culture being patriarchal has been discriminatory towards women. The superiority of male over female has been strengthened due to feudal traditions which give the role of economic provider to men and the secondary role of cooking, cleaning and bringing up of children to the women. But in reality, the man and woman are two wheels of a cart and they supplement and compliment each other's responsibilities. However, there is a wrong impression that the person who holds the money alone can call the shot. The work which women do, that is bearing and rearing of children and running the house hold, are just as important as earning money, but there is a wrong notion that the work carried out by women is inferior. What is more alarming is that women are considered less important as human beings and are expected to be subservient to men. But these ideas are fast changing in urban societies of Asia, although in rural and semi-urban communities the conditions remain more or less the same. In some societies the birth of a girl is not welcomed by the family. The girl babies grow up with a sense of deprivation and develop a sense of guilt as if being a girl is something to be ashamed of. There is a need to put in an extra effort with girls in such societies to boost their self esteem.

Self management

Self management arises from a healthy self esteem. During adolescence, the boy or the girl may be faced with situations that demand a lot of courage in saying "no" to invitation for activities that have harmful consequences. For e.g., on being offered the first cigarette, alcoholic drink or a drug; being persuaded to have sex before marriage. All these situations call for enhanced decision-making skills.



Activity 5.2

Lila 18 went out with Raja 20 for the first time. After a movie Raja took Lila to a park; then he put his arms around her and tried to kiss her. Lila could feel that the action was leading to something more serious. Reflect on these questions and write down your responses.

- If you are Lila, what would you do in this situation ?
- What could be your options ?
- Think about the advantages and disadvantages if you give in.
- Do you think that by saying 'no', you will not have any more boy friends ?



Activity 5.3

You know of a boy in your class who thinks too much of himself and he bullies others. Do you think he has a healthy self-esteem ? Give reasons.



Self-help questions

1. Define values. List three values which can be called universal or core values.

2. How do children learn values from their parents ?

3. Explain self esteem giving its main features.



Self-help questions (contd.)

4. Write a note on being accountable for my actions.

5. The gender bias can effect the girls in lowering their self worth. Discuss.

Unit Summary

This unit essentially dealt with cultivating a sense of self-discipline and having a regard for right values in life. The adolescence is a period which is highly pliable and one has to be careful to stay from certain distractions which may have adverse long-term effects. Whereas it could be true that the right and wrong are very relative, it should not be forgotten that there are certain core values which have an universal relevance and over which no compromises can be made. Essentially these values go to determine the personality of the individual and make him command a respectable place in society. It is true that society at large, and family in particular play a significant role in moulding the personality of an individual. Despite the influence of the society and family, ultimately the decisions are to be arrived at by the individuals themselves. Making right decisions at right time and not bowing down to peer group pressure is the essence of character building and personality development. Certain wrong decisions will lead to disastrous consequences and will have a long term impact. This unit provides some guidance on decision making process. Subscribing to right values imposes on individuals a sense of inherent worth - the self esteem and the right to self-esteem is common to both genders.

Population and Family Life Education

Module Summary

This module is designed to assist youth in their physical, social, emotional and moral development as they prepare for adulthood. Also the requisites for being responsible adult, marriage partner and parent in a family as well as society are outlined. The module begins with a brief study of population and describes the adverse effect of overpopulation on resources, development and environment. Development projects in urban areas result in the mass movement of population and this in turn has its own repercussion on the quality of life. World population is unevenly distributed in relation to land area and resources. And this coupled with uneven utilisation of resources and uneven pace of development compounds the global population problem. Higher population growth is viewed differently in different economies. Whereas developed countries regard it as impeding growth and development, developing countries regard the higher population growth as an asset and valuable human resource. The first unit also provides explanation for the various demographic parameters.

The study of population is followed by the study of family which is in fact a unit of population. Beginning with the definition of family as group of individuals related by marriage, blood or adoption, the unit lists the systems, types and functions of family. Besides the identifying the characteristics of a happy family, the importance of communication to avoid conflicts in family life are also discussed. The criteria to be considered in choosing a marriage partner and the preparations required for marriage and responsible parenthood are highlighted. Communication gap, conflicting interests among the members of a family, personality clash and differing needs of individual members are cited as some of the factors that affect family relationships.

The third unit discusses the events leading to the transformation of adolescence to adult. The physical, emotional and psychological changes experienced by the girls and boys during the transformation are discussed. The human male and female reproductive systems and the function of

various reproductive organs are described. The different aspects of reproductive cycle in a human female - the ovulation, fertilisation and menstruation are also described.

The fourth unit which is a sequel to the third, is a brief unit on sex education. Terms like sex, sexuality and sexual drive are explained. More importantly the unit dwells on the right attitude of youngsters towards sex and the responsibilities expected of them. Differences in the attitude towards sex in different cultures, necessity to develop a sense of maturity in matters relating to sex, ability to handle peer group pressure, the idea that sexuality is not merely physical attraction but has several other facets to it and the responsible and planned parenthood promote welfare of the family are some of the themes of this unit.

The last unit of this module discusses the significance of value system and how the choice of right values mould the personality of youth. The ability to resist temptations, making right decisions and the boldness to say 'no' when the situation so warrants all lead to development of self-esteem in youth and confer on them the quality of self-management.

Assignment

1. Visit a joint family a nuclear family and a single parent family. Narrate your experience with each of them and list out the learning points you found out in each type of family.