



**YWCA**  
TORONTO

A TURNING POINT  
FOR WOMEN



# **LIFE SKILLS: TRAINING | COACHING | PUBLICATIONS**

## **INTRODUCTION TO LIFE SKILLS**

### **About Life Skills**

Life Skills are problem solving behaviours appropriately and responsibly used in the management of our everyday affairs. Life Skills can be broken down into do-able, manageable parts, which can be taught, modeled and practiced. Life Skills lessons and programs are founded in principles of experiential adult learning and the Life Skills lesson model is designed on specific assumptions and philosophy that set it apart from other learning models. Because Life Skills are used in all of the 5 major areas of living our lives (self, family, job/school, leisure and community) lessons and programs can be designed to meet the specific needs of a wide range of client groups.

### **Life Skills groups**

A Life Skills program is conducted with a group of participants led by a trained coach. In any kind of group (employment, youth, mental health, professional development) participants start with different skills and differing abilities to use those skills. As participants become aware of their current skill level they are encouraged to assess their needs and set learning goals. The intent is for participants to develop the ability to draw from a repertoire of problems-solving behaviours to meet the problems of everyday life, and to become balance, self-determined individuals.

### **Roles of the Life Skills Coach**

A Life Skills coach is a trained professional who has the knowledge and experience to use the Life Skills lesson model and a whole range of facilitation and coaching skills to enhance the learning of their clients.

A trained Life Skills coach helps participants:

- learn how to think more effectively
- discover they are not alone in their challenges and struggles
- identify and understand their feelings
- engage in the process of self-awareness
- learn and use problem solving behaviours
- develop appropriate goals
- balance their intellectual, physical and affective needs

### **Life Skills Coach Training**

The intellectual understanding of the Life Skills philosophy is not sufficient to prepare an individual for coaching a Life Skills group. The individual must be suitably trained by a qualified Life Skills coach trainer. YWCA Toronto has been training Life Skills Coaches for

over 35 years, continually enhancing and developing their programs to meet the challenges and changing needs of community leaders and their clients.

Life Skills coach training provides group leaders with the theory and techniques to facilitate any group effectively through a hands-on program where they experience the Life Skills model as participants, work with colleagues to design and deliver lessons and give and receive feedback on their skills and abilities.

### The Life Skills Lesson Model

The material in this manual is based on the Life Skills lesson model. However, there are some activities and exercises that may stand on their own their own. The following chart describes the various components of the Life Skills lesson, its purpose and the techniques typically used by a Life Skills coach.

Lesson Component	Purpose	Techniques Used
Goals	Statements indicating the objectives of the lesson.	Stated and posted to the group
Rationale	Briefly explains the relevance of the topic	Stated to the group
Warm Up	An activity to energize the group, set a mood or act as an group builder	Physical action, free association, art, games, quizzes, etc....
Exercise 1 ( <i>Stimulus &amp; Evocation</i> )	An activity used to introduce the topic to participants in a subjective manner. Then responses are shared and reflected on.	Recalling personal experiences, using music, video, stories and reactions
Theory ( <i>Objective Enquiry</i> )	The presentation of the 'big picture', a theoretical model, or a demonstration of a specific behaviour	Generalizations, frameworks, definitions
Exercise 2 ( <i>Skill Practice</i> )	Structured activities that enable the participants to explore and practice the skills and/or behaviour taught in the theory	Role-play, case studies, games, and/or small group discussions
Exercise 3 ( <i>Skills Application</i> )	These activities encourage participants to consider how they will apply new skills or insights into their real lives.	Transfer learning to 'real life' and create a plan to apply it.
Evaluation	Participants evaluate their own learning and provide feedback on the lesson, measuring cognitive, affective or active skills learned	Questionnaires, rating scales, ranking