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**SKILL DEVELOPMENT AND GOAL SETTING STRATEGIES  
FOR URBAN AND RURAL STUDENTS**

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## **SOFT SKILLS FOR STUDENTS**

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### **Introduction**

Soft skills refer to a set of skills that determine how people interact with others. Soft skills play an important role in the work place as well as in one's career success. These skills are applicable to every field of work; and are usually behavioral traits inherent in an individual. Soft skills are very important for all students that need to develop their potential. Importance of soft skills depends on the context and personal perception. These skills are important for every person.

### **Soft Skills**

Soft skills have more to do with who people are, rather than what they know. As such, soft skills encompass the character traits that decide how well one interacts with others, and are usually a definite part of one's personality. Soft skills are the personal attributes, personality traits, inherent social cues, and communication abilities needed for success in the life. Soft skills characterize how a person interacts in his or her relationships with others. Soft skills include attitude, communication, creative thinking, work ethic, teamwork, networking, decision making, positivity, time management, flexibility, problem-solving, critical thinking, and conflict resolution.

### **Soft Skills and Students**

Soft skills are defined in many ways and are called by many other names including transferable skills and 21st century skills (Abbot, 2014). Robles (2012, p. 457) captured their essence quite well when he described them as "character traits, attitudes, and behaviors—rather than technical aptitudes or knowledge." Soft Skills help students to grow as a powerful personality. It helps to stand out and to move forward in their everyday activities to reach your goals. These skills are thus supposed to be used in every learning situation, big or small. The following are some of the important skills needed for a student.

### **Problem Solving**

Problem-solving will help in controlling situations that may get out of hand. This skill helps a student to come up with solutions for different circumstances. Students will come to know how to solve situational problems.

### **Creative Thinking**

Thinking creatively is of great importance as it leads to the expansion of the imagination. Students need to be creative in their approach in every aspect and it helps them understand the world in a better way

### **Teamwork**

Students must understand the importance of unity. In learning institutions students will have to work together, in doing so many things they will have to confront each other and argue.

### **Decision-making**

Students have to learn how to make decisions within the given time. By doing so they will have a stand of their own and will not have to depend on other people.

### **Intra-personal skills**

Skills that help one to understand one's self, emotional intelligence, thoughts, beliefs on things are known as intra-personal skills. These skills help students to mould them into a person. With adequate knowledge about oneself one will know his/her stand on many decisions and actions.

### **Inter-Personal Skills**

Once students understand themselves, they will start noticing how other students behave. These skills are helpful when it comes to working in groups. Students will know how to work and how each student will react to a certain topic, so it will become easier for them to work in a certain manner.

### **Communication Skills**

This is a basic skill required for everyone to communicate. One has to understand people who are aggressive and how to talk to people who can be sensitive. Students with communication skills very helpful, if they develop them, as it will be useful in almost all the situations.

### **Leadership Skills**

Students will always have decisions to make. Whether they are followers or leaders in opportunities like class election, and student union election and club president or representative.

### **Positive Attitude**

When the world is filled with many negative factors, a student has to win hearts with a positive approach. Starting from teachers to friends, everyone will look for someone who drives the group with a positive attitude. Students have to hone this skill to maintain their friendly attitude towards everyone at an educational institute.

### **Listening Skills**

Surely, a good listener enjoys the highest degree of respect in a society. Students should develop listening as the first skill that should be honed because it is very important while pursuing a education.

## **The Importance of Soft Skills for Students**

### **Developing Emotional Intelligence**

Emotional intelligence is all about how amicable you as a student are with others. If your emotional intelligence quotient, you will be looked upon as an easy-to-work with student. Through soft skills training programs, students will be able to better handle interpersonal relationships with a sense of empathy.

### **Nurturing Interpersonal Relationships**

A classroom is an educational entity which calls for a great deal of interaction between students. Once students constantly engage in interactions during class hours or in the event of completing an assignment, they will befriend others. Given the fact that man is a social being, mutual interactions between students pave the way for a strong educational base supported by a healthy competitive environment in the classroom. Classroom behavior is an important aspect to nurture interpersonal relationships. If students emulate the good behavior of others, there are others who need to be taught about the decorum of a class.

### **Understanding Classroom Lectures**

Students step into a class with the prime aim of learning new things and subjects that are of interest to them. In keeping with this primal need of students, soft skills come handy as instruments that will make learning interesting and fruitful. With soft skills, students will be able to adapt themselves to different teaching and learning patterns and will try to assimilate what all is taught in class. Students can solve problems employing the principles of soft skills while staying inquisitive about their surroundings and their subject matter.

### **Techniques to teach soft skills in the classroom**

#### **Explain the relevance**

Soft skills like communication, work ethic, leadership, personal responsibility, and listening are all important for young adults who are about to enter the working world. Before teaching any new lesson I make it clear why we are learning a subject. How does it affect us? What can we do with this information? Our aim as teachers should not be to coach students for exams, but to teach lessons that will actually be useful in life.

#### **Confidence booster**

One technique to develop confidence in students is to give them parts of a teacher's role. Throughout the year, ask as many different pupils as can to be responsible for classroom tasks like giving out sheets, checking homework, or collecting names for activities. As well as being helpful inside the classroom, students feel like they have a meaningful role within the group. Responsibilities can be extended outside the classroom too. Assign the role of leader or parent to some students that will help to understand any problems their classmates have at home, that may affect their learning. It's important to explain their role is not to spy or gossip, but to give a hand to those who need it, by finding a suitable way to offer help.

#### **Teach body language**

Understanding body language can be complex. So teach students about body language, and try to use it in the class. Control and connect with students by using clear body language and facial expressions.

#### **Smile**

A simple smile is often the secret to creating positive emotions inside the classroom. Laughing helps to reduce the stress of the day.

### **Enhance soft skills**

#### **Communication**

Interpersonal communication is the backbone of all soft skills. Whether it's through emails, phone calls or in person, one needs to be a clear communicator. Some ways to improve this skill include: make eye contact and acknowledge everyone's presence in the room, be aware of your body language and practice both formal and conversational speaking.

#### **Teamwork**

Teamwork is a very important skill because not only does it show that one works well with others, but when a team works well together the result is always better. Some ways to improve this skill include: split up work evenly, keep an open mind and never make assumptions and always praise when possible.

### **Creativity**

Creativity is always an asset in the classroom. It can lead to many exciting and innovative ideas which are essential when working with a team. Some ways to improve this skill include: create a positive work environment, make brainstorming a regular occurrence, make sure you're well rested and surround yourself with creative people.

### **Criticism**

One should keep in mind that the person giving their feedback has the best intentions to help and improve work. Some ways to improve this skill include: listen carefully, hold off on your own thoughts until you have time to reflect, turn a negative into a positive, learn from the person giving feedback, and be appreciative of their time, feedback and thinking.

### **Positive Attitude**

Always keep a positive attitude and try your best to motivate the people around you. If you're excited about something, get others excited about it too. Some ways to improve this skill include: be resilient, make laughter a part of every day and don't wait for happiness.

### **Multi-task**

Multi-tasking is an amazing asset that saves time and boosts productivity. Just like with any skill, the more you practice multi-tasking, the easier it will be to figure out how to complete your tasks in the most efficient way possible. Some ways to improve this skill include: group together related tasks, define each task before starting it.

### **Adaptable**

Adaptability is very important in the school and students who practice it regularly become more understanding, reasonable, tactful and a strong leader. Being adaptable will also increase your ability to communicate with others and build strong relationships, which are something every leader needs to be successful. Some ways to improve this skill include: welcome ambiguity, think creatively, be open-minded and non-judgmental, don't overdo it, be self-aware and be flexible.

### **Listen**

The importance of listening is just as imperative. Genuinely listening to someone else helps build relationships, solve problems, and ensures understanding and much more. Some ways to improve this skill include: invest yourself fully in each interaction, let them finish before you ask a question, maintain eye contact.

### **Humor**

Laughing not only reduces stress, but it is essential when learning with others and can be very successful in life. Some ways to improve this skill include: stay positive, always remember to laugh, be worse, make time for daily laughter and learn some simple appropriate jokes.

### **Conclusion**

Skills such as listening, collaborating with others, presenting ideas and communicating with classmates are all highly valued in schools/colleges. Soft skills are a cluster of productive personal traits that characterize student's relationships in a milieu. These skills include social process skills, communication abilities, language skills, personal habits, cognitive or emotional empathy, time management, teamwork and leadership traits. Soft skills are more challenging to develop, since they are not directly related to knowledge or expertise, but are closely linked with a person's character. It takes ongoing practice, and a commitment to self-development to improve one's soft skills.

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