

## I. Introduction: Defining Work, Job, and Career

Deciding on a career is a complex task for youth, as it requires identifying individual **aptitudes, talents, and personal preferences**.

In order to make the right choice, youth must be exposed to different options and explore themselves to combine their strengths for personal benefit and social contribution.

- **Work** is primarily an activity through which human beings "fit" into the world, create new relations, utilize unique talents, and develop a sense of belonging to society. It can be viewed as a "job" (a means of making a living), as "Dharma" or duty, or as a vehicle for self-actualisation.
- **Job vs. Career:** A **job** is conventionally referred to as work done primarily to earn money and fulfill basic needs. In contrast, a **career** is a lifelong management concept driven by a deep desire to excel and a passionate need to grow and prove oneself within a chosen field. It is defined as a pursuit of consecutive progressive achievement in public, professional, or business life.
- **Meaningful Work:** This is work that is useful to society, done responsibly, and is enjoyable to the worker. It enables individuals to use their skills and judgment, showcasing creativity or problem-solving abilities in an environment that stimulates positive professional relationships.

## II. Understanding Life Skills

**Life skills** are abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life.

According to the **World Health Organisation (WHO)**, life skills are thinking, coping, and social skills that

enhance interactions with others and the environment, promoting resilience in adversity.

**The Ten Core Sets of Life Skills:** Experts have identified ten essential sets of skills necessary for healthy behaviour and the prevention of negative actions:

1. **Self-awareness**
2. **Empathy**
3. **Communication**
4. **Interpersonal relationships**
5. **Decision making**
6. **Problem solving**
7. **Creative thinking**
8. **Critical thinking**
9. **Coping with emotions**
10. **Coping with stress**

These skills are competencies and actual behaviours that cannot be taught strictly in a classroom; instead, they are acquired through **experiential learning**.

## III. Essential Soft Skills at the Workplace

In the modern world, it is no longer sufficient to merely "get a job". Success requires continually upgrading and learning newer skills and updating knowledge into one's middle and later career years.

1. **Working Productively** This involves applying effective work habits and attitudes to tasks. Productivity is heavily influenced by **enthusiasm, zeal, and dynamism**, as well as a sense of belonging to the organisation. It requires sufficient knowledge, skills, and expertise.
2. **Learning Effectively** Every individual needs skills in reading, writing, and computing, as well as the ability to use learning tools and strategies to acquire information. The **motivation to work hard** and update oneself to keep pace with advances in one's field is essential for being acclaimed in that profession.
3. **Communicating Clearly** This involves applying appropriate writing, speaking, and listening skills to precisely convey information, ideas, and opinions. In fields like fashion merchandising, communication is

vital for negotiating prices and selling choices to the public. In development journalism, journalists must communicate the feelings of the community to the community.

**4. Working Cooperatively** Individuals must work with others to complete tasks, solve problems, resolve conflicts, and offer support. Fostering **team spirit and team responsibility** is a hallmark of a healthy work environment.

**5. Thinking Critically and Creatively** Successful professionals apply the principles of analytical thinking and critical evaluation to be innovative. In Human Ecology and Family Sciences (HEFS), creative skills are used to project issues in ways that attract attention and make a social impact.

**6. Other Necessary Skills** Additional requirements for success include **concentration, alertness, presence of mind, tactfulness, and the ability to multitask**. Professionals must also develop the ability to train and delegate tasks to others.

**Positive interpersonal skills** increase productivity by reducing conflicts and making communication comfortable.

People with these skills can control the feelings that emerge in difficult situations and respond appropriately rather than being distressed by emotion.

**Negotiation Skills** Negotiation is a process used when two parties have unacceptable points regarding a deal. Through negotiation, parties try to convince each other by **trading concessions**.

A good negotiator considers all variables, estimates costs, and prepares fully to ensure both sides come out of the deal happy.

**Presentation Skills** These are used to communicate information to a group and allow for immediate interaction. A good presentation consists of:

- **Content:** Information the audience needs and can absorb in one sitting.
- **Structure:** A logical beginning, middle, and end that is sequenced and paced correctly.
- **Packaging:** The treatment given to the content, often using technologies like PPT software.
- **Human Element:** The speaker's personality and ability to hold attention.

**Effective Decision Making** Decision making is a complex but necessary process for every successful person.

It involves assessing both human and material elements, **prioritising factors**, and anticipating outcomes to take actions in the best interest of all parties.

For example, managers must balance efficiency and profit with the satisfaction of stakeholders and employees.

**Time Management** Time is a matchless and valuable resource needed to accomplish goals and enjoy life.

Time management is a set of principles and tools that help individuals get more value out of their time. It increases efficiency, leads to higher productivity, and **reduces stress**.



## IV. In-Depth Analysis of Key Career-Building Skills

**Interpersonal Skills** These refer to a person's ability to operate within organisations through social interactions.

**Stress Management** Stress is the physical, mental, and emotional response to demands and changes in life. While some stress can motivate, symptoms manifest when life demands exceed one's ability to deal with them.

Managing stress involves taking charge of thoughts, emotions, schedules, and environments. The ultimate goal is a **balanced life** with time for work, relationships, and relaxation.

## V. Improving Work Life and Environment

Quality of work life is influenced by how an individual perceives their work situation and handles the demands of the job. When a person perceives work as a source of energy and fulfillment, job satisfaction is ensured.

### Tips for Improving Individual Work Life:

- **Develop Healthy Personal Habits:** Taking care of the body, mind, and spirit through a wholesome diet, exercise, and sleep helps one face workplace pressures.
- **Empathy and Interdependence:** Interacting with peers and supervisors calls for an empathetic approach. Recognising the **interdependence** on others generates goodwill and helps individuals fulfill their own needs.
- **Responsiveness:** It is wise to be responsive to situations rather than reactive. Deserving reprimands should be met with calm examination and corrective measures rather than emotional outbursts.
- **Flexibility and Adaptability:** These are core abilities essential for both the self-employed and those working for others.

**Creating a Healthy Work Environment:** Organisations can foster positive climates by:

- Paying attention to individual employee needs and expectations.
- Motivating individuals and treating people equally.
- Ensuring technical competence and providing a safe, attractive environment.
- Matching the person to the task and providing feedback and praise.

## VI. Values and Ethics in Professional Life

The study of HEFS emphasizes that the home and workplace should be treated with equal respect. **Dignity of labour** means taking pride in whatever work one does, regardless of its nature.

Mahatma Gandhi provided a shining example by performing tasks like sweeping and scavenging to demonstrate that no job is inferior. Generic norms of ethics and dignity are applicable in all work settings.



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## VII. Specialized Skills in HEFS Domains

Career-building in specific domains requires a blend of general life skills and technical knowledge:

- **Clinical Nutrition and Dietetics:** Requires skills in assessment, diet planning, and

**counselling.** Counselling is both an art and a science, requiring knowledge of psychology and sociology to help patients cope with the emotional impact of disease.

- **Food Processing and Technology:** Needs expertise in cooking, measuring ingredients accurately, and using Information Technology for contemporary production.
- **Development Communication:** Requires **questioning ability** to look into finer details, a passion for adventure/travel, and the ability to work with diverse groups. The guiding principle is "helping people help themselves".
- **Consumer Studies:** Demands being a good listener and having the creative skills to develop programmes and advertisements for consumer awareness.

