The Life Skills Handbook
An active learning handbook for working with children and young people

Section THREE
Download 5 of 8

Activity Sessions 24-32

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November 2008
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November 2008

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LIFE SKILLS ACTIVITIES

Introduction
In all the activities, children may be asked to think and talk about their ideas and feelings; work in groups and pairs; speak to the whole group and or draw. The children do not need to read and write well for most of the activities although some activities will be easier if they can. Educators may need to work with individual children (or in pairs) to give them the confidence to communicate well in the group.

It is best to introduce the children to life skills learning by starting with a selection of activities from Part 1. The activities in Part 2 and 3 are designed for children who already have some experience of life skills learning.

Adapt, Adapt, Adapt!
The activities have been written in a general way, so that they can be adapted to your group and your situation. It is important to make sure the activities suit the age and the needs of the children you are working with. The activities present many examples of role-plays and questions and so on. These are shown in *italics*. Use these ideas but where possible, use your own words and ideas which suit the needs of your group.

Time
Most activities take approximately 45 minutes although because a lot of the activities involve group work and discussions, this depends on the educator and the children. Educators may want to add an introductory activity at the beginning of the session and a closing activity at the end. Ideas for these activities are at the end of Section 3. With these extra activities the sessions will take approximately 60 minutes.

Monitoring questions
You should ask monitoring questions at the end of every session to find out what they have learned. There are some general questions at the end of Activity 1 and these can be used and adapted to be used at the end of every activity. A symbol has been inserted at the end of each activity to remind you to undertake some kind of monitoring activity. Try not to leave out this part of the session. Ask the children to sit in a circle and ask for their questions and comments. Then ask specific questions as appropriate. Spend time getting comments from each child if possible. When the children become more accustomed to this, it can be done less formally.
BEFORE YOU START!

Ground rules for life skills sessions

**Purpose of activity:** To agree ground rules for the lifeskills sessions

In the first session with children, create the basic rules (ground rules). These rules help everyone work together well, they create and maintain a good atmosphere and they make the children feel valued and safe. Try to express all the rules in a positive way, for example:

*Let everyone have a chance to speak*

instead of

*Don’t let one person talk all the time.*

**Materials**
- Large piece of paper
- Marker pen or crayon

**Steps**
1. Explain to the children that you will agree the rules for the group that everyone must try to obey during the life skills sessions. The rules are to help everyone get on well with each other.
2. Using the example of the rule in the box above, explain that in lifeskills we focus on positive behaviour so we make rules about what we should do not what we should not do. The group can discuss this all together or in pairs or groups and then make the suggestions in the whole group.

**Examples**
- *We arrive on time*
- *Let everyone have a chance to speak*
- *Stick to the subject*
- *Listen to each other*
- *If you disagree with someone, say it in a nice way*
- *Speak one at a time*
- *Keep what has been said in the meetings private (do not gossip!)*
- *If you do not want to join a discussion, you can just listen*

3. After each suggestion, ask the children why they think each rule is important. If some children disagree with suggestions, encourage them to explain why and to suggest a better rule.
4. If the children are having problems thinking of rules, prompt them by using scenarios such as the example below: Read them out then ask the children why the situation is not acceptable and then ask them for a rule which could help to avoid it.
In the life skills session, Chacha and Tina talked about a personal problem. Later, during the lunchtime break, Chacha overhears Tina laughing and giggling with her friends about the lesson and telling them the things that Chacha had said. He is very upset.

Rule: Keep what has been said in the meetings private.

5. When each rule is agreed, write it down on a large piece of paper and display this at all life skills sessions. It’s a good idea to put a symbol beside each rule e.g. a clock beside ‘we arrive on time’

6. Read through the list of rules and make sure that the children agree with them all.

Final discussion:
How can we help each other remember the rules? What do we do if someone breaks a rule? What do we do if someone breaks a rule over and over again?
Activity 24
Rights and Responsibilities

Purpose of activity
• To share ideas about children's rights and responsibilities
• To discuss how to ask closer to achieving their rights

Lifeskills: Critical thinking, creative thinking

Important points

Materials
• Pieces of paper large enough to make a life-size drawing of a child
• Marker pens or crayons
• Stickers (optional)

Steps
1. Explain that this activity explores children's rights and responsibilities
   Rights: what children should have (food, shelter, safe water, health care play etc) and Responsibilities: what children should do (respect others' rights, help one another etc)
2. Ask a volunteer to lie down on the large piece of paper on the floor and draw the outline of their body shape.
3. Ask all the children to sit around the body drawing. Explain that the body drawing will become a child's rights and responsibilities.
4. Children brainstorm all the rights they think children should have. The educator writes all these suggestions inside the 'body' using a pen in one colour.
5. Children are then asked to list the responsibilities they have. To help them, show them that many rights have a corresponding responsibility, for example: A right to speak and a responsibility to listen.

You can have a break here

7. Read through all the rights that the children listed inside the body.
8. Ask each child to vote for the three rights that are most important to them.
   Children can make three dots beside three different rights using a pen in a different colour, or if possible, give each child three stickers.
   If the children are not literate you can create symbols for different rights. Make sure the children can easily identify what the symbols represent. Then children tell the educator which rights they want to vote for and the educator shows them where to put their mark or sticker.
9. Select the three rights with the most votes and discuss how this right can be realised, for example: What needs to happen for children to ask the right to protection from violence?
10. Draw a thin line from each of these three rights. On a card outside the

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body, write children’s ideas about how to achieve this right.

Follow up
Encourage the children to work together to develop and implement an action plan to improve their rights

Case study
In India, children in a project formed a Child Rights Club. The children were interviewed by the media about their rights at the launch of the club. Here are some of the replies...

- I was not allowed to play because I am a girl.
- My mother does not send my sister to school, but she sends me. [a boy]
- A right to live a proper life is important because it is only after having this right that we can ask for the other rights [in the UN CRC]. For example, if a girl does not even have the right to live, then what will she do with the other rights?
- Because I was not educated, a vegetable seller cheated me.
- The police beat me up and put me in an observation home. I wish I could live freely and safely. I hope the police will not beat me in future.
Part Two: How can we Move Forward?

The topics and activities in Part Two help children identify obstacles they may face and suggest building blocks to help them deal with these obstacles. Repeat the session on Ground Rules.

Activity 25
Problem-Solving: identifying our problems

**Purpose of activity:** To help children learn how to identify their problems, think of solutions and think who can help.

**Life skills:** Problem-solving, creative thinking

**Important points**
Help the children identify problems in their lives for themselves. This is the best start to finding a solution. Listen to how children look at their problems. It is often different from how adults see them.

**Materials**
- Large piece of paper with the following chart:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>How Serious</th>
<th>How Common</th>
<th>How much can children do to solve problem + examples</th>
<th>Importance to the programme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not getting enough food</td>
<td>++++</td>
<td>++++</td>
<td>++ (sharing food, helping to find or buy food, showing which foods are best)</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being beaten by other children</td>
<td>++++</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>+++ (how to defend yourself, getting friends to help so you don’t ask attacked)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Marker pens or crayons. You can also draw this chart on the ground with chalk or sand. Use pebbles, seeds, or other objects to score. (In one programme the educators built up the chart with the children)
- Large pieces of paper for each group
- Puppets if used.

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Steps

1. Explain that the children will think about a problem in their life, and find ways to solve or cope with the problem. Puppets can be used to introduce the activity.

2. Explain the chart to the children. Five points is the highest score and one point is the lowest score.

3. In groups, ask the children to think of five or six problems they are facing. They can write these, draw symbols for them or ask the educator to write them in the left-hand column under the heading 'problems'. If possible, children think of their own problems. If they find this very difficult, you could use picture cards to give an example but try not to lead the children’s ideas. It is very helpful to find out what the children think of as their most important problems.

4. Using a marker pen or crayon (or chalk or pebbles), children discuss each problem. (How common it is, how serious it is and what they think other children can do to solve it). They give them a mark out of five. When the chart is completed, the children or the educator add up the scores for each problem and identify the top problems.

You can have a break here

5. Each group shows their chart and explains the scores. The whole group discusses each chart.

6. If you have time, make a whole group chart, combining all the top problems identified by the smaller groups.

7. Final discussion. What were the top problems that you chose? Why? Were there disagreements? How did you resolve these? How can we use the charts to plan future lifeskills sessions?

Follow up

The problem chart also is used to think more deeply about one problem.

Here is a sample chart made by street children in India.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>How Serious</th>
<th>How Common</th>
<th>How much can children do to solve problem + examples</th>
<th>Importance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Harassment and abuse from police</td>
<td>++++</td>
<td>+++</td>
<td>++ (run away from police)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not being able to go to school</td>
<td>++++</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>+++ (We cannot do much - adults can do something)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No good food</td>
<td>++++</td>
<td>++++</td>
<td>++ (we can make our own food or get it from a hotel)</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fighting amongst ourselves</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+++</td>
<td>+++ (we can try to stop our fights)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer pressure to smoke</td>
<td>++++</td>
<td>+++</td>
<td>++++ (we can stop smoking and make our friends understand)</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harassment of girls</td>
<td>++++</td>
<td>++++</td>
<td>++++ (The girls should get together to tell the boys how they feel).</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The ‘But why?’ game
Other ways to look at underlying problems or causes is to use the phrase 'but why', for example:

People shout at me in the street
...But why?
Because they think I will steal from them
...But why?
Because they can see I am poor
...But why?
Because I do not have good clean clothes
...But why?
Because I do not spend money for clothes
...But why?
Because I spend my money on food and smoking
...But why?
To stay alive and to feel less hungry

This game can help children break down a problem into smaller causes. Some of the smaller causes may be easier to tackle than the big cause. In the example above a first step might be to try to stop smoking in order to have some more money for food.
Activity 26
Problem-solving: What risks do we take and why?

Purpose of activity

- To understand better the concept of risk-taking
- To consider when a risk is acceptable or not

Life skills: critical thinking, creative thinking, problem-solving

Materials

- Marker pens or crayons (red, yellow and green)
- Sets of cards of three blank cards (red, yellow and green) one set for each pair
- Poster listing risk statements

Steps

1. Explain that we all take risks as part of everyday life. For example:
   - We cross the road (traffic accidents)
   - We work in the fields (snake bite)
   The important thing is to think about the risks first and decide carefully. This is not always easy.

2. Read a short story in which a character in the story takes a risk. For example:
   *Luis is selling cigarettes in the main street. He is approached by a man who buys two packets and then tells him that there is a better way to make money in the street. He tells the boy to follow him to his flat where they can talk about it more. Luis follows.*

3. In the whole group
   - Is anyone in this story taking a risk?
   - Why did Luis decide to take a risk?
   - How do you think Luis felt at the time?
   - What might have happened because of taking that risk? Would it be good or bad?
   - What identity factors led to Simon taking this risk? (Luis showed risk-taking behaviour. He lacks skills to think critically about the dangers of this situation. The environment in which he lives and works, as a street vendor with very little money encourages this risky behaviour.)
   - What do you think about people taking risks?
   - Who take more risks? Young people or old people? Why?
   - Do you take risks?

4. Ask everyone to think of occasions when they took a risk. Maybe it was a small risk or maybe it was a very important one. In pairs, ask them to answer the same questions as above

5. Ask some of the pairs to share with the whole group. Can you make any general observations on risk-taking behaviour?

6. Give each pair a set of three coloured cards

7. Read out the 'risk statements' below. Then read them out again, and after each one, ask the pairs to hold up one of the cards: Red for very risky; yellow for risky; green for very small risk.

Purpose of activity

- To understand better the concept of risk-taking
- To consider when a risk is acceptable or not

Life skills: critical thinking, creative thinking, problem-solving
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Driving when drunk</th>
<th>Going to the market</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Starting your own business</td>
<td>Arguing with your father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cycling fast</td>
<td>Accepting gifts from someone you don’t know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crossing a road</td>
<td>Making fun of the teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having unprotected sex</td>
<td>Getting married before the age of 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eating unwashed fruit</td>
<td>Riding a bicycle at night without lights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having sex with a condom</td>
<td>Having children before the age of 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taking a drug</td>
<td>Living on your own</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sleeping without a mosquito net</td>
<td>Walking through a field of maize or corn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stealing from a market stall</td>
<td>Walking barefoot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dropping out of school</td>
<td>Carrying a knife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walking home late at night</td>
<td>Doing what your friends do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Going to a disco</td>
<td>Going to pray</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accepting a lift from stranger</td>
<td>Getting an sexually transmitted infection (STI)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accepting a lift from someone you know</td>
<td>Kissing and hugging someone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smoking</td>
<td>Riding a bicycle without holding the handlebars</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8. Record the results using the marker pens or crayons. The educator should be aware of what is acceptable locally. Some of these risks may be considered high risk in some places but not in others. The educator must also be prepared to give guidance if the children’s assessment is inaccurate.

9. Divide the children into boy-only and girl-only groups of four. Ask each child to select three ways in which they have taken a risk (from the list, from real life or invent them).

10. Each child tells the group their three risks. They discuss why they take these risks, for example:
   - **Because it’s fun**/because it’s **exciting**

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- Because I feel I have nothing to lose
- Because I want to be a part of the group and they are all doing it
- Because I feel old enough
- Because I am scared not to
- Because I want to make money

11. In the whole group discuss the risks and the reasons. If groups have common reasons, decide what lifeskills are needed to reduce this risk-taking behaviour. (Use the answers to choose future lifeskills activities).

Final discussion:
Point out risks that the children did not think about during their discussion. Do you know when you are taking risks? What can you do to identify risks
Activity 27
Decision-Making: the three Cs in decision-making

**Purpose of activity:** To learn skills to help make thoughtful decisions

**Life skills:** decision-making, critical thinking, creative thinking, problem-solving

**Important points**
Read through this activity carefully and work out your own decision-making example. It should be something important and relevant to the children in that group. It is best if the children can see how the example can help them with REAL decision-making.

**Tip**
If you work in another language you can find three words for the three C’s which also begin with a similar letter. For example in Spanish, Juconi in Mexico used three D’s: Desafío, Diyuntiva and Desenlace instead of the English 3 C’s (challenges, choices and consequences).

**Materials:**
- Poster showing *The three Cs in decision-making*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The 3 Cs in decision-making</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. <strong>Challenge</strong> (or decision you are facing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. <strong>Choices</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choice 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choice 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choice 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And so on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. <strong>Consequences</strong> (of each choice positive and negative)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Poster with the join the dots brainteaser
Steps:
1. Give each child blank pieces of paper.
2. Draw the nine dots on the large piece of paper and ask the children to copy the pattern. Tell them that they have to join all the dots using only four straight lines.
3. After 5 minutes or so, give them the answer.

Join-the-dots answer

4. Ask what we can learn from this brainteaser. (To solve a problem you may have to go outside the most obvious answers)
5. Talk about how we make decisions:
   - suddenly
   - putting off the decision until something else makes the decision for you
   - not deciding at all
   - letting others make the decision
   - looking at choices and then deciding
6. Explain that this session focuses on looking at choices and then deciding.
Draw an outline of a child on a poster. Ask them what decisions this child may be facing, for example, *should I join an after-school club?*

7. Point to the first C word, *challenge*, and explain that this is the first 'C'.

8. Point to the word *Choices* on the poster and say that this is the second 'C'. Ask children to think about the different choices that a child making this decision has. In this example:
   - *Choice 1: To talk to other children who go to this club to find out more*
   - *Choice 2: To find another club*
   - *Choice 3: To carry on without going to a club*  
   (There should be at least three choices).

9. Point to the word *Consequences* and explain that this is the third C. Ask the children to think of good and bad consequences of each choice.

   **Choice 1: To talk to other children who go to the club**
   - The children may tell you useful information and encourage you to join them
   - **BUT**
   - You may not feel the same way as they do about the club

   **Choice 2: To find another club**
   - This may be a better club with more opportunities for you
   - **BUT**
   - You have not tried it so you don’t know if this one will help you. You may get frustrated

   **Choice 3: To carry on without going to a club**
   - You will not be taking any risks
   - **BUT**
   - You will not be taking the opportunities to make life any better.

10. Ask everyone to give other examples of challenges from their lives. Choose one and practice the three Cs.

11. Ask everyone to agree or take a vote to find the most popular choice.

12. Explain that in life, you have to face your own challenges and make your own decisions but you can ask for other ideas before making a decision.

13. Summarise the three steps of three C’s to good decision-making.

**Final discussion.**

*Has anyone made a decision that did not turn out well? Would the 3 C’s steps have helped? How?*

If you have time, it may be useful to finish this session with a game such as the Fishbowl game or team drawing (see the games section at the back).

**Follow up**
Follow this activity with further sessions in which the group works together to ‘practice’ the 3 Cs decision-making process.
Activity 28
Decision-making: practising making decisions

Purpose of activity: To practice using the 3 C’s to make decisions

Life skills: decision-making, critical thinking, creative thinking, problem solving, communication skills

Important points
Try to ask help from your colleagues in this activity so that children can ask them questions. They can be in the same room or nearby.

Materials
- Poster of the three Cs (see Activity 27)

Steps
1. Using the poster, go through the three Cs. Explain that it is not necessary to use the model to make small everyday decisions but it can help for those decisions that could have a big effect on your life.
2. Tell children that they are going to practice using the three Cs.
3. Divide people into groups and give each group 2-3 challenges they might face (using the ones they identified in the first session and any others you think are relevant). Each group writes or draws the decision-making model on a large sheet of paper and discusses the choices and consequences of each challenge. You may need to help groups identify choices and consequences.
4. Allow groups to continue working until the next part and remind them to be prepared to present their response. Encourage them to look for further information from other sources for example by discussing with other friends or with another educators or other adults, religious leaders etc.

Some difficult challenges
- **Meena’s uncle says there is no money to pay for Meena’s school fees.** Her father always sent money before but recently he has sent nothing. Her mother tells her she is sure he will send the money but Meena doesn’t believe it. She wants to run away early in the morning and go to town to find her father. She knows the area he lives in but she has never been to his room.
- **Achieng belongs to a group of girls who are a little older than her. They like to show how grown up they are. All except Achieng have already had sex. They now tell Achieng that she doesn’t deserve to belong to the same group. She does have a boyfriend but they have never had sex together.**
- **Nasir belongs to a group of boys who sell food and drinks to the big buses that stop in the village on the way to the city. The boys have discovered that it is easy to steal small things from the passengers as the bus drives away (earrings, handbags etc.) They pull them away as the bus gathers speed. Nasir has never dared try although it looks easy and his friends laugh at him and call him a coward.**
• Matteus has been going out with his girlfriend for a year and they have been having sex for 6 months. They have always used a condom but Matteus’s girlfriend is tired of using a condom. They want to get married and she sees no reason why they should go on using a condom. She is becoming quite upset about it and threatening to end the relationship.

• Grace has discovered that she is pregnant. When she goes to her boyfriend, he chases her out and calls her a prostitute. She is afraid of telling anyone. Then a friend of hers tells her that there is an old woman who can help her ask rid of her baby.

• Augusto wants to go to secondary school but he has to pass an exam for government school. When he goes to find out the results, he finds he has missed his chance by only two places. A worker in the education office tells him that if he is prepared to give him a certain amount of money, he will make sure he is given a place, since he knows that some of the names on the list are not real.

You can have a break here

Steps
5. Give a few minutes for each group to finish their decisions (in case they consulted other people outside).
6. Ask groups to report their decisions to the whole group. The other children may ask questions and add other ideas for choices and consequences.
7. After all decisions have been discussed, end with the following questions.

Final discussion:
Is it easy or difficult to make good decisions? What makes it difficult? (for example, the influence of emotions, or alcohol, pressure from peers or a partner etc). What makes it easy? (knowing how to resist pressure, being sure about your values or goals, getting good advice from people you trust) Have you made a decision that affected other people? What happened? How likely is it that one of your decisions will turn out badly? What do you do if that happens?
Activity 29
Taking Harmful Substances: What do I think about substance abuse?

Purpose of activity:
- To explore children's attitudes about substance abuse and how they are affected by others
- To correct myths and incorrect information

Life skills: self-awareness, critical thinking

Important points
You may not wish to deal with all these issues in one session. You may divide them up according to whether you are dealing with smoking, drinking or other drugs. Many people take risks by using harmful substances even though they know that these damage their health. Some people become addicted, which makes it difficult to give up.

Materials
- 2 large signs, Agree and Disagree
- Attitude statements such as those below (adapt these to suit the needs of your group)

Steps
1. Place the sign Agree in one corner and the sign Disagree in the opposite corners of the room.
2. Ask the children to stand in the middle of the room.
3. Say that you are going to read out a statement, they should go immediately to either the agree or disagree corner. There is no room for 'not sure' – they have to decide.
4. Read out a statement and when the children have chosen their corners, ask why they chose to move there. If necessary, give information to correct any wrong information. Do this for about 10 statements.
5. At the end, ask the children to choose a partner and discuss how they made their decisions: to what extent did they decide on their own, and to what extent did they look at what others were doing. Use this to talk about the power of peer pressure in our lives.

Final discussion:
Why do you think some doctors smoke? If you were the leader of our country, what laws would you pass about smoking, alcohol and drugs?
Attitude statements and facts

Issues surrounding attitudes to smoking and drugs and complex and sensitive, and they are different in different countries. The information below is intended only as a starting point for discussions.

- **The risks of smoking are exaggerated. I know people who smoke but they don’t have any health problems**
  Not everyone who smokes has health problems now. But medical studies show a link between smoking cigarettes and diseases like lung cancer and heart disease. Over a quarter of all regular smokers die of smoking related diseases. Those people who start to smoke when they are young are more likely to die of smoking related diseases.

- **People should be allowed to smoke as and where they wish. It’s their right.**
  A smoker risks their own life but also the health of other people who breathe the smoke from their cigarettes. This is why many countries have laws which do not allow smoking in public areas such as transport and buildings. Many organisations have made their offices smoke-free and some people do not allow smoking inside their homes.

- **Smoking is not a serious risk like unprotected sex etc**
  Over a quarter of all regular smokers die of smoking related diseases.

- **Smoking is cool**
  Smoking cigarettes seriously damages your health so it’s foolish to start smoking. Fools are not cool. It is not cool to ignore avoidable risks and it is not cool if we are fooled by advertisements.

- **Everything in life is dangerous, even crossing a road**
  It is true that life is full of risks, and that everything has some element of danger. However, we have to accept some risks that are necessary and we can reject risks which are unnecessary and avoidable.

- **People who take drugs should be punished**
  It is important to find out how and why people started taking drugs. It is better to concentrate first on how to prevent people form starting to take drugs.

- **Smoking tobacco is far more dangerous than smoking marijuana**
  They are both dangerous. The tar produced by marijuana contains more cancer-producing agents than tobacco tar.

- **Drug takers only have themselves to blame if they ask sick**
  Some drug-taker deliberately started taking drugs but many are pushed into it by peer pressure, pressure in their lives or by drug dealers. Many people take drugs to escape from the difficulties or problems in their lives. Whatever the reason, once they are addicted, they need a lot of support to help them give up.

- **People who don’t drink are either religious fanatics or cowards**
  Whether to drink alcohol or not is a personal decision. It may be determined by religious reasons or many other reasons.

- **Alcohol is a part of our culture**
  Alcohol may be a part of some cultures, but drunkenness is not.
Activity 30  
Taking Harmful Substances: responsibility and consequences (drugs and alcohol)

Purpose of activity  
- To help children think about the reasons why people take harmful substances  
- To help children think about the short term and long term consequences of taking harmful substances  
- To help children think about the consequences of NOT taking harmful substances  
- To give children practice how to resist pressure  

Life skills: Creative thinking, critical thinking  

Important points  
There may be many reasons why children take harmful substances (tobacco, alcohol drugs etc). Many are motivated to start by reasons like "I wanted to be accepted in my group" rather than anything to do with the drug itself. Activities that aim to change harmful behaviour need to address all the factors that surround the child. Change is more likely to happen when it is linked to a positive outcome.

Materials  
- Situation card.

Steps:  
1. Read out the following situation to children:  
TSHEPO has just become part of a group. He’s really happy to be part of the group and enjoys hanging around with them. Recently they’ve started to smoke dagga (use a local word or a word the children know for marijuana). Tshepo does not smoke and does not like the idea of smoking marijuana. He knows some other groups which use stronger, more harmful drugs. Some of his friends want to try these harder drugs too. Tshepo does not know what to do because he wants to stay part of the group but he does not want to get involved in smoking or taking drugs.

2. Divide the group into three or four smaller groups and ask one child to be the leader in that group. Children discuss answers to the two following questions:  
   - What choices does Tshepo have?  
   - What are the consequences of each?

3. Ask each group to act out a role-play which illustrates positive and negative consequences for Tshepo.

4. The group can then discuss:  
   - Why did Tshepo respond like he did?  
   - Guide the children towards considering the whole Tshepo  
     - his identity  
     - his values and beliefs  
     - his skills (to take harmful drugs)  
     - his behaviour (how he usually is)  
     - his environment (does it help or not?)

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• Why did other characters in the role plays behave as they did?

Final discussion:
Do you know someone who was taking harmful substances? Why do you think that they did this? What happened to them? What is good and what is bad about taking drugs?
Activity 31
Taking Harmful Substances: peer pressure

**Purpose of activity:** To enable children to look at their attitudes and decisions about drugs and explore the risks of drug-taking

**Life skills:** critical thinking

**Important points**
Before or after this session, do or repeat communication skills activities such as Activity 19: *You and I.*

**Materials**
- Large sheets of paper
- Coloured pens

**Steps**
1. Tell this scenario to the whole group: *You meet some friends. Some of them begin to smoke marijuana. Your good friend decides to try it and wants you to join in too.*
2. Ask for ideas on what might lead you to try it. Make a list of these and divide the ideas to show if these pressures are from the outside (from other people) or the inside (from yourself)
   - **Outside**
     - Friends
     - Advertisements
     - Seeing people in films
     - Songs
     - Having parents or relatives who drink or smoke to a level where there is a problem
   - **Inside**
     - Feeling lonely
     - Having problems at home
     - Wanting to be one of the group
     - Wanting to show that I’m grown up
     - Not knowing who to ask for help with problems
3. Divide Children into groups. Give each group one of the situations below. Use local words for drugs

**Situations**
- *Life has been difficult for you. There are problems at home and you depend more and more on your friends. Someone that a find of yours tells you that he has something you can take that will make you feel 100 times better.*
- *You keep hearing stories about cocaine which say that it makes you feel great. You are curious and want to try it to see what happens. One day a friend offers you some.*
- *You meet your friends. They are with a man who you don’t know. He shows you a pill which he says ‘will make you feel like a new person’. He says that they give you a good time and are totally safe and that he will give you one...*
4. In the groups, draw a picture with a title, ‘if only….’ About what happens in the story. These stories could also be turned into raps (a spoken song with a beat), songs or poems.

5. Ask the children to discuss how they would react. Refer to Activity 19: You and I.
   - How will you react to this situation?
   - What problems might you have in refusing?
   - What consequences might you face if you accept? (Remind children of the three C’s of decision-making)
   - If another person refused before you, would this help you? Why?
   - What identity factors will strengthen you or weaken you
   - Can practising, ‘No’ help in real life? Why/why not?

Follow Up
Act out more role plays using real problems situations of the children to practice dealing with different situations.
Activity 32
Taking Harmful substances: avoiding risks

**Purpose of activity:** To identify the deep reasons behind risk-taking so that children can learn to avoid risk

**Life skills:** problem-solving, creative thinking

**Important points:** Do or refer back to Activity 26: What risks do we take and why?

**Materials**
- None

**Steps**
1. Tell the group that sometimes we take action because we believe they give us short–term benefits, even if the action has no long-term benefit for us.
2. Explain that a risk is a chance or a possibility of harm. In groups of four of five, ask the children to discuss and draw risks that they or their peers or friends take in their lives. For example: smoking, drug-taking, stealing, having unprotected sex etc
3. Now ask each child to think of a risk that they do take or they would like to take.
4. Ask for one volunteer to come forward. Reassure them that they will not have to say anything personal or that will embarrass them! Ask them to close his/her eyes and then imagine themselves taking that risk. Now open the eyes and say what the benefits are from taking that risk. Ask…*What does that give you? What does it do for you?*
5. The educator lists all the positive benefits down. For example in one session, Anton said that he kept risking his health by smoking. When asked what it does for him, Anton said:
   - *It relaxes me even when I have problems*
   - *I feel happy with my friends*
   - *I feel part of my group*
6. In pairs, ask the group to do the same exercise with each other. Ask for volunteers to report the results back to the group
7. Ask volunteers to report back the results.
8. Now ask the children how they can have the same results but without taking the risk. Often children take risks (for example smoking or taking drugs) to escape, forget or become happier. Ask the whole groups to think creatively about how they can achieve this. For example, Anton decided he could relax and feel happy with the group by playing football more regularly. Still in the same pairs, one child repeats the benefits of the risk they take, and the other child thinks of ideas for achieving the effect without taking the risk. Give time for everybody to have a turn in each position. You can use the fishbowl game here where each child gets at least two suggestion form different people. (See games at the end of the handbook)
9. Finally ask the children to close their eyes and visualise how to get the benefits in a non-risky way.
Final discussion:
Was it easy being creative with ideas? Why or why not? Do we ask stuck into behaviour patterns? (it is easier, we don’t know any alternatives, we are scared) How can we break risky behaviour patterns? If you have done Activities 22 and 27, remind children of the techniques of saying NO and the three C’s in decision-making. Otherwise, you can do these activities next to develop their skills in changing their behaviour.)