A basic framework for introducing teenagers to Life Skills

1) Select a useful skill. Consider what’s useful for life at school, for life outside school, for University life, for the world of work, for today, tomorrow and for the longer term…

Get inspiration from your students’ needs and interests. And bear in mind that many organizations promoting healthy living and positive values often have online teaching resources for secondary students. For example, [**www.redcross.org.uk**](http://www.redcross.org.uk/) (British Red Cross), [**www.bhf.org.uk**](http://www.bhf.org.uk/) (British Heart Foundation), [**www.who./int/en**](http://www.who./int/en) (World Health Organisation)...

2) Motivate the students by eliciting and encouraging a personal response to the topic, helping students to realise or evaluate how important the skill is, e.g. by using Diamond Ranking activities, where students put points in order of importance, beginning at the top with the ideas they most like/agree with and finishing at the bottom with the ideas they least like/agree with.

3) Inform the students about the Life Skill you are studying by using reading texts, listenings, podcasts, video. In this way, we can combine vital skills practice with meaningful content.

4) Give the students a task to allow them to put the Life Skill into practice. This can lead to integrated skills work, presentations, and team project work.

See also Dave Spencer’s ‘Life Skills: The Gateway to the Future’ webinar <http://www.macmillanenglish.com/events/life-skills-online-conference/>

and IATEFL presentation <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JgQoVqybs2s>

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Main Life Skills Areas for Teenagers: A personal selection

PERSONAL WELL-BEING

PHYSICAL WELL-BEING

ICT

AUTONOMY/ENTERPRISE

SOCIAL SKILLS/CITIZENSHIP

THE WORLD AROUND YOU

ACADEMIC SKILLS

THE WORLD OF WORK

NUMERACY

MONEY AND FINANCE

ART AND CULTURE

See Gateway 2nd Edition (<http://www.macmillangateway2.com/> ) for practical examples of how to approach these topics. There are videos for each Life Skills spread, from A1+ to B2+.

Tips:

\* I would always advise extreme caution discussing oversensitive issues in a foreign language.

\* Remember to respect students’ opinions and feelings when discussing Life Skills. And remember that there are not always right or wrong answers to complex questions and issues.

Background reading/viewing

1) ‘Educating Ruby: What our children really need to learn’ - Guy Claxton and Bill Lucas, Crown House Publishing, 2015

Key quote:

‘If you are not a teacher, when was the last time you needed, in your real life, to solve a quadratic equation? Or recall, without recourse to your iPad, the capital city of Mongolia? Or explain the difference between a terminal and a medial moraine, or a breve and a minim?’

2) ‘Independent Review of the proposal to make PSHE (Personal, Social, Health, Economic) Education statutory’ - Sir Alasdair Macdonald 2015

<http://www.educationengland.org.uk/documents/pdfs/2009-macdonald-pshe.pdf>

Key quote:

‘Effective PSHE education should equip children and young people with the knowledge, understanding, attitudes, and practical skills to live healthy, safe, productive and fulfilled lives. But beyond this, PSHE should also enable children and young people to reflect on and clarify their own values and attitudes, and explore the complex and sometimes conflicting range of values and attitudes they encounter now and will in the future. PSHE Education is therefore also about developing young people´s sense of identity, their capacity to relate to other people and handle setbacks. It also encourages young people to be enterprising and supports them in making positive education and career choices and managing their finances effectively. In other words, it is about developing the personal, social and emotional attitudes that will help them flourish in life and work.’

3) European Commission – Education and Training

<http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/school/competences_en.htm>

Key quote:

‘The European Commission works with EU countries to strengthen 'key competences' – knowledge, skills, and attitudes that will help learners find personal fulfillment and, later in life, find work and take part in society. These key competences include 'traditional' skills such as communication in one’s mother tongue, foreign languages, digital skills, literacy and basic skills in maths and science, as well as horizontal skills such as learning to learn, social and civic responsibility, initiative and entrepreneurship, cultural awareness, and creativity.’

4) ‘An Intelligent Person’s Guide to Education’ – Tony Little, Bloomsbury, 2015

Key Quote:

‘At its simplest, schools give young people a place at the water’s edge.
A horse may not choose to drink if it is led to water but it cannnot drink at all if the water is not there.’

5) ‘Did you know? Shift happens’ – Fisch and McLeod, YouTube

Key Quotes:

‘Many of our students may end up doing jobs that don’t exist yet, with technologies that haven’t been invented, to solve problems we don’t even know are problems yet.’

‘According to the US Department of Labor, today’s learner will have 10 to 14 jobs by the age of 38.’