

From the Editor

Nowadays our society is very concerned about young people's education. The Student Health Service (SHS) aims to enhance youngsters' psychosocial and physical health via the Basic Life Skill Training (BLST) programme. The current newsletter will briefly introduce the content of this programme and share some comments from some of our users namely students and teachers. In fact, the participating schools appreciated our work over the years and considered basic life skill as an important training. Staff of the Adolescent Health

Programme of the SHS will continue to work hard and keep our quality service in the coming future.



Editorial Board Members:

Dr. HO Chun-luen, David, Ms. LAI Chiu-wah, Phronsie, Ms. CHAN Shuk-yi, Karindi,

Ms. CHOI Choi-fung, Ms. CHAN Kin-pui

Tel : 2349 4212 / 3163 4600 Fax : 2348 3968

Website : <http://www.studenthealth.gov.hk>

Background

Many parents and teachers agree that adolescence is a rather important but yet puzzled period for them. Young people spend more time with their peers and their social circle will be widened with more opportunities to contact the opposite sex. On the other hand, their time spent with family will decrease. During adolescence, they experience body development as well as encounter a various challenges as well as adjustment problems like family relationships, emotional and behavioral problems, friends, study, emotional and sexual development.

No matter they experience success or failure, the outcome might affect their mood, self-confidence, and the establishment of self-esteem directly or indirectly. In addition, they start to build up their moral attitudes and have more independent thinking and self development. They will also try to analyze different opinions and comments from various channels and consolidate their own thinking in order to strike a balance between them and others while facing conflict. At this stage, they learn more about themselves and build a more mature personality. If they can develop healthier, they will be able to contribute to society more in the future.

Basic Life Skill Training Programme (BLST)

To empower our adolescents to face the challenges of growing up, the Student Health Service of the Department of Health launched the Adolescent Health Programme (AHP) in 2001. The programme is to provide quality health promotion services for our adolescents using a multi-disciplinary team approach. It is an outreaching service for secondary schools implemented by our professional staff including doctors, nurses, dietitians, social workers and clinical psychologists.

The programme is designed for secondary one to three students. It is a three-staged continuous training programme with basic sessions in the secondary one followed by booster sessions in secondary two and three, focusing on psychosocial health promotion. It covers a wide range of life skills including emotion management, harmonious interpersonal relationship building, communication skills, stress management, analytical thinking and problem solving skill, time and money management, self acceptance and self-care, as well as healthy living skill.

Why one need to learn basic life skills?

As many studies show, education and health are inseparable and inextricably linked. Ensuring that adolescent are healthy and able to learn is an essential part of an effective education system. Equipping young people with knowledge, attitudes, and skills through education is analogous to providing a vaccination against health threats. It minimizes the threat of disease and reduces the adverse health effects due to their unhealthy behaviour.

As health education and life skills have evolved during the past decade, there is growing recognition of and evidence for the role of psychosocial and interpersonal skills in the development of young people, from their earliest years through childhood, adolescence, and into young adulthood. These skills have an effect on the ability of young people to protect themselves from health threats, build competencies to adopt positive behaviours, and foster healthy relationships. Life skills have been tied to specific health choices, such as choosing not to use tobacco, eating a healthy diet, or making safer and informed choices about relationships. Different life skills are emphasised depending on the purpose and topic. Basic life skills training gained more attention in recent years, people began to realize that the psycho-social and interpersonal skills in the different life stages of growth, including infancy, childhood, youth, adult, play an important role.

The contents of the Basic Life Skills Training programme

This course aims to teach "life skills" i.e. "knowledge", "attitude" and "skills". "Knowledge" refers to a range of information and the understanding of theory. "Attitudes" are personal biases, preferences,



Student Health Service, Department of Health
Dr Lai Yi Lam

and subjective assessments that predispose one to act or respond in a predictable manner. Attitudes lead people to like or dislike something, or to consider things good or bad, important or unimportant, worth caring about or not worth caring about. "Skills" are abilities that enable people to carry out specific behaviours. The goal of this course is to enable a young person to apply knowledge and develop attitudes and skills to make positive decisions and take actions to promote and protect one's health and the health of others.

World Health Organization has defined "Life Skills" into three categories, namely communication and interpersonal skills, decision making and critical thinking skills, coping and self-management skills. However, many life skills are interrelated, and several of them can be taught together in a learning activity. Life skills are abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life. In particular, life skills are psychosocial competencies and interpersonal skills that help people make informed decisions, solve problems, think critically and creatively, communicate effectively, build healthy relationships, empathise with others, and cope with managing their lives in a healthy and productive manner. Life skills may be directed toward personal actions or actions toward others, or may be applied to actions that alter the surrounding environment to make it conducive to health.

Curriculum development of the BLST

It has been nearly a decade since the development of the BLST course in 2001. Youth culture and the society have changed a lot and the BLST course should also keep abreast of the changing social environment

and hence suits the changing needs of young people. Therefore, in 2010, Student Health Service of the Department of Health commissioned an experienced non-governmental organization to work together with the Adolescent Health Programme staff to revise the existing course content. The new design used more lively daily life examples together with new activities to illustrate the core messages. We hope that the new BLST programme would match with the current learning characteristics of students so that they could learn more practical skills from the new programme.

The course targets at the physical, psychological and social needs of today's secondary school students. We have made reference to local and foreign literature on the promotion of the social health of adolescents during the preparation process. Besides, focus group interview were conducted on some students and teachers to seek their views on the programme so that the content would better meet their needs. Besides, we also invited principal, front-line teacher, representative from the Education Bureau and the Social Welfare Department to compose a Steering Committee to monitor the entire course of the revision process.

The Revised BLST programme

There are a total of ten chapters in the revised Form one programme. Eight of them were revised programme, including "Problem Solving Skills", "Emotion Management", "Stress Management", "Communication Skills", "Healthy Living", "Self Appreciation" and "Refusal skills". There were two new chapters called "Personal Growth I" and "Team Work". The following is the introduction on some of the new and revised chapters:

"Team Work" is a new chapter in the Form One programme. The learning objective is to let students learn about the skills and attitudes during team building, so that they could effectively work with others and complete tasks efficiently. There is an activity called "Man Made Machine" which requires students to participate in groups to achieve a task. Then they will draw lots to decide what kind of machine to act, such as washing machines, cranes, clip doll machine, and let the other group guess about what machine they are acting for. This activity lets students experience the role of being a team member, and they must maintain a cooperative attitude with a positive common goal in order to achieve the goal. Every member need to contribute actively and share the responsibility to achieve the common goal, meet the challenges and undertake consequences. They will learn the skills to maintain a good team so as to achieve the team goals.

Life Skill



"Problem solving" is a revised programme. The learning objective is to enable students to learn the ideal attitude and steps to solve the problem so as to enhance their problem solving ability. The new activity "unknot the knot" requires two students to form a group and they need to unknot the knot tying between their hands in ten minutes. It is not important whether they have succeed unknotting or not, the activity aims to bring out that the challenges are not as hard as we might have imagined, and as long as we are always positive, we could be able to face challenges. Meanwhile, we should cultivate them the right attitude to face challenges. We should keep trying, and remain optimistic, open and positive.

There are a total of nine chapters in the Form Two programme. Seven of them are revised programme, including "Active Listening", "Self-Esteem", "Appreciation of Daily Life", "Personal Value Reflection", "Anger Management" and "Conflict Resolution". There are two new chapters called "Creativity" and "Personal growth II".

"Creativity" is a new chapter and its learning objective is to develop students' creativity and application to daily life. We defined "Creativity" as making something "new" and "valuable". We encourage students to develop the right attitude to improve their ability in creativity, e.g. being curious, perseverance, humble, passion, etc. One activity "Brain Storming" is very interesting and useful. Students can usually come up with more common but old-fashioned methods which are still valuable and worthy of appreciation and retention. Some students will come up with many innovative but not feasible ideas, but as long as students continue to improve, they will create a "new" and "valuable" result. Creativity could bring us new ideas in life, improve our quality of life and it could be very fun too.

"Personal Growth II" is also a new chapter, aiming to let students be aware of the right attitudes and skills to face with the opposite sex. From the programme, students understand the factors to be considered before they start a love affair in a healthy manner with the opposite sex. The activity "Boys and girls guide" teaches through scenarios based recording tapes, and guide the students to have group discussions. They will learn about the proper social distance between opposite sex while in campus and public area.

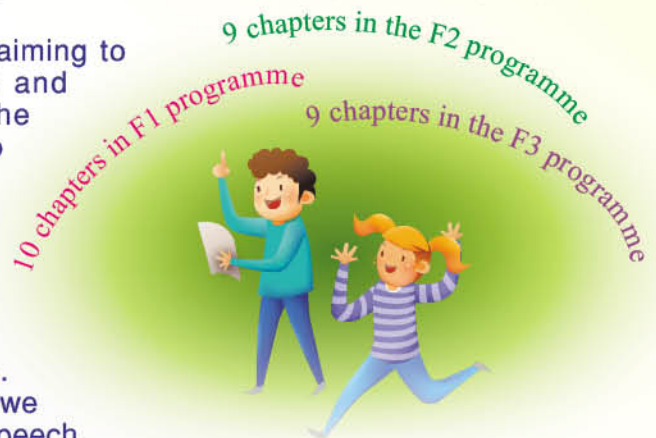
They should avoid excessive intimacy. Besides, we should avoid overly ambiguous behavior and speech between opposite sex, so as not to cause unnecessary misunderstanding. Focused on those students who are already in love affairs, this chapter will also teach the skills to deal with emotional matter, such as when rejecting the pursuit of the others, one should take into account the other's feeling, and be positive, respectful and show a firm attitude during the process.

There are a total of nine chapters in the revised Form Three programme. Five of them are revised programme, including "Analytical thinking", "Time management", "Money management", "Adversity" and "Mutual support". There are four new chapters including "Learning skill", "Goal setting", "Communication skill" and "Health promotion". The Form three chapters are still in editing stage and therefore we are unable to share with you at the moment.

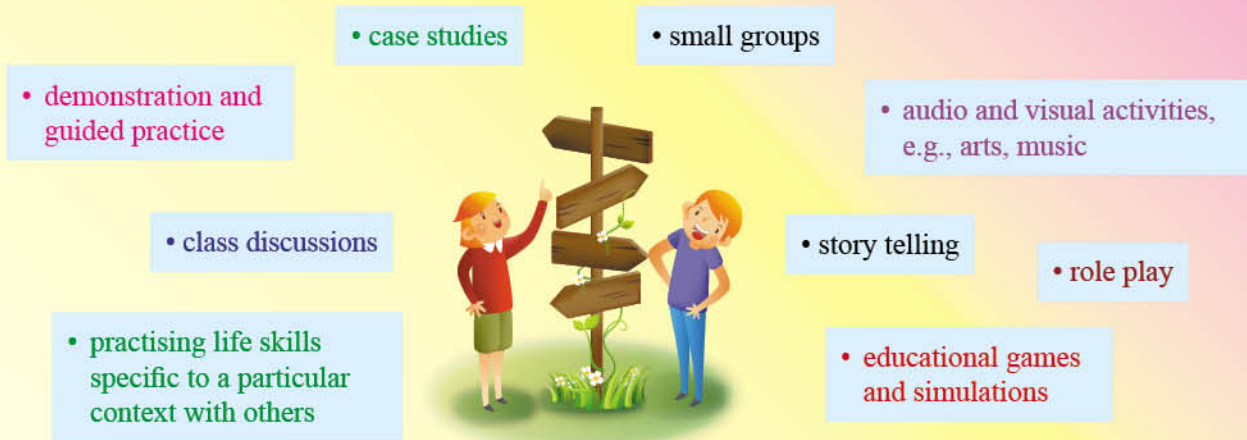
The teaching and learning method for BLST programme

To contribute towards skills-based health education goals and achieve the objectives of skill-based health education, teaching and learning methods must be relevant and effective. These include modelling, observation, and social interactions. Interactive or participatory teaching and learning methods are an essential part of skills-based health education. Skills are learned best when students have the opportunity to observe and actively practise them. Researchers thought that if young people can practise the skills in the safety of a classroom environment, it is much more likely that they will be prepared to use them in and outside of school.

The role of teachers in delivering skills-based health education is to facilitate participatory learning in addition to conducting lectures or employing other appropriate and efficient methods for achieving the learning objectives. Participatory learning utilises the experience, opinions, and knowledge of group members; provides a creative context for the exploration and development of possibilities and options; and affords a source of mutual comfort and security that aids the learning and decision-making process.



Participatory teaching methods used in BLST programme include the following:



Take for example, in a Form one programme named “Personal Growth I”, the activity “Instant change”, required one student representative to leave the classroom and make 3 changes in their appearance as directed by the facilitator. When the student representative returns to the classroom, the remaining students will guess about the subtle changes made while outside the classroom. With this educational game, student will experience that the transfiguration is similar to actual life process and there will be changes in their body. Besides, some changes could happen very suddenly. Therefore, students should enjoy the process of growth positively and actively.

Another example was called “Value Auction” which is a Form two programme activity under the theme “Personal Value Reflection”. Many students like this activity. Students are grouped into 6-8 groups to bid for three important values in life and they need to write the reasons of bidding such item in a worksheet. There are many items for students to bid, including health, family, friendship, academic, trustworthy, fair, appearance, honesty, money, love and others. This activity can effectively guide the students to review their own value judgement which would affect their position, behavior and decisions. At the same time, students will experience in the auction process that making judgment on things, will be affected by personal values, environment, and the psychological state at the moment. Therefore, they need to learn to build a positive and healthy value judgment, in order to avoid violation of personal values in the future.

Summary

In short, BLST is welcomed and praised by many teachers and students and they believed that such training is conducive to adolescents’ development. Learning basic life skills through participatory teaching methods can effectively teach students about the related attitudes, values and skills which are very important to help them becoming mature adult. The whole BLST programme revision would be carried out in phases. The new Form One programme has been completed and put in use in September 2011. Form Two and Three programmes are still under revision and will be implemented in 2012-2013 school year.

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In this issue we have invited students and teachers to share their opinions about the training:



The views of students on the training:

Speakers spoke in an attractive way.
Good!

Good! I learnt a lot of knowledge that was outside the school textbooks.

I like BLST because it made me understand myself more and it enhanced my problem solving skills.

I love "Stress Management" the most as the relaxation skills were very practical and useful.

I like the bridge building game in "Problem Solving Skills".

"Communication Skills" helped me to build a better friendship with my friends.

I think the activities were well organised and the core messages were matched to the game. I love bridge building game.

I love the game in "Refusal Skill" the most. It is fun.

I am particularly fond of using game format in class and I think introducing some healthy competition in classroom would arouse more interest from us. Besides, I like receiving souvenirs during competition.

The availability of audiovisual material helped us to understand the core messages!

The teacher's response:

Our school participated in Form 1 and 2 BLST programme this year. I felt that most students were interested in the content and the activities were very much matched with the needs of students.

The Principal agreed that the programme was able to help students to grow healthier. He believed that the course was able to teach the right and practical stress management skills.

All the Form one class teachers agreed that the course was just right to the students and they appreciated the multi-modalities way of teaching.

I appreciated the course design as a whole and I think the healthy competition in classroom, together with the little gift given after activities make the learning atmosphere more enjoyable.

The Principals and co-ordinating teachers agreed that the course was able to enhance students' moral education and the overall effects to students were positive. Students had benefited a lot through the training.

Nowadays young people face a lot of temptations, including internet addiction and psychotropic substance. I thought the "Refusal Skill" programme was very useful to students.

The knowledge learnt could be used life long.
Good!

I think the facilitators were very professional in teaching life skills. The programme design was excellent as well.

The Principals and teachers are grateful to the Department of Health to provide such excellent services to their schools and they echoed the importance of the life skill teaching.





Healthy Recipes



Latest News

Latest News



Dear Students,

Do you have problem find healthy recipes? Recently, we have invited Bon Bonn and his friends to identify some healthy recipes and uploaded them onto our website. You can enjoy preparing these healthy snacks with your parents and friends. Wish you all eat healthy and live a happy life! You are welcomed to visit our website at: http://www.studenthealth.gov.hk/english/health_recipe/health_recipe.html



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