



THE 10 SPIRIT SKILLS

COMPREHENSIVE HANDBOOK FOR TEACHERS

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1. INTRODUCTION

We are living through a truly incredible historical epoch: according to futurist Ray Kurtzweil we are living through an exponential epoch because of the speed of the change we are experiencing, not only technological. This historical epoch requires the school, in order to be a true ‘teacher of Life’, to rethink the knowledge it transmits. Among the fundamental knowledge of our culture, over the last 30 years, alongside the classic technical knowledge (hard skills), the so-called soft skills or transversal skills have made more and more room for themselves: skills linked to self-awareness, communication, relationships, etc., the importance of which we are increasingly realising, in every context of life. Teaching children the skills that will accompany them into this future is an exciting and complex challenge. The SPIRIT project was created with the aim of helping teachers, school leaders and researchers meet this challenge by offering an innovative model for teaching soft skills in primary schools, namely between K1 and K4 level. This handbook, the result of a collaboration between some of Europe’s leading organisations involved in education and research – **Patrizio Paoletti Foundation** (Italy), **Erasmushogeschool Brussel** (Belgium), **Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania** (Romania), **Magyar Digitális Oktatásért Egyesület** (MDOE, Hungary), **VitaComm Education** (Cyprus) and Thinking Skills Development Research Group (ELTE Faculty of Primary and Pre-School Education) as the associate partner of MDOE – is a practical and theoretical guide to addressing this educational transformation.

The term ‘Transversal skills’ entered the educational and professional debate around the 1970s, when the US Department of Defence began to distinguish technical skills, necessary to perform a specific task, from relational and transversal skills, which support effectiveness and adaptability in complex contexts. In recent decades, the importance of soft skills has grown exponentially, fuelled by an increasingly fluid, interconnected social and economic reality characterised by rapid technological change.

In a world where robotization, artificial intelligence and global transformations reshape professions and human interactions, skills such as effective communication, empathy, resilience, creativity, critical thinking and collaboration have become crucial for personal and collective success. These are not just skills useful for work: soft skills influence emotional and social well-being, a sense of belonging and the development of active and responsible citizenship.

For today's children, who will be tomorrow's adults, mastering these skills means being better equipped to face an unpredictable future. But how to teach them? How to make them an integral part of education in primary schools? The SPIRIT project sought to answer these questions with a unique approach based on a structured and flexible framework, capable of adapting to the needs of different pupils, teachers and cultural contexts.

The 10 transversal skills - The SPIRIT research team, after surveying more than 500 teachers across Europe and interviewing developmental psychologists, identified 10 skills that are crucial for children's well-being and resilience in a future scenario dominated by uncertainty and technological innovation.



Experiencing empathy, problem-solving or critical thinking in their daily lives enables teachers to fully understand the value of these skills and translate them into effective teaching practices. In a school context, this awareness generates a more inclusive, stimulating and resilient learning environment where children and adults grow together. Teaching soft skills also means creating a safe space for error, experimentation and dialogue, and who better to guide this process than an aware and trained teacher?

The SPIRIT project is not just a model: it is an invitation to transform education. Thanks to the contributions of the participating organisations and the shared vision of a forward-looking education, this handbook and the accompanying activities manual, aims to inspire teachers and schools to become agents of change to ensure a happier future for the children of today and the children of tomorrow. We hope that each page, each suggestion and each proposed activity will accompany you on an educational journey full of discovery and satisfaction.



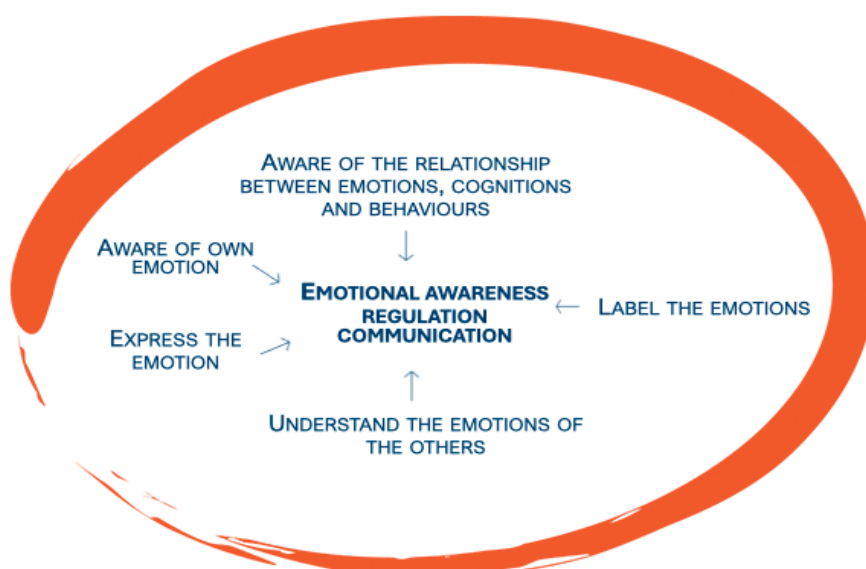
2. THE TEN SKILLS

2.1 Emotional awareness, regulation and communication

Definition of the skill

For the past 50 years, it has been evident that developing emotional competence is a cornerstone of promoting the well-being of children and adults. Emotional competences are broad and multifaceted, encompassing three key aspects: emotional awareness, emotion regulation, and communication of emotions. Emotional awareness is the ability to recognize and identify one's own emotions and those of others, involving understanding personal feelings and associating them with specific experiences. Emotion regulation refers to managing emotions appropriately and productively, rather than reacting impulsively, teaching children to calm themselves, express frustration constructively, and deal with intense emotions like anger or sadness positively. Communication of emotions involves expressing feelings clearly and respectfully, verbally and non-verbally, enabling children to share what they feel, avoid misunderstandings, and build deeper connections with others. Together, these components form the basis for emotional competence, supporting personal and interpersonal growth.

Complexity of the skill



- **Be aware of own emotions.** It is the ability to perceive and identify own feelings and emotions quite accurately.
- **Label the emotions.** It is the ability to use the appropriate emotional vocabulary for the feelings and emotions experienced, labeling them correctly.
- **Express the emotion** appropriately to yourself and others. It is the translation of your inner world into a language others can understand, spoken not just with words, but with your body and your actions.
- **Understand the emotions of the others.** It is the ability to accurately perceive the emotions and feelings of the others, as well as relate from empathy by putting into practice the appropriate verbal and extraverbal language for the situation.

- **Become aware of the relationship between emotions, cognitions and behavior.** It is the ability to understand how emotional states influence thinking and behavior, as well as understand the influence of our ideas and behaviors on emotional states.

Importance of the skill for lifelong well-being

Emotional awareness, regulation and communication are vital for navigating the challenges of the 21st century, where rapid change and interpersonal collaboration are constants. They are essential for stress management and resilience, as children who can identify and regulate emotions develop stronger coping mechanisms, helping them adapt to challenges and prevent anxiety. Improved social relationships are another outcome, as children who regulate and communicate emotions effectively build trust, collaborate better, and resolve conflicts constructively. These skills are crucial in fostering meaningful connections in school and future work environments. Furthermore, they support decision-making and problem-solving by promoting balanced and clear thinking, even under pressure, ensuring that impulsivity or frustration do not hinder judgement. Emotional competence also contributes to growth in self-esteem and a sense of self, as recognizing and expressing emotions respectfully strengthens self-awareness and confidence, essential for thriving in an ever-changing world.

Manifestation and development of this skill in ages 6-10

Children aged 6 to 10 are in a significant developmental phase where emotional awareness, regulation and communication begin to manifest more clearly. At ages 6–7, children start recognizing basic emotions like joy, sadness, and anger in themselves and others, linking these emotions to specific events or circumstances, such as feeling happy when praised or sad when excluded. Their ability to regulate emotions remains basic, relying on external guidance from adults or simple strategies like seeking comfort, while emotional communication is often limited to non-verbal cues or short expressions like saying, "I'm sad," without further elaboration. Between ages 8–9, children develop a deeper understanding of their own emotions and those of others, becoming capable of identifying more complex feelings such as frustration or pride and understanding mixed emotions like being happy yet nervous about a new experience. They begin experimenting with simple regulation strategies, like taking deep breaths or counting to ten when angry and show an increased willingness to talk about their

emotions, while non-verbal communication improves as gestures and tone of voice become more aligned with their feelings. By age 10, children exhibit advanced emotional awareness, recognizing the role of emotions in decision-making and social interactions. They develop more effective regulation strategies, such as reframing negative thoughts or discussing problems to find solutions, and emotional communication becomes nuanced, with children expressing themselves more precisely and adapting their communication to different social contexts, such as speaking calmly during conflicts to avoid escalation. To nurture these skills, teachers and caregivers can use role-playing, storytelling, and reflective discussions, providing consistent opportunities for emotional expression and practicing problem-solving in a supportive environment to foster growth.

Observation parameters for establishing class level

Level 1: Children recognize basic emotions in themselves and others, linking them to events that caused them. They begin understanding emotional signals, such as associating a smile with happiness.

Level 2: Children develop initial strategies for managing emotions, such as taking deep breaths or stepping away to calm down. They start noticing how their emotional reactions affect others, fostering a sense of responsibility.

Level 3: Children express emotions respectfully and use more complex regulation techniques, like changing perspectives to reframe situations. They exhibit empathy, understanding emotions' roles in relationships, and apply these insights to enhance social interactions.

Interconnections with other skills

Emotional awareness, regulation, and communication intersect with numerous other soft skills:

- **Empathy:** Emotional awareness, regulation, and communication enhances the ability to understand and share others' feelings, fostering stronger relationships.
- **Resilience:** Managing emotions supports bouncing back from challenges and building mental toughness.
- **Assertiveness:** Communicating emotions clearly and respectfully aids in advocating for oneself without aggression.
- **Active listening:** Emotional competence promotes attentive listening, crucial for understanding others deeply.
- **Stress management:** Emotion regulation helps prevent overwhelming stress, ensuring healthier coping strategies.
- **Critical thinking:** Recognizing emotions aids in analysing situations more objectively and making balanced decisions.
- **Collaboration:** Emotional communication strengthens teamwork by promoting trust and openness.
- **Problem-solving:** Regulated emotions support rational thinking and creative solutions in challenging situations.

Didactical tips for teachers

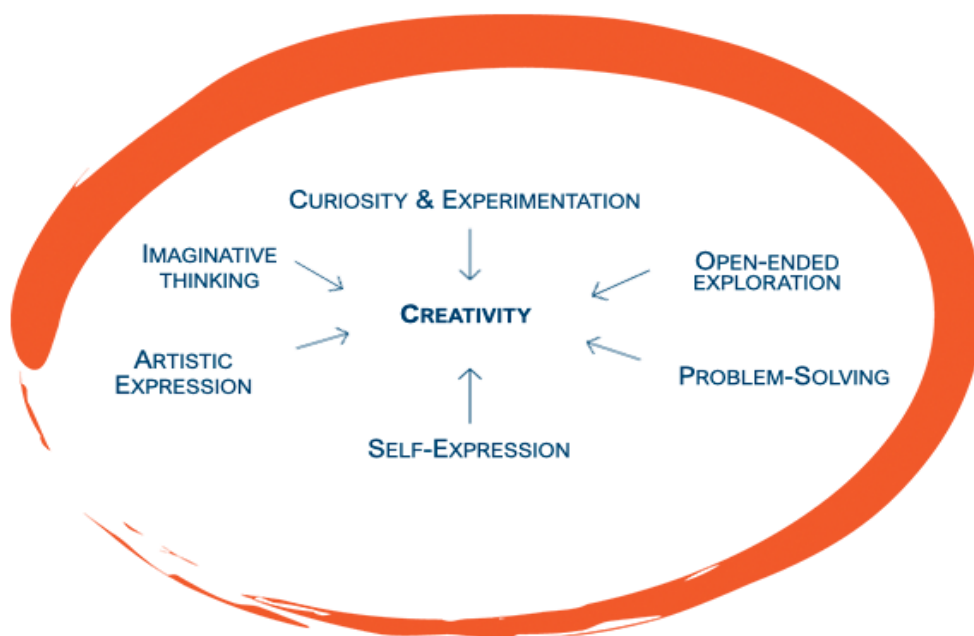
- Encourage the use of emotion words, asking students to label and share their feelings.
- Guide them through simple breathing exercises or relaxation techniques to regain calm.
- Model reflective listening by paraphrasing their emotions and validating their experiences.
- Introduce brief journaling activities, letting them express emotions through words or drawings.
- Role-play challenging conversations and highlight respectful language and tone.
- Celebrate constructive emotional exchanges and acknowledge efforts to resolve conflicts peacefully.

2.2 Creativity

Definition of the skill

Creativity is the capacity to reinterpret, combine, or expand upon existing conventions to generate ideas or approaches that are both novel and valuable. It involves combining existing knowledge, experiences, and perspectives in innovative ways to solve problems, create art, design products, or develop solutions. Creativity is often the result of collaboration, feedback, and iteration.

Complexity of the skill



- **Imaginative Thinking** – Children engage in role-playing, storytelling, creating stories, characters, and make-believe scenarios.
- **Open-Ended Exploration** – Using materials in different ways (e.g., turning a box into a spaceship).
- **Artistic Expression** – Drawing, painting, sculpting, and crafting allow children to visualize their ideas
- **Problem-Solving** – Finding multiple solutions to a challenge.
- **Self-Expression** – Drawing, dancing, acting, or verbalizing ideas in original ways.
- **Curiosity & Experimentation** – Asking “What if?” and exploring possibilities without fear of mistakes.

Importance of the skill for lifelong well-being

Developing creativity is essential for the future because it equips individuals and societies to thrive in an increasingly complex, fast-changing world. Here are some key reasons why it is important:

- Creativity enables individuals to approach challenges from different angles, fostering innovative solutions to complex problems in various fields. A creative mindset helps people adjust to new

situations, technologies, and changing environments by thinking flexibly and embracing new ideas; it fuels innovation and helps push society forward.

- Creativity allows individuals to express themselves uniquely through art, writing, music, and other forms of personal and cultural expression, contributing to emotional well-being. Creativity enriches our lives by making experiences more enjoyable and fulfilling.
- As knowledge and skills rapidly become obsolete, creativity supports a mindset of lifelong learning and curiosity, ensuring individuals stay relevant and adaptable in their personal and professional lives. In the future, many routine tasks may be automated, making creativity a key differentiator for human workers. Jobs that require creative problem
- solving, critical thinking, and innovation will most probably be in high demand.
- As technology evolves rapidly, creativity will be crucial for navigating emerging challenges and opportunities. Future societies will need to be resilient in the face of uncertainty, whether due to economic shifts, pandemics, or environmental disasters. Creative thinking promotes flexibility and the ability to quickly adapt to unforeseen circumstances.
- Creative thinking often leads to better collaboration, as it encourages sharing diverse ideas and perspectives, fostering teamwork and innovation. Engaging in creative processes also nurtures the ability to analyse, evaluate, and synthesize information in novel ways, improving critical thinking skills.

Manifestation and development of this skill in ages 6-10

Creativity at this stage often manifests as a mix of imaginative thinking, problem-solving, and the ability to generate original ideas. There are notable differences in how creativity manifests in children aged 6–8 compared to those aged 8–10 which are primarily due to developmental milestones in cognitive, emotional, and social growth.

Children aged 6-8:

- tend to blur the line between reality and fantasy, their creative works are often whimsical, with little concern for realism;
- approach problems with curiosity but may lack systematic thinking, often leading to unexpected and inventive solutions;
- creativity is often expressed through play, such as make-believe scenarios, puppet shows, or role-playing;
- collaborative creativity is limited as they are still learning to work with others and share ideas.

Children aged 8–10:

- consider others' viewpoints, leading to more collaborative and socially aware creative projects;
- engage in structured problem-solving and are better at explaining the reasoning behind their creative decisions;
- their art and stories become more detailed, with attempts to mimic real-world objects, events, or emotions;
- enjoy group projects, value peer feedback, and can adapt their ideas to fit group goals.

Observation parameters for establishing class level

The development of creativity can be understood as progressing through different levels or stages, where individuals move from basic creative thinking to more advanced, refined, and innovative forms of creativity. While there are various models to describe the stages of creativity development, a common framework can include the following levels:

Level 1: At this level, creativity is often about mimicking or replicating existing ideas, forms, or patterns. Students may rely on known methods or examples, making small adjustments, for example painting a picture by closely following a teacher's example or writing a story that is similar to a well-known plotline. This is an important foundational stage where learners practice basic skills and gain exposure to creative processes. This level essentially involves learning through copying, which is crucial for mastering the foundational skills needed to create something original later.

Level 2: At this stage, students begin to experiment and explore different ideas or approaches, combining elements from various sources, testing boundaries and becoming more flexible in their thinking, for example, writing a story inspired by a book they've read but adding their own twists to the plot and characters. This stage is marked by an individual's ability to take something learned and make it their own, adding new elements or altering existing ones.

Level 3: At the highest level, creativity reaches mastery, where individuals are capable of producing highly original, innovative, and sophisticated work. They can generate complex, refined ideas and create new frameworks or fields of knowledge, for example, solving an environmental issue by applying conventional or unconventional methods, such as using a novel material for water purification. Transformational creativity involves creating groundbreaking or disruptive innovations that challenge established norms or perspectives.

Interconnections with other skills

- **Critical thinking:** critical thinking involves analysing and evaluating ideas, while creativity generates novel solutions. Together, they enable individuals to refine their ideas and assess the feasibility of innovative solutions.
- **Problem-solving:** creativity fuels problem-solving by enabling individuals to think from different perspectives, explore novel approaches and generate multiple solutions.
- **Emotional intelligence:** emotional intelligence (EI) complements creativity by helping individuals manage emotions, empathize with others, and draw inspiration from personal and social experiences. It also fosters the resilience needed to persist through creative challenges.
- **Collaboration and cooperation:** creativity thrives in collaborative environments, as diverse perspectives spark new ideas and solutions to achieve shared goals.
- **Adaptability:** adaptability involves being open to change and adjusting to new circumstances, which is essential for creativity. Creative thinkers must adapt their approaches when original ideas don't work or when unexpected challenges arise.
- **Curiosity:** curiosity drives creativity by encouraging exploration, questioning, and the pursuit of new knowledge. It provides the motivation to seek inspiration and experiment with unfamiliar ideas.

- Resilience: creativity often involves trial and error, which can lead to frustration or failure. Resilience helps individuals persist through setbacks, refine their ideas, and continue the creative process despite challenges.

Didactical tips for teachers

- Encourage open-ended activities such as drawing, storytelling, or building with blocks that have no single correct answer.
- Create a safe place for expression where students feel comfortable sharing their ideas without fear of judgment.
- Integrate play-based learning, e.g. role-playing, dramatization, or imaginative play.
- Incorporate divergent thinking exercises by using questions/problems that encourage multiple answers or solutions.
- Let students choose topics, activities, or ways to present their work.
- Integrate arts across the curriculum, blend creative arts like music, visual arts drawing, or drama with subjects like maths or science.
- Foster curiosity by encouraging students to ask questions and seek their own answers.
- Use outdoor activities and age-appropriate resources to inspire creative thinking.
- Teach students to view mistakes as learning opportunities which can lead to better ideas.
- Celebrate creativity by displaying students' creative works around the classroom and acknowledging their efforts publicly.

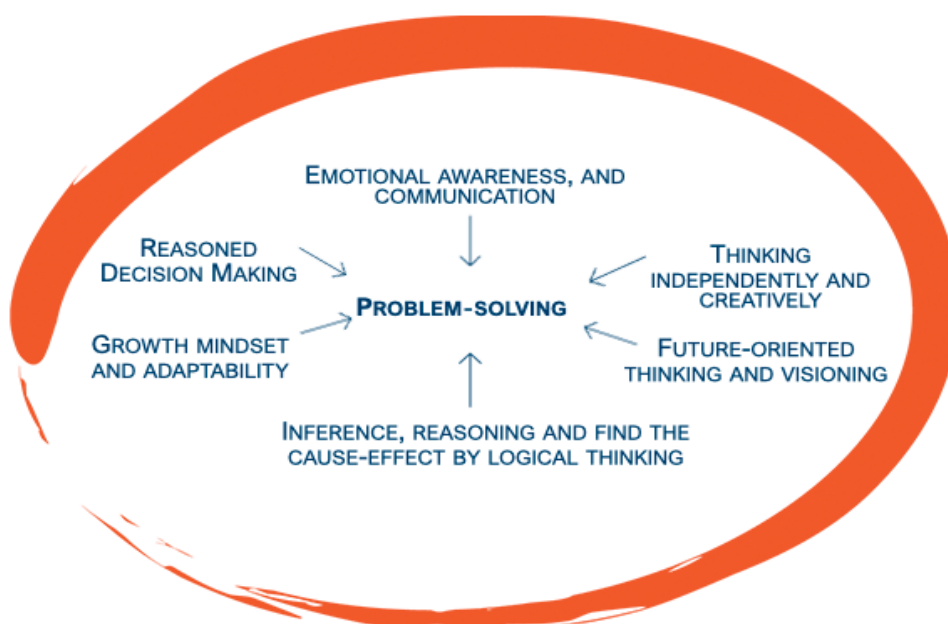


2.3 Problem-solving

Definition of the skill

The problem-solving process involves finding a solution to a problem by following several steps in a systematic way (= procedures or strategies). This is a structured approach to identify a problem, analyse it, and find and implement an effective solution. This skill typically transcends single disciplines and can be applied in different contexts. This skill involves critical thinking, creativity, and the ability to work through obstacles systematically. Problem-solving also requires adaptability, as not all solutions may work as expected, leading to adjustments and further exploration of alternatives.

Complexity of the skill



- **Emotional awareness, and communication** – children are motivated to solve a problem if they can recognise and verbalise why the situation is not good for them. (makes feel bad). Recognising and explaining it is an essential starting point for identifying, and solving the problem.
- **Future-oriented thinking and visioning:** children need to be able to imagine and articulate what a solved situation means to them. Describe the situation when the problem is really resolved. This requires “visioning” critical thinking.
- **Inferring, reasoning and finding the cause-effect:** adults break down the problem, find the cause-effect relationship and identify the areas they want to change in the problem-solving process. Children need help to do it. Working together to break the problem into smaller, more manageable chunks, and finding logical connections together. However, it is important that children have the ability to understand these cause-effect relationships well. Facilitate the processes with open-ended questions.

- **Thinking independently and creatively:** Devise many possible solutions to all subproblems (divergent phase which involves CREATIVITY). Support children to do it. At this point, they don't even have to have "good" solutions.
- **Reasoned Decision Making:** Evaluating the possible solutions and deciding which one might be most effective and solve all subproblems (convergent phase which involves CRITICAL THINKING). It includes **assessing the options** (pros and cons of each possible solution), **weighting consequences** (which solution offers the most benefits) and finally **making a reasoned choice**.
- **Growth mindset and adaptability:** Trying out a chosen solution and learning from the results, even if it doesn't work immediately. Seek adjustments and further alternatives means that CRITICAL THINKING comes into play again in this phase.

The steps of the problem-solving process:

- Defining the problem; This stage articulates what the problem is precisely. Ask questions: What is the problem? When and where does it occur? Who or what is affected by it? Why is it a problem?
- Defining criteria for the main solution: when is the problem really resolved?
- Identifying possible subproblems
- Devise many possible solutions to all subproblems (Divergent phase which involves CREATIVITY)
- Solve all subproblems (Convergent phase which involves CRITICAL THINKING):
- Assess the options: Look at the pros and cons of each possible solution. Consider factors such as limitation and feasibility, cost, time and possible risks or obstacles.
- Weigh consequences: Consider the possible short- and long-term consequences of each solution. Which solution offers the most benefits and has the least adverse effects?
- Make a choice: Choose the best solution based on the analysis. This can be a single solution or a combination of several solutions.
- Integrate partial solutions to all subproblems: implement the solution to the main problem
- Testing, evaluating and adjusting/optimising the overall solution. Critical thinking comes into play again in this phase.

Importance of the skill for lifelong well-being

Problem-solving is a foundational transferable skill that enhances an individual's ability to succeed in various domains. People with strong problem-solving skills are typically creative, critical thinkers who demonstrate perseverance. These qualities enable them to face future challenges with confidence and resilience.

Additionally, strong problem-solving skills enhance one's ability to collaborate and communicate effectively. This helps in sharing ideas, delegating tasks, and uniting efforts toward a common goal.

In professional settings, employers highly value employees who can identify issues, take initiative, and provide effective solutions, contributing to greater efficiency and innovation within organizations.

The application of problem-solving skills leads to several positive outcomes:



- **Increased efficiency and productivity:** Well-executed problem-solving can streamline processes, reduce unnecessary work, and save time by quickly addressing obstacles.
- **Innovation and growth:** Creative solutions to problems can lead to new opportunities for growth, whether it's in business, education, or personal development.
- **Reduced conflict and better decision making:** Problem-solving skills help manage conflicts or complex decisions by identifying root causes and facilitating rational discussions based on facts and solutions rather than emotions.
- **Continuous improvement:** Regular application of problem-solving leads to personal and professional development. Individuals improve their abilities by learning from each problem they tackle, leading to better performance over time.

Manifestation and development of this skill in ages 6-10

At the age of 6-10, the ability to problem-solve begins to develop. Children in this age group can already identify and solve simple problems independently, especially when they have concrete and visual tools. For example, they can solve a puzzle.

While children of this age often still use concrete, practical approaches, they are beginning to think more abstractly and may start planning simple solutions for more complex issues. Problem-solving at this age is therefore already recognizable, but it continues to develop. This process can be further stimulated through activities that challenge them to think about different solution strategies and encourage them to think creatively and flexibly. This could be different levels in the development of the skill:

Children between 6- 8 years

- simply recognize a problem and find a simple solution.
They learn what a problem is and that trial and error is allowed (without the fear of making mistakes). They learn to collaborate and share ideas with others.
- learn to use different strategies to find solutions.

Children between 8-10 years

- work more independently, follow multiple steps to reach a solution, stimulate critical thinking, and understand why one solution works and another does not.
- approach problems more creatively.
Solve problems that do not always have just one single answer.

Observation parameters for establishing class level

Level 1 (Beginner): Problem Identification: Needs help identifying problems. Generating Solutions (creativity): Suggests one simple solution. Use of strategies: Random approach, needs help. Perseverance and resilience: Gives up quickly, gets frustrated. Reflection and evaluation: Rarely reflects, struggles with evaluation. Independence: Highly dependent on guidance.

Level 2 (Semi-advanced): Problem Identification: Independently identifies simple problems, sometimes with help. Generating Solutions (creativity): Generates multiple solutions. Use of strategies: Uses strategies, sometimes with guidance. Perseverance and resilience: Shows perseverance,

sometimes discouraged. Reflection and evaluation: Sometimes reflects, makes suggestions for improvement. Independence: Increasing independence, seeks confirmation.

Level 3 (Expert): Problem Identification: Independently identifies all problems. Generating Solutions (creativity): Offers creative and logical solutions. Use of strategies: Uses advanced strategies independently. Perseverance and resilience: Strong resilience, adjusts approach when facing setbacks. Reflection and evaluation: Regularly reflects, conducts in-depth analysis. Independence: Fully independent, initiates and adapts without help.

Interconnections with other skills

- **Critical thinking:** Both skills involve the ability to analyse, evaluate, and synthesize information. Problem-solving is often the practical application of critical thinking in decision-making and action-taking.
- **Creativity:** Problem-solving relies on creativity to generate novel and innovative solutions. The ability to think outside the box enhances one's ability to resolve issues effectively.
- **Collaboration:** Many problems are solved through teamwork. Effective problem solvers often work well with others, leveraging diverse perspectives to arrive at the best solution. Strong communication skills are essential in collaborative problem-solving.
- **Decision-making:** Problem-solving is a precursor to making decisions. After evaluating solutions, the ability to choose the best option and commit to an action is vital.
- **Resilience and flexibility:** The iterative process of problem-solving often involves trial and error, requiring individuals to adapt when initial solutions fail. Resilience is crucial in persisting through challenges and finding success.

Didactical tips for teachers

Teachers support children by encouraging them to think about the consequences of their actions, consider multiple solutions, and motivate them not to give up in the face of setbacks.

Here are some concrete tips for teachers to help develop problem-solving skills in children:

- Ask open-ended questions instead of closed questions (this encourages students to think more deeply and consider various aspects of the problem).
- Use games, puzzles, and concrete problem situations where students need to think and come up with solutions.
- Support the problem visually (use diagrams, charts, or mind maps to help students organize their thoughts).
- Encourage students to think creatively and experiment with different approaches to problems.
- Promote collaboration among students ($1 + 1 = 3$) to show how teamwork can lead to better solutions.
- Regularly practice problem-solving skills to build confidence and fluency.
- Integrate problem-solving activities across subjects such as math, language, or sciences (e.g., "How can we create a garden that attracts bees?").

These strategies help children not only solve problems but also develop a mindset that allows them to approach challenges with creativity and resilience.

2.4 Critical thinking

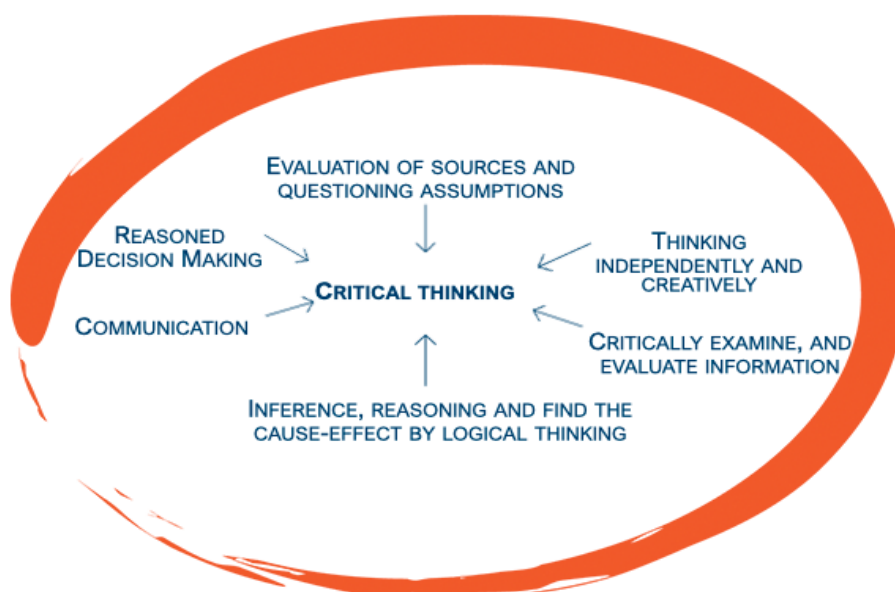
Definition of the skill

Critical thinking is the ability to reason objectively and logically, analyse and evaluate information, consider different perspectives and draw conclusions based on evidence and logic. It enables us to evaluate and assess information in an objective and systematic way.

Critical thinking is thus a dual skill:

- It includes both 1. the ability to critically examine and evaluate information, and 2. the ability to think independently and creatively about complex problems and issues.
- Critical thinking also helps form well-reasoned opinions and positions and ensures that we do not simply believe everything we hear, see, feel or read.

Complexity of the skill



- **Critically examine, analyse and evaluate** information – children learn to examine new information and ideas, analyze them without pre-judgement, and form conclusions rather than just remembering facts.
- **Thinking independently and creatively** about complex problems and issues, challenge assumptions, fostering independent thought. .
- **Evaluation of sources and questioning assumptions:** Assessing the credibility of sources and the strength of arguments. Recognizing the motives and interests of the information provider, and considering the different perspectives of others. It relies heavily on empathy
- **Inference, reasoning and find the cause-effect by logical thinking**– Drawing logical conclusions based on evidence and reasoning.

Critical thinking needs ability to form well-reasoned opinions and positions and ensures that we do not simply believe everything we hear, see, feel or read.

- **Communication:** Sharing and receiving the information with others. Open for understanding others view. Clearly communicating the critical thinker's thoughts and conclusions in a logical manner.
- **Self-Regulation and being objective:** Acknowledging your own biases and assumptions and actively working to overcome them.
- **Making independent decisions:** By remaining impartial and motivated by facts rather than assumptions.

Importance of the skill for lifelong well-being

- Critical thinking is an essential skill in almost every aspect of life, requiring the ability to think independently and logically. It goes beyond simply having an opinion or point of view; it includes the ability to substantiate and defend that perspective.
- Critical thinking is therefore essential in our increasingly complex and rapidly changing world. It is the ability to think in an active and reflective way, to analyse and evaluate problems in a systematic way and thus to arrive at informed decisions and opinions.
- So critical thinking is a fundamental and overarching skill that should be promoted in all aspects of life. It helps people make more informed and responsible choices and contributes to a critical and tolerant society. Developing critical thinking as a cross-cutting skill is thus crucial for individuals and society: critical thinking is becoming increasingly important because our world is full of data and we have to know how to distinguish and work properly with them.

Manifestation and development of this skill in ages 6-10

For children aged 6-7:

- Asking questions: Children ask a lot of 'Why?' and 'How?' questions. This shows their curiosity and desire to understand things. For example, they may ask, 'Why is the sky blue?'.
- Active participation: They are often actively involved in conversations, asking curious questions and wanting to provide their own answers.
- Spontaneous thinking: Children can make surprising connections while playing or telling stories. For example, when reading a story, they can immediately explain what they think happens next.
- Concrete thinking: They tend to think in concrete terms and struggle with abstract concepts. Their critical skills often focus on what they can observe directly.
- Cause-and-effect: They begin to understand that actions have consequences. For example, they may come up with an example such as: 'If I don't clean up my toys, I won't be able to play with them anymore.'
- Story comprehension and analysis: They can retell simple stories and ask questions about characters' choices. For example, 'Why did the hero decide to run away?'
- Simple statements: They can express their thoughts, but often in simple ways. For example, 'I like this book because the pictures are beautiful.'
- Personal preferences: Opinions are strongly based on personal experiences and preferences, without much argumentation. They can say what they like or dislike, but do not yet explain many reasons.

- **Creative thinking:** While playing, they often invent new game rules or ways to solve a problem, such as how to overcome an obstacle in a game. This promotes their ability to think creatively and explore alternatives.

For children aged 8-10:

- **Active discussion:** They participate more often in group discussions and debates, not only expressing but also defending their ideas and opinions.
- **Collaboration:** They work better together on projects, learn to listen to each other and develop respect for different points of view.
- **Complex questions:** They start asking deeper questions about topics, such as ‘What if...?’ This shows their ability to consider scenarios and analyse possible outcomes.
- **Forming opinions and arguing:** Children can support their opinions about books, films or events with reasons. For example, when describing a book, they can explain which aspects they liked best and why.
- **Logical reasoning:** Children begin to make more logical connections and understand more abstract concepts. For example, they can think about how certain choices have long-term consequences.
- **Hypothetical thinking:** They are able to fantasise about ‘what if’ scenarios, which helps them explore possible outcomes and solutions.
- **Problem-solving thinking:** They can think of multiple solutions to a problem, such as how to resolve a conflict with a friend, and can weigh up the pros and cons of each solution before deciding what to do.
- **Information analysis:** They learn to compare and evaluate information, such as using different sources for a school project. They can ask questions such as ‘Is this correct?’ or ‘How do we know this is correct?’.
- **Critical evaluation:** Children begin to look at information more critically. They may ask questions like, ‘Is this even true?’ or ‘What could someone else say about this?’ This shows that they are considering different perspectives.
- **Simple reflection and evaluation:** After group activities or projects, they can reflect on what went well and what could be improved. They can formulate answers like, ‘I liked that we worked together, but we should have started our task earlier.’

Observation parameters for establishing class level

Level 1 (Beginner): Children ask simple questions such as ‘Why?’ and ‘How?’. They understand basic concepts of cause and effect and can express personal preferences, but without deep argumentation. Asking questions and Research: Asks simple questions. Analysis and Interpretation: Identifies basic facts. Evaluation of Arguments: Difficulty distinguishing between opinion and fact. Reasoning and Problem-Solving: Proposes basic solutions. Reflects on Thinking Process: Reflects rarely.

Level 2 (Semi-advanced): Children begin to ask more complex questions and can support their opinions with reasons. They are able to see problems from different perspectives and collaborate on group projects, actively participating in discussions.

Asking questions and Research: Asks relevant and complex questions. Analysis and Interpretation: Analyses information, makes connections. Evaluation of Arguments: Evaluates simple arguments.



Reasoning and Problem-Solving: Proposes multiple solutions with rationale. Reflects on Thinking Process: Reflects occasionally.

Level 3 (Expert): Children can reason logically and consider hypothetical scenarios. They formulate well-reasoned opinions and critically evaluate information, effectively using arguments and counterarguments in a discussion.

Asking questions and Research: Formulates in-depth, open-ended questions. Analysis and Interpretation: Critically analyses complex information. Evaluation of Arguments: Critically evaluates complex arguments. Reasoning and Problem-Solving: Formulates well-reasoned, innovative solutions. Reflects on Thinking Process: Reflects consistently on thinking process.

Interconnections with other skills

- Curiosity: Drives critical thinking by encouraging questions, exploration, and the search for explanations.
- Openness: Supports critical thinking by welcoming new ideas and different perspectives.
- Self-awareness: Helps identify personal biases, leading to more objective analysis.
- Questioning: Encourages deeper inquiry, clarification, and testing of information.
- Analysis and evaluation: Breaks down, compares, and assesses information to separate facts from opinions.
- Reasoning: Links ideas logically and helps draw consistent conclusions.
- Reflection: Promotes reviewing and improving one's own reasoning process.
- Problem-solving: Applies critical thinking to analyse problems and evaluate possible solutions.
- Decision-making: Uses critical thinking to make thoughtful, well-informed choices.
- Creativity: Generates original ideas, which critical thinking evaluates and refines.

Didactical tips for teachers

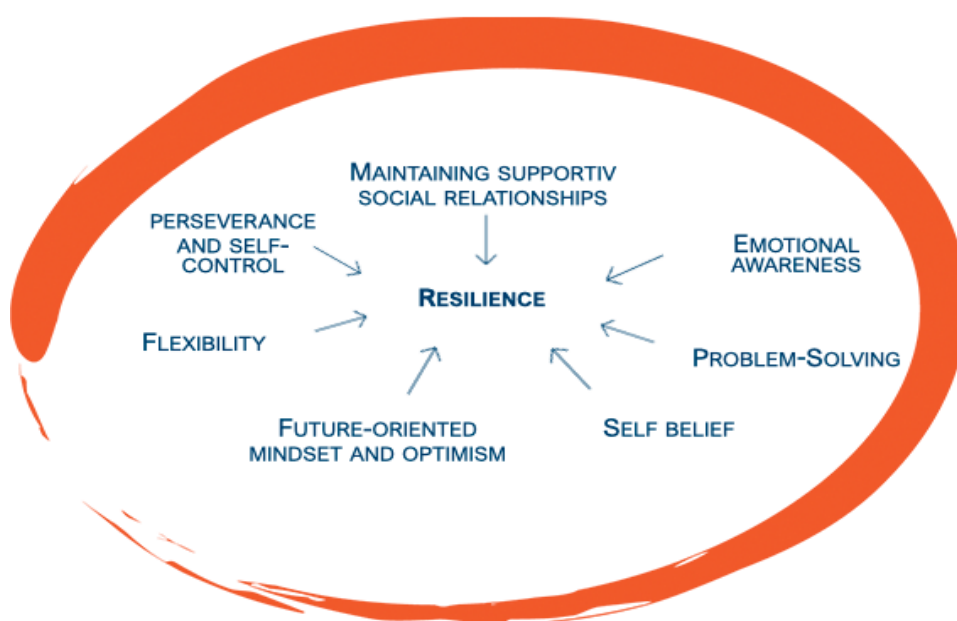
- Ask open-ended questions: e.g. 'Why do you think that?'
- Use thinking schemes: "what, why, how?" or "advantage and disadvantage"
- Have students work on problem-solving activities: individually or in small/large groups?
- Organise discussions on recognisable topics including both for and against arguments
- Encourage reflection on choices and outcomes
- Analyse stories and choices of characters
- Learn to look critically at media and information, current events
- Use games to practice logical and critical thinking: e.g. Puzzles and riddles
- Provide a safe environment for mistakes: "Mistakes are allowed!"
- Give room for autonomy in choices: multiple solutions to one problem
- Link lesson material to real-life situations: cross-curricular working.

2.5 Resilience

Definition of the skill

Resilience is the ability to adapt to challenges through mental, emotional, and behavioural flexibility. It is not just a personal trait but arises from the interaction between individuals and their environment, like family, community, and society. Resilience is the process and outcome of successfully adapting to difficult or challenging life experiences, especially through mental, emotional, and behavioural flexibility and adjustment to external and internal demands. A number of factors contribute to how well people adapt to adversities, including the ways in which individuals view and engage with the world, the availability and quality of social resources, and specific coping strategies.

Complexity of the skill



- **emotional regulation and acceptance:** children can calm themselves after experiencing frustration or failure (e.g., losing a game or resolving a conflict).
- **self-control:** in order to overcome failure and emotional pitfalls, the children must be able to establish a vision for the future (future-orientated mindset), control their thoughts and actions in order to achieve their goals, and be able to block out factors that might disturb them from reaching their goals. This requires a high degree of goal-orientation.
- **problem-solving:** they look for ways to overcome obstacles, like completing homework independently.
- **maintaining relationships:** they build and nurture supportive friendships or family bonds to help them through tough situations.
- **future-oriented mindset and optimistic outlook:** they remain hopeful for a positive outcome even when facing difficulties.
- **flexibility:** they adapt quickly to changes, such as a new teacher or classmates.

Importance of the skill for lifelong well-being

Resilience is vital in nearly every aspect of adult life, as challenges arise in various areas. In the workplace:

- It helps manage stress.
- Adapt to changes like new technologies or roles.
- Avoid burnout by balancing work and personal life.

In family life:

- Resilience supports effective parenting.
- Navigating relationship difficulties.
- Overcoming hardships such as financial issues or health crises.

It also plays a key role in maintaining physical and mental health during illnesses or emotional struggles, while fostering strong social relationships and coping with isolation or community conflicts. Resilience is critical during crises, from natural disasters and wars to economic instability, as it aids in processing trauma and rebuilding life. In education and personal growth, it helps individuals overcome learning challenges, adapt to career uncertainties, achieve goals, and build self-confidence through adversity. Essential resilience factors include optimism, acceptance, problem-solving skills, self-control, responsibility, relationship-building, and a future-oriented mindset, which can all be cultivated from childhood.

Manifestation and development of this skill in ages 6-10

Resilience is already present in children aged 6-10, as it is part of a developmental process that often starts earlier, during preschool years. The level of resilience they exhibit depends largely on their temperament, family background, and the support provided by their environment.

At this age, resilience can appear in various ways, such as:

- Emotional regulation: children can calm themselves after experiencing frustration or failure (e.g., losing a game or resolving a conflict).
- Self-control: in order to overcome failure and emotional pitfalls, the children must be able to establish a vision for the future (future-orientated mindset), control their thoughts and actions in order to achieve their goals, and be able to block out factors that might disturb them from reaching their goals. This requires a high degree of perseverance, self-control and goal-orientation.
- Problem-solving: they look for ways to overcome obstacles, like completing homework independently.
- Maintaining supportive social relationship: they build and nurture supportive friendships or family bonds to help them through tough situations.
- Future-oriented mindset and optimistic outlook: they remain hopeful for a positive outcome even when facing difficulties.
- Optimistic outlook: they remain hopeful for a positive outcome even when facing difficulties.
- Flexibility: they adapt quickly to changes, such as a new teacher or classmates.

Developing resilience at this age lays a foundation for children to successfully adapt to life's challenges as they grow into adulthood.

Children aged 6-10 with developed resilience are able to handle challenges and adapt to various situations confidently.

- They can regulate their emotions, calming themselves after setbacks such as losing a game or facing disappointment, which helps them avoid becoming overwhelmed.
- They are able to solve problems independently, using critical thinking to complete tasks or resolve conflicts with peers.
- These children can build and maintain supportive relationships, relying on social connections for emotional support during tough times and resolving disagreements constructively.
- With an optimistic outlook, they are able to stay motivated and hopeful, even when facing challenges or experiencing failure. They see setbacks as opportunities to learn, rather than obstacles.
- They can also adapt to changes, such as adjusting to new routines, environments, or meeting new classmates. Their flexibility helps them remain calm in unfamiliar situations. They approach challenges with confidence, persistence, and the ability to seek help when needed, balancing independence with support.

Overall, these children use their emotional, social, and cognitive skills to navigate life's difficulties. Their resilience enables them to manage current challenges and prepare for future ones, allowing them to grow and achieve their goals.

Observation parameters for establishing class level

Level 1: Children with low resilience often react with frustration or emotional outbursts to minor challenges. They tend to avoid difficult tasks, lacking confidence in their problem-solving abilities, and may struggle to ask for help. Social relationships can be fragile, with difficulty recovering from conflicts. For example, they might avoid group work or quit tasks after making mistakes.

Level 2: Children with moderate resilience manage frustration with support and are willing to face challenges, though they often need encouragement. They seek help but may rely on adults for reassurance. Their confidence varies by situation, and they may struggle with complex tasks or resolving conflicts independently. For example, they may need assistance to complete new or difficult tasks.

Level 3: Children with high resilience handle frustration well, learning from mistakes without distress. They take on challenges eagerly, find solutions independently, and adapt easily to change. They show confidence, persist through difficulties, and maintain stable relationships, resolving conflicts constructively. For example, they correct mistakes independently and approach tasks with enthusiasm.

Interconnections with other skills

- Emotional regulation: managing emotional responses to challenges, helping maintain focus and calm during setbacks.
- Problem-solving: finding solutions to obstacles, directly supporting the ability to overcome challenges.



- Self-confidence: believing in one's abilities, allowing persistence and a positive approach to challenges.
- Optimism: staying hopeful and motivated in adversity, fostering perseverance and a positive outlook.
- Adaptability: adjusting to changes and new situations, helping to thrive in unpredictable environments.
- Growth mindset: viewing challenges as opportunities to learn, which enhances resilience through continuous self-improvement.
- Self-awareness: understanding one's strengths and weaknesses, helping manage stress and adapt effectively.
- Stress management: using techniques to manage stress, preventing burnout and enhancing overall resilience.
- Perseverance: continuing to pursue goals despite setbacks, indirectly supporting long-term resilience.

Communication skills: resolving conflicts and building strong relationships, which help provide support during tough times.

Didactical tips for teachers

- Use an emotion wheel to help students identify and understand their feelings, promoting emotional awareness, regulation and communication.
- Encourage students to view mistakes as learning opportunities, fostering a growth mindset.
- Have students regularly reflect on their achievements to build self-confidence ("What I Did Well" Journal).
- Create opportunities for students to share experiences and practice empathy (Empathy Circle).
- Incorporate brief mindfulness or breathing exercises to help students manage stress.
- Promote resilience by encouraging students to persist after setbacks.
- Use storytelling to help students understand and overcome challenges creatively.
- Model resilience by showing students how to handle challenges constructively.
- Create a praise-based classroom culture and systematically praise the process, not the results. Teach children how to give and receive process praise.
- Integrate growth mindset activities into the lesson.



2.6 Flexibility

Definition of the skill

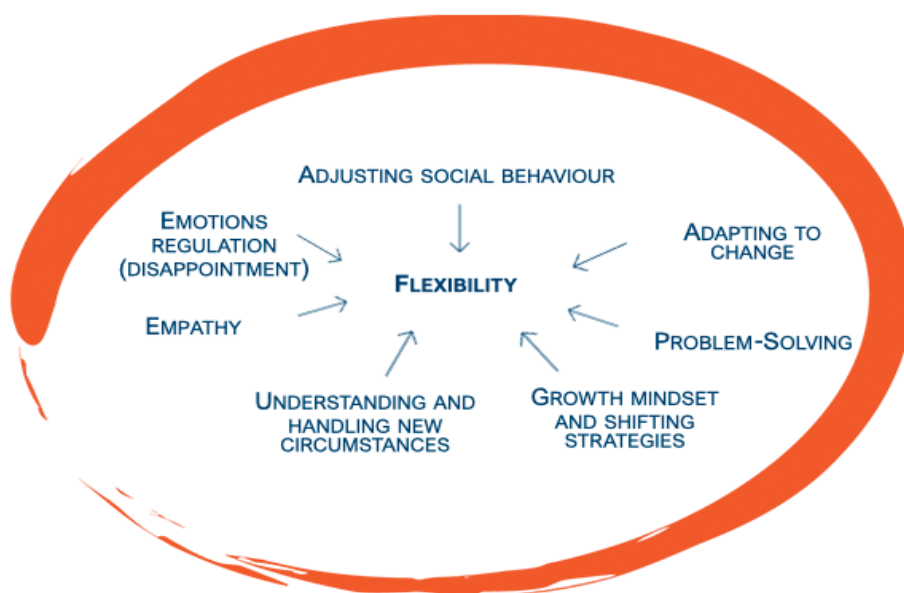
Flexibility is the ability to adapt to new situations and changes. It is the willingness to change. It involves being open to different ideas, adjusting to unexpected events, and finding new ways to solve problems. Flexibility is important because life is constantly changing, and being flexible allows us to cope with challenges in a calm and effective way. It's not just about accepting change, but also being able to adjust our thoughts, emotions, and actions to meet new demands or circumstances, whether they are in our personal life, work or social environment. Flexibility helps us move forward and make the best of difficult situations. There are three skills that are very close in meaning. Sometimes they are used interchangeably, but the difference between them should be clear. These three skills are: resiliency, adaptability and flexibility.

Resiliency is the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties.

Flexibility is willingness to change, ability to easily modify thinking and behavioural strategies while keeping core values in mind.

Adaptability is being able to adjust our thinking and behaviour to new conditions.

Complexity of the skill



- **Adapting to change:** children are able to quickly adjust to new situations, like a new teacher, a change in class activities, or a different daily routine.
- **Shifting strategies and handling new circumstances:** when faced with difficulties, such as struggling with a task, children show flexibility by trying different approaches to solve problems, rather than giving up. The flexible children are able to adapt to unfamiliar situations, such as going to a new place or meeting new people, without becoming overly anxious or upset.

- **Growth mindset and creative thinking:** Flexible children are able to think in a divergent way, seeking many different, novel/unusual solutions to a situation rather than thinking in terms of one 'good' answer. In other words, they use their fantasy to discover new and unexpected connections and apply unconventional approaches.
- **Adjusting social behaviour:** children can adapt their behaviour to suit different social situations, understanding how to interact with peers or adults based on context and social norms.
- **Managing emotions:** if things don't go as expected, children show flexibility by coping with the situation, adjusting their expectations, and continuing to engage with the task or situation.

Importance of the skill for lifelong well-being

Flexibility is crucial in every aspect of adult life, as it enables individuals to adjust effectively to life's constant changes and challenges. In the workplace:

- Flexibility helps adults embrace new roles, technologies, and work environments, making it easier to adapt to shifting expectations or unforeseen circumstances.
- It also allows for better problem-solving in the face of unexpected challenges, whether it's a change in workload or organizational restructuring.

In family life:

- Flexibility supports the ability to navigate relationship dynamics.
- Balance parenting demands.
- And cope with life transitions like moving or changes in family structure.

It plays a vital role in managing personal well-being, as it helps cope with challenges, reduce stress, and build resilience. In social interactions, it supports strong relationships by facilitating adaptability in communication and conflict resolution. During crises, flexibility allows individuals to adapt, process emotions, and find new paths. It also fosters personal growth by encouraging learning from mistakes, trying new things, and pursuing goals despite obstacles. Developing flexibility enhances the ability to navigate life's complexities and maintain balance.

Manifestation and development of this skill in ages 6-10

Flexibility in children aged 6-10 begins to develop as part of their ongoing growth process. At this age, children become more capable of adapting to new situations and changes, although the extent of their flexibility is influenced by factors such as their temperament, family support, and environmental influences.

At this age, flexibility can manifest in various ways, such as:

- **Adapting to change:** children are able to quickly adjust to new situations, like a new teacher, a change in class activities, or a different daily routine.
- **Shifting strategies:** when faced with difficulties, such as struggling with a task, children show flexibility by trying different approaches to solve problems, rather than giving up.

- Handling new environments: they are able to adapt to unfamiliar situations, such as going to a new place or meeting new people, without becoming overly anxious or upset.
- Adjusting social behaviour: children can adapt their behaviour to suit different social situations, understanding how to interact with peers or adults based on context and social norms.
- Growth mindset and creative thinking: Flexible children are able to think in a divergent way, seeking many different, novel/unusual solutions to a situation rather than thinking in terms of one 'good' answer. In other words, they use their fantasy to discover new and unexpected connections and apply unconventional approaches.
- Managing emotion and disappointment: if things don't go as expected, children show flexibility by coping with the situation, adjusting their expectations, and continuing to engage with the task or situation.

Developing flexibility helps children remain open-minded, adapt to social changes, and navigate friendships and conflicts with ease. They approach new challenges with curiosity, understanding that change can lead to growth. Flexible children handle life's uncertainties with confidence, staying positive and focused, which supports their emotional well-being, problem-solving skills, and social success, preparing them for future challenges.

Observation parameters for establishing class level

Level 1: Children with low flexibility struggle to adapt to changes in routine, tasks, or environment. They may react with frustration or distress when faced with unexpected situations, like a new class schedule or unfamiliar activities. They often resist change, find it hard to shift strategies, and need significant support to cope with transitions.

Level 2: Children with moderate flexibility can handle some changes but may need support to adjust. They might feel frustrated or reluctant initially but can adapt with encouragement. They manage routine changes better than complex ones and may require guidance to fully engage with new tasks or environments.

Level 3: Children with high flexibility adapt quickly to new situations, changes in routine, and unexpected challenges. They approach new tasks positively, try different strategies, and adjust easily to changes in their environment. They handle transitions with minimal stress and remain motivated, showing resilience in the face of challenges.

Interconnections with other skills

- Emotional regulation: the ability to adjust emotional responses to changing circumstances, helping to stay calm and composed when facing new situations.
- Adaptability: a direct connection to flexibility, as being flexible means adjusting to new information, environments, or changes in expectations.
- Problem-solving: flexibility allows individuals to find new strategies or alternative solutions when things don't go as planned.
- Open-mindedness: willingness to consider different perspectives or approaches, which supports flexible thinking and actions in dynamic situations.
- Self-confidence: believing in one's ability to handle change, which encourages a positive approach and willingness to adjust.



- Growth mindset: viewing challenges as opportunities for learning, which supports flexibility by encouraging a willingness to try different approaches or strategies.
- Stress management: managing stress effectively allows one to stay flexible in difficult situations by preventing overwhelm.
- Perseverance: continued effort in the face of change or uncertainty is supported by a flexible mindset, enabling people to adapt and keep moving forward.
- Resilience: flexibility supports resilience by helping individuals bounce back and adapt to new or unexpected situations.
- Collaboration skills: the ability to work with others and adapt to group dynamics enhances flexibility in team-based tasks or situations.

Didactical tips for teachers

- Emphasize the importance of effort and learning from experiences rather than just the final result.
- Use role-playing exercises where students must adapt to changing situations, promoting flexibility in thinking.
- Encourage students to come up with different solutions for a single problem, highlighting that there are various ways to achieve success.
- Have students explore and discuss different viewpoints to understand and appreciate diverse ideas.
- Present incomplete stories or problems and ask students to brainstorm possible endings or solutions, helping them become comfortable with uncertainty.
- Teach students to use phrases like "I can try another way" to foster a resilient and adaptable mindset.
- Assign group tasks where students must collaborate and adjust their approaches based on team input and evolving situations.
- Demonstrate flexibility by showing students how you adapt to unexpected changes or challenges in the classroom.

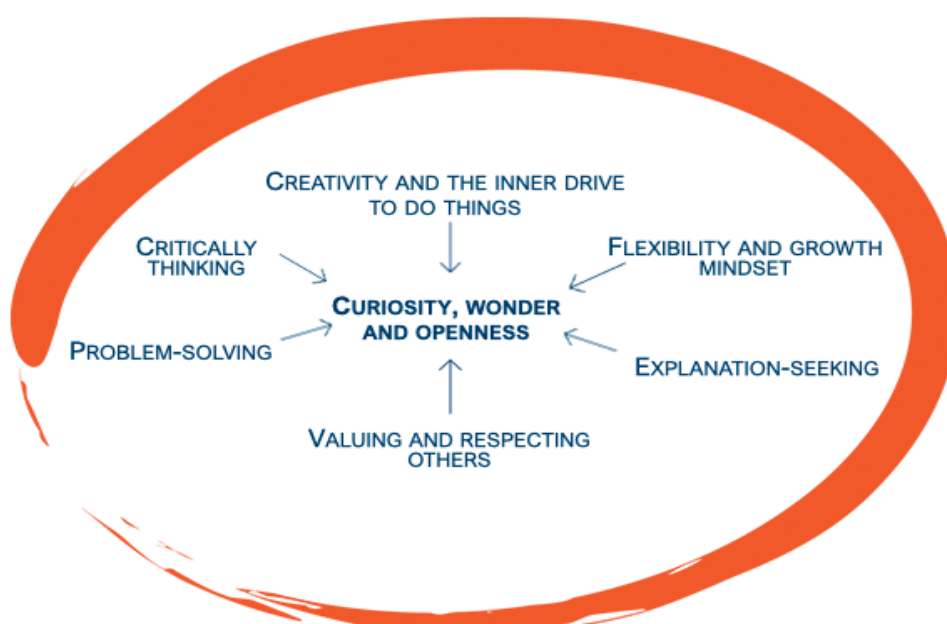


2.7 Curiosity, sense of wonder and openness

Definition of the skill

Curiosity, sense of wonder and openness form a foundational skill that drives a desire to explore, learn, and understand the world. This skill represents a mindset of active interest and enthusiasm in experiencing new things, asking questions, and staying open to diverse perspectives. It is the inclination to approach situations with eagerness to learn rather than judgement, paired with an open heart and mind. This skill enables children to discover, appreciate, and reflect upon the uniqueness and complexity around them, fostering a lasting love for learning and discovery.

Complexity of the skill



- **Creativity and the inner drive to do things:** Curiosity is the engine of imagination. When children wonder about something, they begin to look for new connections, come up with ideas, and see things differently. Creativity is thus directly fuelled by openness and the joy of discovery, and vice versa.
- **Explanation-seeking:** Children are known for asking ‘why?’ — a query motivated by their desire for explanations. Curiosity encourages children to ask questions.
- **Problem-solving:** Children experiment out of curiosity, trying to find connection and solutions, and this process helps them to think independently and persistently seek answers.
- **Critically thinking:** Openness means not only acceptance but also consideration. Curiosity drives children to ask questions, and our job is to guide them to consider multiple perspectives and distinguish facts from opinions. Thus, critical thinking can become a natural element of curiosity.
- **Flexibility and growth mindset:** Facing new experiences often challenges previous views. Openness is achieved when children are able to flexibly change their ideas and adapt to new evidence or perspectives.

- **Valuing and respecting others:** Curiosity and openness can also lead to understanding other people. When children show interest in the stories, feelings, or cultures of others, they become able to empathize and appreciate differences.

Importance of the skill for lifelong well-being

- In a fast-evolving world, curiosity, wonder, and openness are crucial for adaptability and mental agility. Cultivating these qualities early contributes to: resilience and continuous learning; enhanced emotional satisfaction and well-being; improved problem-solving, empathy, and adaptability. Adults who embrace curiosity and openness thrive in a world of expanding knowledge and shifting career paths. These traits nurture joy in learning, innovation, and positive relationships.
- Studies further underscore that encouraging these traits in childhood contributes to improved long-term outcomes. Adults with a strong foundation of curiosity and openness report greater satisfaction in navigating life's challenges and show higher levels of adaptability and empathy in their personal and professional relationships.
- Research highlights the long-term benefits of nurturing curiosity, wonder, and openness in children. Studies show that children encouraged in these areas tend to develop stronger problem-solving skills, higher emotional intelligence, and a positive attitude toward challenges. For example, classroom environments that support this skill see students who are more engaged, ask more questions, and show greater interest in learning. Longitudinal studies also suggest that adults who were encouraged to be curious as children are better able to adapt to complex life changes, tend to experience lower stress levels, and demonstrate stronger relational skills due to their openness and empathy.

Manifestation and development of this skill in ages 6-10

Between the ages of 6-10, curiosity, wonder and openness are already natural inclinations, often displayed through spontaneous questions, exploration, and a fascination with the world. This skill is readily observable in children's interactions such as their delight in learning about animals, space, history, or technology and their natural interest in peers' perspectives. At this age, children can develop this skill further by being encouraged to:

- Encouraging open-ended questions: inviting children to ask questions without fear of judgment helps them explore different viewpoints.
- Promoting explorative play and activities: storytelling, hands-on experiments, and guided nature walks teach children to view the world with wonder.
- Practice perspective-taking: exposing children to different cultures, ideas, or historical events builds openness and understanding of diverse perspectives.

The benefits of these activities manifest in children's growing engagement in learning. Research shows that students supported in developing curiosity, wonder, and openness are more likely to ask thought-provoking questions and engage fully in learning activities. They exhibit greater enthusiasm for exploring diverse topics and show an enhanced ability to understand complex ideas.

Observation parameters for establishing class level

Level 1: The child occasionally shows interest in new topics or asks questions but is hesitant to engage in exploratory activities or express opinions.

Level 2: The child regularly shows curiosity, frequently asking questions, and engages in new activities with minimal encouragement. They are open to others' perspectives.

Level 3: The child actively seeks out new information, shows excitement in learning across a wide range of topics, and exhibits a high degree of openness to different ideas. They ask thought-provoking questions, contribute insights in discussions, and engage fully in activities with an eagerness to explore and learn.

Interconnections with other skills

- Creativity: curiosity drives the desire to explore new ideas, which fuels creative thinking and problem-solving.
- Problem-solving: a curious mindset enables children to approach challenges with an open mind, asking questions and testing solutions.
- Critical thinking: openness allows children to question assumptions, consider alternative perspectives, and think critically about information.
- Resilience: a sense of wonder and openness builds emotional resilience, as children learn to face unknowns with curiosity rather than fear.
- Empathy: openness toward others' experiences and ideas cultivates empathy and helps children connect with those who may have different perspectives.
- These interconnections underline the importance of fostering curiosity and wonder as a foundation for other critical life skills, resulting in a well-rounded individual capable of adapting and thriving in a complex world.

Didactical tips for teachers

To nurture curiosity, sense of wonder and openness in children:

- Create “wonder walls”: allow children to post questions or topics they are curious about and discuss them regularly.
- Plan nature and science exploration days: facilitate outdoor activities or experiments that inspire observation and inquiry.
- Introduce cultural exchange projects: share stories, food, or art from various cultures to celebrate diversity and foster openness.
- Encourage journaling: have children document their questions, observations, and reflections to deepen their engagement with the world.
- Model curiosity: demonstrate inquisitiveness by asking questions and exploring answers alongside children.

2.8 Empathy

Definition of the skill

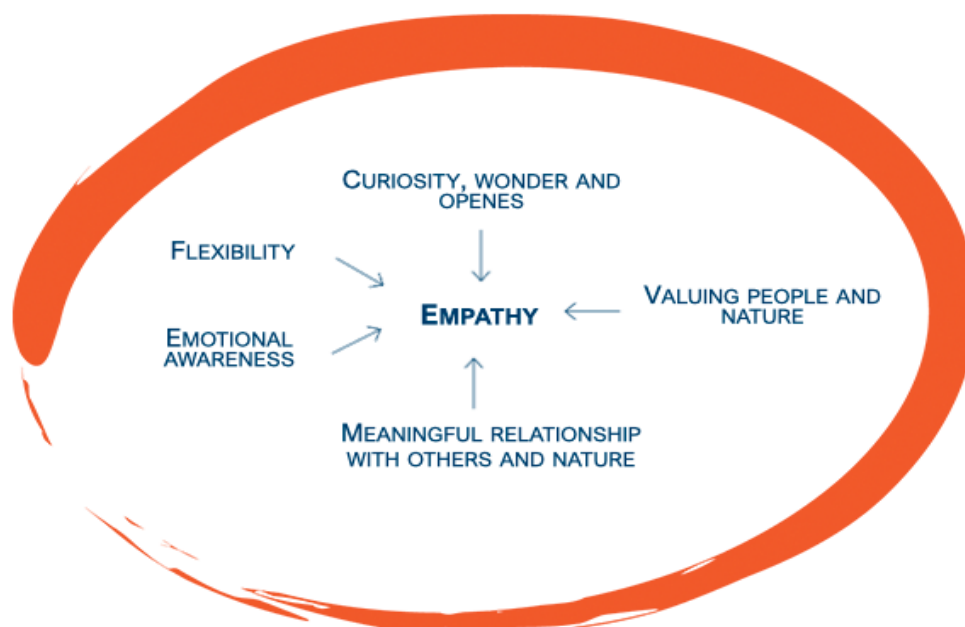
Empathy is the ability to understand and share the emotions and viewpoints of others, putting oneself in their shoes both emotionally and cognitively. This skill is at the heart of interpersonal relationships and lays the foundation for creating a more harmonious and cooperative society.

Empathy has two key dimensions:

- Emotional empathy, which refers to the capacity to feel what others feel and respond with appropriate emotions.
- Cognitive empathy, which involves understanding another person's perspective or mental state without necessarily sharing their emotions.

Both aspects are essential for children as they navigate complex social interactions in their personal and academic lives.

Complexity of the skill



- **Emotional awareness:** The basis of empathy is that children are able to recognize and name their own feelings and those of others. This creates the foundation for them to respond appropriately to the feelings of others.
- **Meaningful relationship building** empathy requires quality social relationships because it helps children form deeper bonds, making them aware that they themselves are part of a community and enabling them to listen to and understand each other.
- **Valuing people and nature:** for children to have empathy for others, they need to learn to respect and appreciate differences between people, whether their feelings, thoughts or

cultures. This attitude can also extend to nature. Children will wonder at the diversity of the living world, and in doing so they will develop a more responsible, caring relationship.

- **Curiosity, wonder and openness:** true empathy can only develop if children are open and curious about the stories, perspectives and feelings of others. Inquiry promotes attentive listening and understanding.
- **Flexibility:** being empathetic also means that children are able to put aside their own perspective and see the situation from the other's point of view. This requires emotional flexibility.

Importance of the skill for lifelong well-being

Teaching empathy to children is crucial to prepare them for life in an increasingly fast-paced and changing society, where social and work interactions require strong interpersonal skills and adaptability. Below are the main benefits of cultivating empathy in children:

- **Improves Social Skills:** empathy equips children with the ability to understand others, handle conflicts constructively, and build positive relationships. In a globalized and interconnected society, collaborating with diverse groups is essential for success.
- **Fosters Inclusion and Tolerance:** an empathic approach nurtures respect for cultural, ethnic, social, and ideological differences. This skill becomes vital as children grow into adults navigating increasingly multicultural and diverse environments.
- **Stimulates Critical Thinking and Adaptability:** understanding others' perspectives fosters open-mindedness, helping children adapt to new situations and approach challenges with innovative solutions. This cognitive flexibility also enables them to make ethical decisions in complex situations.
- **Promotes Resilience and Emotional Well-Being:** Empathy helps children connect with their own emotions and those of others, equipping them with tools to cope with stress, frustration, and challenges. This emotional awareness serves as a foundation for lifelong mental health.
- **Builds Responsible Leaders and Citizens:** Empathy shapes future leaders who lead with sensitivity, considering the needs of their community. It also fosters active citizenship, with individuals committed to contributing to a more equitable society.

Manifestation and development of this skill in ages 6-10

Children aged 6 to 10 are in a crucial developmental phase where empathy begins to emerge in both emotional and cognitive forms. At ages 6–7, children show a basic understanding of others' feelings but remain largely focused on concrete and visible emotions; for instance, they may respond with concern if they see a peer crying but might struggle to grasp more subtle emotional cues, often mimicking compassionate behaviours modelled by adults or peers. At ages 8–9, they begin to grasp that others can have feelings and experiences different from their own, developing the ability to infer emotions from less overt cues such as body language or tone of voice, and might start showing genuine acts of kindness, like comforting a friend without being prompted. By age 10, children exhibit a more advanced form of empathy that incorporates both emotional and cognitive elements; they understand complex emotional scenarios, such as conflicting emotions, and can anticipate how their actions affect others, consciously avoiding saying something hurtful due to understanding its emotional impact.

Observation parameters for establishing class level

Level 1: At this level, children begin to distinguish their own emotions from those of others and can respond to obvious emotional signals (such as crying or sadness). However, their ability to put themselves in the shoes of others is limited to visible and concrete situations. They follow simple empathic behaviour patterns, responding with care and concern when they see another child in pain, but tend to react only if the pain is explicit.

Level 2: At this stage, children develop a greater ability to ‘take the perspective’ of others, i.e. to understand that even without overt emotional expressions, other people may have different emotions and may be influenced by external factors. This is the stage at which they begin to understand that actions can influence the emotions of others, even in contexts that cannot be directly observed.

Level 3: Around the age of 10, children are able to display a more mature form of empathy, involving both emotional and cognitive understanding. They can perceive another person's emotions even if they are not expressed overtly and can engage in empathic behaviour by anticipating how their actions may affect the emotions of others. This is also the age at which children begin to develop the ability to emotionally support others, offering advice or seeking solutions to others' problems.

Interconnections with other skills

- **Active Listening:** Empathy enhances the ability to truly listen and understand others, creating a foundation for meaningful communication.
- **Effective Communication:** Empathetic individuals can express themselves in ways that resonate with others' emotions and perspectives, fostering clarity and connection.
- **Collaboration and Teamwork:** Empathy promotes mutual understanding, crucial for working effectively in teams and building strong, cooperative relationships.
- **Conflict Management:** An empathic approach helps resolve conflicts by addressing underlying emotional needs and finding solutions acceptable to all parties.
- **Leadership:** Empathy enables leaders to motivate and inspire by understanding the emotions and needs of their team members.
- **Adaptability:** Understanding diverse perspectives allows empathic individuals to adapt more easily to new environments and challenges.
- **Emotional Intelligence:** Empathy is a core component of emotional intelligence, enabling better self-awareness and interpersonal relationships.
- **Respect and Inclusiveness:** Empathy fosters an environment of respect and inclusion by valuing others' experiences and viewpoints.

Didactical tips for teachers

To foster empathy during these stages, adults can:

- Encourage perspective-taking through role-playing or storytelling.
- Discuss moral dilemmas that require considering others' feelings.
- Provide opportunities for cooperative learning and group activities.
- Model empathic behaviour consistently.

- Use role-play scenarios where children act out different emotions and discuss their feelings.
- Read stories highlighting characters' emotions, then invite students to consider those perspectives.
- Encourage “emotion journals” where students reflect on daily interactions and identify others' feelings.
- Praise empathetic responses and acknowledge when students support each other.
- Organize small-group activities that promote cooperation, mutual understanding, and listening.
- Introduce a “feelings corner” where children can safely express emotions and receive supportive feedback.

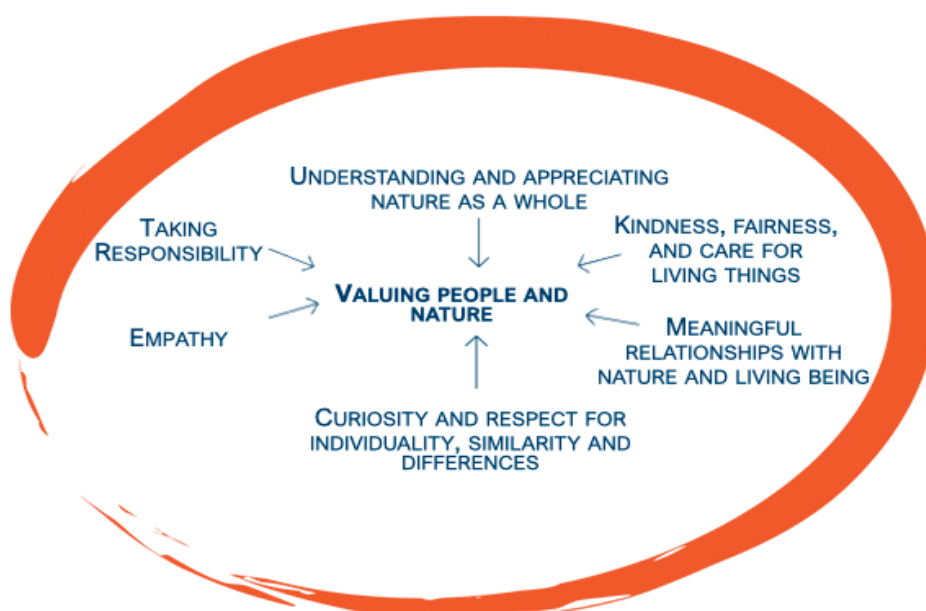


2.9 Valuing people and nature

Definition of the skill

Valuing People and Nature is the skill of recognising the intrinsic worth of both human beings and the natural environment. This involves understanding the interconnectedness between human well-being and the health of the planet. It includes a conceptual and procedural grasp of sustainable development as essential for a thriving future. This skill promotes respect for ecosystems, responsible resource use, and a balanced relationship between people and nature, which are crucial for long-term sustainability and societal well-being. Beyond awareness, valuing people and nature requires taking responsibility and transforming values into concrete actions that nurture and protect both humanity and the planet, ensuring a sustainable legacy for future generations.

Complexity of the skill



- **Understanding and appreciating nature as a whole:** The feeling that all living beings belong together and that *humans are part of nature* and they form a wholeness.
- **Empathy:** This is a critical element of children's relationship with nature and other people, which can be developed through interactions with the natural world and other people.
- **Meaningful relationships with nature and living being:** Cultivating a healthy relationship with the natural environment, the community and individual to awaken in children a feeling of connectedness.
- **Curiosity and respect for Individuality, similarity and differences:** Children are naturally curious. This natural curiosity and respect can easily be extended to the needs and rights of *other Living Beings and Nature* through interactions with the natural world and other people. *This respect is often expressed in actions such as sharing and helping.*
- **Kindness, fairness, and care for living things:** Showing compassion and consideration for others, and a willingness to act individually or/and in collaborating in teams for the benefit of others (including nature).

- **Taking Responsibility:** Children practice responsibility in small ways, such as recycling or caring for pets or plants. These actions nurture a sense of duty toward their community and the environment.

Importance of the skill for lifelong well-being

Valuing people and nature is a foundational 21st-century skill essential for fostering a sustainable and equitable future. This skill prepares adults to navigate a rapidly evolving, interconnected world by aligning personal well-being with environmental health.

In Environmental Contexts:

- Promotes sustainable living and resilience in response to challenges such as climate change, resource depletion, and biodiversity loss.
- Encourages eco-friendly habits and supports policies that protect natural resources.

In Social Contexts:

- Strengthens empathy, respect, and meaningful relationships, fostering community cohesion and individual emotional well-being.
- Cultivates responsible citizenship and ethical leadership, inspiring others to make sustainable and ethical choices.

In Broader Life Contexts:

- Enhances adaptability and innovation, enabling individuals to address complex problems creatively and collaboratively.
- Provides a sense of purpose, aligning personal actions with values for meaningful contributions to a better world.

By teaching this skill, adults are empowered to act as proactive stewards of both communities and the environment, essential for building a sustainable and resilient future.

Manifestation and development of this skill in ages 6-10

Children aged 6–10 are at an ideal developmental stage for cultivating the skill of valuing people and nature. Through guided learning and activities, they can progress through the LifeComp stages: Awareness, Understanding, and Action.

Awareness and Curiosity:

- Children begin to notice differences and similarities among people and the natural world.
- Concepts like kindness, fairness, and care for living things resonate strongly.

Understanding and Respect:

- Stories, outdoor exploration, and role-playing help children grasp the importance of respecting others and nature.
- They start to internalise the value of compassion toward others and the environment.

Action and Responsibility:

- Practical activities such as recycling, gardening, or caring for animals teach sustainability and responsibility.
- Children begin to see the impact of their behaviour on the world, fostering a proactive mindset.

Observation parameters for establishing class level

Educators can use these parameters to assess how children demonstrate the skill, categorised into three levels of development:

Level 1: Awareness and Curiosity: Shows interest in discussions about people and nature but may need reminders to respect peers and the environment. Understanding and Respect: Demonstrates occasional kindness and requires guidance to recognise the value of natural resources. Action and Responsibility: Needs encouragement to engage in pro-environmental actions and rarely initiates them independently.

Level 2: Awareness and Curiosity: Actively participates in discussions, showing a growing understanding of the interconnectedness between actions and their impacts. Understanding and Respect: Exhibits increased empathy and respect for classmates and nature, often expressing concern for others. Action and Responsibility: Begins to take initiative in simple sustainable actions, though still requiring occasional reminders.

Level 3: Awareness and Curiosity: Articulates the importance of valuing people and nature, offering thoughtful insights. Understanding and Respect: Consistently shows empathy and respect, inclusivity, and concern for the environment. Action and Responsibility: Independently initiates and leads pro-environmental actions, encouraging peers to participate.

Interconnections with other skills

- **Teamwork & Collaboration:** Working effectively with others, fostering support networks and shared efforts to achieve common goals.
- **Communication Skills:** Expressing ideas clearly and listening actively, enhancing teamwork and understanding in group settings.
- **Empathy & Compassion:** Understanding and sharing others' feelings, offering emotional support and building trust in relationships.
- **Sociability & Collegiality:** Engaging with others in a friendly and professional manner, contributing to a positive and supportive work environment.
- **Reasoned Decision-Making:** Using logic and careful consideration to make choices, ensuring decisions are well-thought-out and beneficial.
- **Reflective Thinking:** Looking back on experiences to learn from them, improving future decision-making and problem-solving skills.
- **Creativity:** Thinking outside the box and generating innovative solutions, helping to address challenges with new perspectives.
- **Resourcefulness:** Utilizing available resources effectively, adapting to constraints and overcoming obstacles through creative solutions.

Didactical tips for teachers

- **Engage Curiosity:** Use storytelling and nature walks to foster interest in people and the environment.
- **Promote Responsibility:** Assign tasks like recycling or caring for classroom plants to develop accountability.
- **Encourage Reflection:** Facilitate discussions on how actions impact others and the planet.
- **Model Behaviour:** Demonstrate sustainable habits and empathy in daily interactions.
- **Create Collaborative Projects:** Encourage group activities like tree planting or clean-up drives to build teamwork and empathy.
- **Celebrate Efforts:** Acknowledge and reward pro-environmental actions to reinforce positive behaviour.

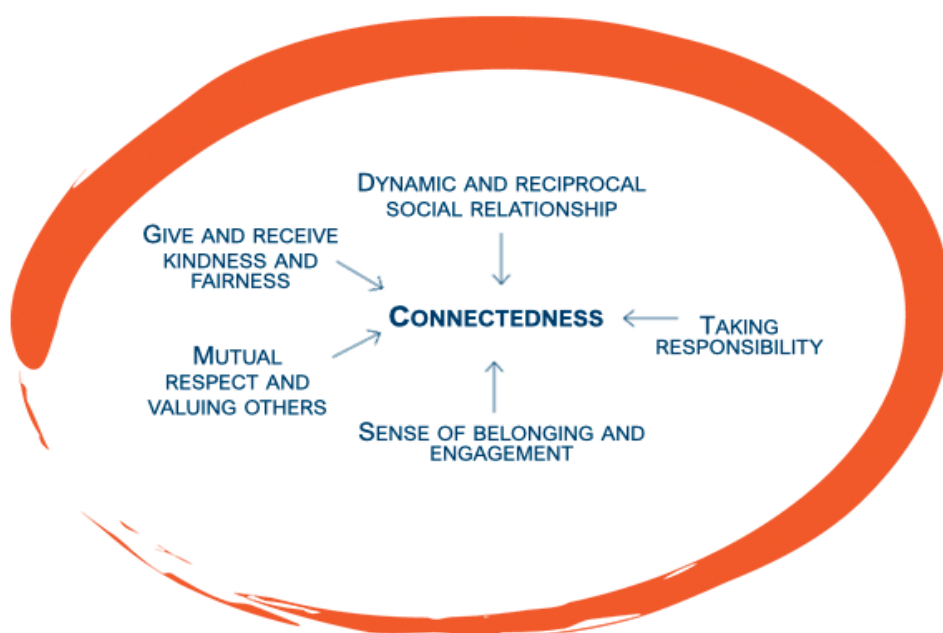


2.10 Connectedness

Definition of the skill

Connectedness is the ability to recognize and engage with the broader community, both locally and globally. It goes beyond sociability and collegiality, embracing a sense of shared humanity and responsibility. This interconnectedness is shaped by relationships through communication, travel, migration, trade, and political systems. On a cognitive level, connectedness involves understanding global, regional, national, and local issues, while recognizing the interdependence of different countries and populations. Socio-emotionally, it involves empathy, solidarity, and respect for diversity. Behaviourally, it means taking actions that promote peace, sustainability, and social cohesion, fostering environments where people care for one another.

Complexity of the skill



- **Awareness and Curiosity:** Children begin to notice differences in people, cultures, and the environment. They grasp concepts of fairness, kindness, and responsibility toward others and nature.
- **Mutual respect and valuing others:** Through activities like role-playing and group work, children learn to respect and valuing others' feelings, backgrounds, the nature and the environment. This respect often shows in actions like sharing and helping.
- **Sence of belonging and engagement:** Want to feel linked with others, a group of people(peers, family, community, school), linked and being a part (and responsible and act) of something larger than oneself.
- **Dynamic and reciprocal relationship:** It is very important for children to love and feel loved. We teach them that they are important and that they should consider others important too. This is characterized by understanding and sensitivity to the feelings and beliefs of others, and vice versa, the same for themselves.

- **Taking Responsibility:** Children practice responsibility in small ways, such as recycling or caring for pets or plants. These actions nurture a sense of duty toward their community and the environment.

Importance of the skill for lifelong well-being

Connectedness is essential for adults to thrive in an interconnected world. As globalization increases, individuals who value connectedness are better equipped to contribute to social harmony, sustainability, and ethical leadership. Key benefits include:

- **Promoting sustainability:** Adults who recognize their interconnectedness will address global challenges like climate change by making sustainable choices, helping ensure a resilient future for communities and the planet.
- **Strengthening social bonds:** Connectedness enhances emotional intelligence, enabling individuals to form strong relationships, which benefit both their mental health and the well-being of others.
- **Encouraging responsible citizenship:** Adults with a sense of connectedness make decisions that promote equity and sustainability, leading by example to create a collective, better future.
- **Fostering adaptability and problem-solving:** Understanding the interconnectedness of global issues equips individuals with the skills needed to face complex challenges with creativity and critical thinking.
- **Providing purpose and fulfilment:** Those connected to a larger community find deeper meaning in their actions, aligning them with values that contribute to personal fulfilment.

Manifestation and development of this skill in ages 6-10

At ages 6-10, children are in an ideal stage to develop connectedness. Through hands-on experiences and guidance, they can cultivate the awareness, understanding, and behaviours that reflect interconnectedness:

- **Awareness and Curiosity:** Children begin to notice differences in people, cultures, and the environment. They grasp concepts of fairness, kindness, and responsibility toward others and nature.
- **Developing Respect:** Through activities like role-playing and group work, children learn to respect others' feelings, backgrounds, and the environment. This respect often shows in actions like sharing and helping.
- **Taking Responsibility:** Children practice responsibility in small ways, such as recycling or caring for pets or plants. These actions nurture a sense of duty toward their community and the environment.

Observation parameters for establishing class level

Level 1: Children may show interest in people and the environment but need prompting to think about their impact. They require guidance to demonstrate kindness and responsibility, such as helping with recycling or taking care of classroom plants.

Level 2: Children actively engage with global and environmental issues and demonstrate empathy. They begin taking initiative in sustainability actions like sorting recyclables and helping care for class pets, though they may need occasional reminders.

Level 3: Children articulate the importance of valuing both people and nature. They consistently demonstrate empathy and responsibility, independently initiating pro-environmental actions and suggesting community improvement projects.

Interconnections with other skills

- **Teamwork & Collaboration:** Working together to solve problems and achieve common goals.
- **Empathy & Compassion:** Understanding and caring for others' feelings and well-being.
- **Communication Skills:** Effectively sharing ideas and building relationships.
- **Reasoned Decision Making:** Making informed choices based on understanding and analysis.
- **Reflective Thinking:** Analysing experiences to improve future actions.
- **Creativity:** Finding innovative solutions to challenges in a global context.

Didactical tips for teachers

- **Promote global awareness:** Use books, videos, and discussions that highlight different cultures, global issues, and environmental challenges.
- **Encourage empathy:** Create opportunities for children to practice empathy through group work, discussions, and helping others.
- **Incorporate sustainability activities:** Engage students in age-appropriate environmental activities like recycling, tree planting, or community service projects.
- **Model connectedness:** Teachers can demonstrate empathy, respect for diversity, and responsibility in their actions, serving as role models for students.
- **Foster reflection:** Use journals or class discussions to help students reflect on how their actions affect others and the environment.

