

BEGE -145

SOFT SKILLS





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BEGE -145

Soft Skills

Block

2

UNDERSTANDING THE SELF

Block Introduction

UNIT 1

Self-Reflection

UNIT 2

Adaptability

UNIT 3

Learn Ability

UNIT 4

Emotional Intelligence

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COURSE INTRODUCTION

As we understand, there are two types of skills that we identify both in our personal lives as well as professional lives: soft skills and hard skills. Hard skills are technical skills that have to be learned through external training and are usually job-specific. Soft skills cover personality-based traits that are key aspects of what makes someone a good fit for a given role and a productive coworker in a group work environment. We are generally aware of hard skills as they are explicitly mentioned. We have seen people guessing about Soft skills on many occasions.

You will understand through the course that Soft skills generally fall into the category of interpersonal skills and inner values. Unlike hard skills, soft skills are generally not learned in professional training programs and are usually innate or gained through personal development. A person with strong soft skills usually has great communication skills or a strong work ethic. Through this course you will be able to generate a complete understanding on key soft skills such as Self-reflection, Adaptability, Learn ability and Emotional intelligence.

We will also learn about Appreciating different perspectives and also about ways Coordination with others. There will be a detailed discussion on Understanding disability and People management

When we are discussing Soft skills, it is important to understand the process of learning to be creative. Critical thinking is a crucial component and requires detailed discussion and understanding. It is also important to discuss various aspects of Decision making and problem solving. Soft Skills also relate to a futuristic understanding and that will be discussed in the concluding unit of the course Hark into the future.

We are sure that you will enjoy studying all the units and also achieve complete understanding of soft skills in your mind and conduct.

Block Introduction

BLOCK 2 is focused on Understanding the Self. How we think about ourselves – weak or strong, happy or sad, confident or unsure, a doer or a follower and so on is very important. The concept of “self” is the image that we have of ourselves. For example, when you dress up well, you look in the mirror and like what or who you see, you are likely to mentally say to yourself – “I look good/smart/beautiful/handsome.” And then when you go out, this confidence in ‘self’ reflects in the way you will walk or talk or even the choice of ‘venue’. But more closely, the ideas or beliefs like “I am a good person” or “I am confident” or “I am an introvert” or “I am a leader” or “I like to follow rather than lead” or “I am a risk taker” are all part of the concept of ‘self’. This image of ‘self’ develops over time and is not uniform. It changes as we grow older and with our experiences of the world and people around us. This block will discuss all significant aspects through discussions with appropriate examples on Self-reflection, Adaptability, Learn ability and Emotional intelligence. So, it is important to make incremental improvements in the quality of our lives by making small daily changes in our attitude and behavior. These positive changes will make us become happier people and also encourage us not to be mentally disturbed by little issues at the workplace.

We are sure that you will enjoy studying all the units and also achieve complete understanding of soft skills in your mind and conduct.

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UNIT 1: SELF-REFLECTION

Structure

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Understanding the Self: The First Step in Self-reflection
 - 1.2.1 Self-Check
 - 1.2.2 What is Self?
 - 1.2.3 Exploring the Self-Concept
 - 1.2.4 Our Self-Concept and Our Identity
- 1.3 Self-reflection {include Self-care}
 - 1.3.1 Understanding Self-reflection
 - 1.3.2 Benefits of Self-reflection
 - 1.3.3 Strategies for Self-reflection
- 1.4 Let Us Sum Up
- 1.5 Key Words
- 1.6 Suggested Readings
- 1.7 Answers

1.0 Objectives

This Unit will enable you to:

- Understand the concept of ‘self’ and how is ‘self’ different from ‘others’.
- Understand how the idea of self is not independent but connected with our very lives.
- Understand and apply the manner in which our identity affects our idea of self.
- Learn the benefits of self-reflection
- Apply self-reflection

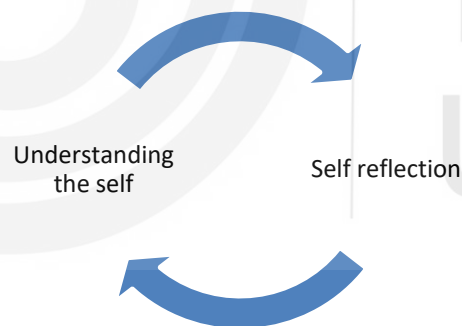
1.1 Introduction

Think about your everyday experience / interaction. You meet different people – father, mother, brother, sister, aunt, uncle, son, daughter, father-in-law, mother-in-law, green grocer/ vegetable seller, teacher, relative(s), student, a casual friend, best friend, business partner and so on. The

way you feel or think about yourself – your self-confidence, comfort level, self-esteem etc., affects the manner in which you interact with other people. For example, imagine a very senior member of a management body has asked you to meet her/him but has not given a reason. If you are someone who generally is very confident about yourself and know that your work is in order, meeting the senior member will not make you anxious. But if you are someone who lacks confidence in yourself, then the idea of meeting a senior member will make you anxious because you are likely to keep asking – “what have I done wrong?” or you may also feel anxious.

How we think about ourselves – weak or strong, happy or sad, confident or unsure, a doer or a follower and so on is very important. The concept of “self” is the image that we have of ourselves. According to Joseph A Bailey self-concept is generally thought of as our individual perception of our behaviours, abilities, and unique characteristics—a mental picture of who you are as a person¹. For example, when you dress up well, you look in the mirror and like what or who you see, you are likely to mentally say to yourself – “I look good/smart/beautiful/handsome.” And then when you go out, this confidence in ‘self’ reflects in the way you will walk or talk or even the choice of ‘venue’. But more closely, the ideas or beliefs like “I am a good person” or “I am confident” or “I am an introvert” or “I am a leader” or “I like to follow rather than lead” or “I am a risk taker” are all part of the concept of ‘self’. This image of ‘self’ develops over time and is not uniform. It changes as we grow older and with our experiences of the world and people around us.

Self-Reflection and understanding the self are two sides of the same coin. In order to ‘self-reflect’, it is important to understand ‘one-self’ and in order to understand ‘one-self’ it is important to ‘self-reflect’.



Once we understand the concept of ‘self’ and ‘self-reflection’, they can help our self-esteem, improve our relationships with others, improve the quality of our lives and work, deal with shyness or lack of confidence, make us more understanding of other peoples’ conditions and more.

In this unit, we will first start by exploring the concepts of ‘understanding the self’ and ‘self-reflection’. Then we will explore the strategies that we can adopt and use to improve through ‘self-reflection’.

¹Bailey, Joseph A 2nd. “Self-image, self-concept, and self-identity revisited.” *Journal of the National Medical Association* vol. 95,5 (2003): 383-6.

1.2 Understanding the Self: the First Step in Self-reflection

1.2.1 Let us reflect

Before you begin reading the Unit, here are a few questions for you to answer.

1. Who are you?
2. What makes YOU unique?
3. What are your strengths?
4. What are your weaknesses?
5. What are your short-term goals? Long term goals?
6. What are you worried about?
7. What are your VALUES?
8. What is your proudest accomplishment?
9. What is your biggest self-doubt or what is the biggest thing that you are uncertain about yourself?
10. When you are feeling down, what do you do?

The above ten questions look easy. Maybe you think that you can complete all of them in 15

minutes. Absolutely... you can do that. But it is very important to  STOP. Take a step back. Ignore everything that may be going on around you. Take your time. Read each question carefully. Think. Try and remember *an example* from your life that you can apply to that question. Then write or draw your answer.

Look at the answers you have written or drawn. Does anything surprise you? Why? Did you notice the difference in your responses, once you stopped, took a mental step back to think and then wrote them?

In this exercise, you explored both ideas – ‘understanding the self’ and ‘self-reflection’. ‘Taking a step back’ helped YOU to think deeply about YOURSELF.

1.2.2 What is self?

In the simplest form the notion of the ‘self’ is the idea that we hold or have of ourselves. We are not born with the notion of self. This idea that we have of ‘self’ (self-concept from now on) or ‘ourself’ slowly emerges and is shaped by the people around us, those who influence us, how we are treated by others and how we treat ourselves, the family values and lifestyle, our economic and social status, our gender and more. The notion of self-concept is a learnt one which is constructed over time. Take a very simple example, when a parent tells a son that he is special but does not say the same thing to the daughter, the son may think that he can do no wrong. On the other hand, the daughter may spend most of her time trying to impress or please the parent but may never be successful. And both the son and the daughter may continue to be influenced by this parent’s attitude in both their work and their personal lives.

1.2.3 Exploring the Self-Concept

Carl Rogers a leading psychologist believed that humans have one basic motive, which is to fulfil one's potential and achieve the highest level of "human-beingness" we can. He identified three components of 'self-concept'.

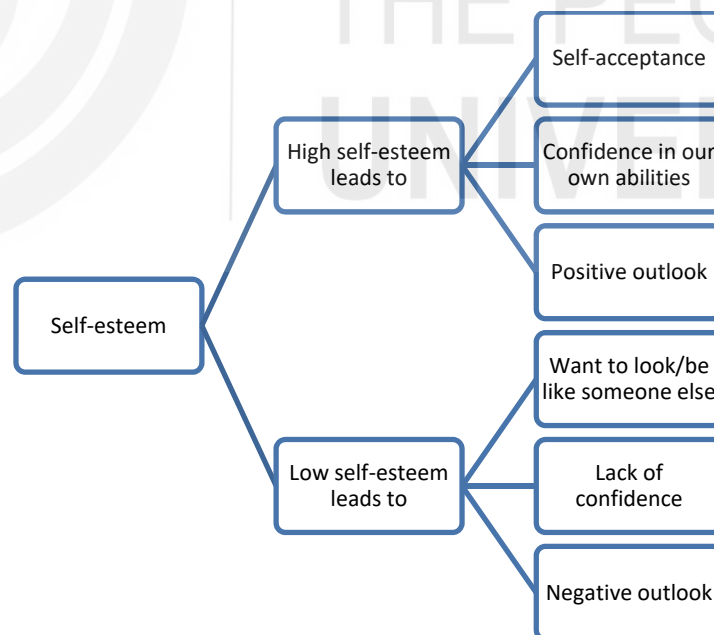
♦ **The view you have of yourself (self-image)**

This is **how** we see ourselves. This is important for our mental well-being. To put this simply, we might think or perceive ourselves as healthy, smart, intelligent, great cook, creative and other positive characteristics. Some of us might associate a more negative characteristic like not good enough, insecure, ugly, not worthy and more. In short, self-image includes influence of our body image as well as personality.

Self-image affects how a person thinks, feels and behaves in the world. A person's self-image is affected by many internal and external factors – media, friends, parental influences, fashion, praise, etc.

♦ **How much value you place on yourself (self-esteem)**

Self-worth or self-esteem refers how much we like, accept, value or approve of ourselves. In short, it is **what** we think about ourselves. Self-evaluation and self-reflection are important steps in order to have balanced self-esteem. We can have either a positive or a negative view of ourselves. We can either have a high self-esteem or low self-esteem; and both types of self-esteem or self-worth affects us. Let's look at the infographic below. It explores only three consequences of high and low self-esteems.



♦ **What you wish you were really like (ideal-self)**

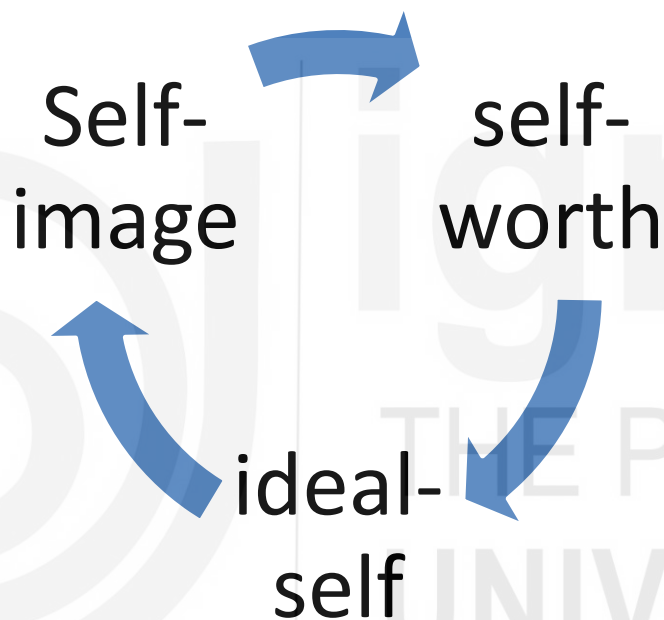
Do you remember what you wanted to become when you were five years old? – A doctor? A businesswoman? A world traveller? An actor? In your future, you wanted to be

Self-reflection

like someone you admired because you felt and thought s/he was 'ideal' or 'perfect'. This is the ideal-self. But think again – when you turned 15 or 20 did you want to be that same person who you thought was 'ideal' when you were five?

The 'ideal-self' keeps changing.

In conclusion, self-concept is the key to understanding the self. By understanding the self, we find our own place in the world. It helps us differentiate between "I" and "others". The three components of self-concept: self-image, self-worth and ideal-self are also closely connected. All of this form, affect and are reflected in our personality. They also give us our unique identity.



1.2.3 Our Self-Concept and Our Identity

From the previous sections it is clear that there is a close connection between self-concept and identity. Both are inter-dependent, dynamic, evolve and changes over time.

Take some time to complete the following Self-Check table.

Your Personal Identity	Your Social Identity
In the column below, make a list of characteristics that make you unique or those that make you different from others	In the column below, make a list of things, or ideas that make you part of a larger group like - your professional, cultural, familial etc. {for

	example, your ethnic identity etc.}

After completing the table above, take a look at it. Think and note down the differences and similarities of each 'identity'. It is very clear from the two Self-Check Tables and the text that the self-concept and identity evolve and change through our experiences with other people, circumstances, opportunities, culture, the picture that we have of ourselves and more. We will explore these in more depth in the following sections. Let us do this through another Self-Check.

Self-Check

Think about a quality/trait about yourself that you feel most proud of. Write this down.

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Give one reason why this quality/trait makes you proud of yourself. How did it influence your attitude?

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Give an example where this quality/trait helped you.

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Now think of an incident that made you feel not very confident about this quality/trait. What was it? What made you feel not great about this quality/trait?

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How did this incident change or influence the quality/trait that you were proud of?

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William Shakespeare wrote a poem “The Seven Ages of Man” for the play *As you Like it*. He compared life as a drama which is played out on a stage. Every person according to Shakespeare plays seven distinct roles (termed by him as seven ages). These roles begin at birth and end with death. These seven ages are – infancy, schoolboy/schoolgirl, Teenager, Youth, Middle Age, Old Age and Extreme Old Age. With each age, Shakespeare identified qualities and a way of life. For example, for a teenager emotions like love or insecurity about love, heartbreak, depression and doing well play an important role. For youth, finding their purpose, job and the desire to make her/his mark in the world are very important. These make the youth enthusiastic and zealous. They are more ready to express their views. In the 21st century teenagers and especially the youth use social media like TikTok, Instagram etc. to assert this.

While we may not agree with just ‘seven ages’ of humans, we all go through similar stages. As we grow older from infancy, our awareness of the world and understanding also increases. Our experiences change us and these include (a) interaction with other people from different walks of life (professional- general staff, colleagues, boss etc.; in-laws, older relatives and the younger generation, service providers etc.), (b) our finances (c) our status, (d) even our religion and caste, (e) health, (f) our biological and physical changes, (g) our emotional changes, (h) village, state, or country we live in and more. Let’s look at two examples of experiences of same age group in two different locations.

Influences on Identity 1: Growing up in different

Anita, 18 years old living in an Indian city

Anita being a girl started helping her mother or relatives in the household chores. She went to school and played but as a girl she had additional responsibilities of helping in cooking and cleaning. She has a brother who is almost as old as her. The brother has no household responsibilities like Anita. It is acceptable that the brother doesn’t know how to cook or clean. The family is middle-class with traditional outlook. But since the family has limited financial support and is also traditional, there are high chances that the family is going to prioritise investing more in the brother’s education and career. Also, remember in India, girls after marrying usually live with the family of her husband. Anita may be allowed or decides to work. If she is working in the same city, then chances are that she will continue to live with her parents.

Rose, 18 years old living in Berlin, Germany

Independence and self-reliance are important qualities that are taught to children in Germany from a very young age. Generally, both boys and girls are given chores that they have to do – set the table for meals, take out garbage, clean the car, etc. To earn their pocket money, children are encouraged to do small jobs in the neighbourhood like – clear up the leaves from the neighbour’s garden or if it snows, then shovel snow from the driveway etc. High school students often start working part-time either in chain restaurants or in a field where they learn skills as well. In fact, high schoolers, often move out of their parents’ house to live on their own. They often move to a different city for college. Generally, it is also common for a married couple to live on their own rather than with family. Rose too grew up in the same German culture. Her brother who is of the same age is as independent as Rose. It is up to them if they want to go to college or get a professional training.

After reading the lives and general experiences of Anita and Rose, how do you think their experiences will impact their identity?

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Influences on Identity 2: Understanding our emotions

Self-Check

Task: Think of a difficult situation that you recently faced. Read each question carefully and note down your response.

Objective: To understand the interconnections between our self-concept, identity and experiences in formulating our responses to situations.

Extension: If possible, compare your responses with someone else.

Questions	Your Responses
When did the situation happen?	{be specific ... last night, or day or date}
What happened? (Describe the event)	
Why did you think the situation happened? (Identify the cause or trigger?)	
How did you react? (Describe your response)	

How did that situation make you feel both physically and emotionally? (Try to identify as precisely as possible)	
What did you do and say? (Identify your action or behaviour)	
To what extent were your actions motivated by your own beliefs, personality or traits?	
To what extent were your actions motivated by emotional response?	
Think and then answer. If instead of your emotions, if you had prioritised thinking rationally, would your actions be any different?	
After completing this, read your responses. Is there anything that surprised you or you learnt about yourself? How did you benefit from this exercise?	

Conclusion of *Understanding the Self: The first step in self-reflection*

To summarise each of us has a distinct and unique ‘self’ and this self evolves over time from our babyhood to old age. Since self-concept is the image that we have of ourselves, it evolves through our lives. We are influenced by our experiences, people we meet, our own emotions and the world around us. Our self-esteem is closely connected with our self-concept. The connection between self-concept and influences is very close. Through various Self-Checks, we have been taking a step back in order to understand and experience the ideas of self-concept, and influences. This ‘taking a step back’ is part of the larger process called self-reflection, which will be the focus for the next section.

Check your progress 1

1. What is a self-concept?

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2. How is our image of ‘self’ formed? Support this with a personal example.

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3. How are ‘self-reflection’ and ‘understanding the self’ connected?

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4. Give an example of an event that might raise the ‘self-esteem’ of a person. What could be the possible consequences of high self-esteem?

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5. Why does our idea of ‘self’ change and evolve?

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6. Make a list of possible social identity factors? Pick any one of these to write and expand by giving an explanation and example.

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1.3 SELF-REFLECTION

1.3.1 Understanding Self-Reflection

Let us look at a few quotes to see what scholars have said about self-reflection

“The unexamined life is not worth living.” – Socrates (Ancient Greek philosopher)

“Everything that irritates us about others can lead us to an understanding of ourselves.” – Carl Jung (Swiss psychiatrist and psychoanalyst)

“Without reflection, we go blindly on our way, creating more unintended consequences, and failing to achieve anything useful.” – *Margaret J. Wheatley (Author, community worker, speaker and leader)*

“We don’t learn from experiences; we learn from reflecting on the experience.” – John Dewey (American philosopher, psychologist and educational reformer)

The above quotations are not by ordinary people but by scholars whose contributions in philosophy, education and academia have been very significant. Their ideas have helped formed the basis for understanding many fields. In simple words, self-reflection is like looking in the mirror in order to assess yourself, your ways of working; and understanding your motivations and influences as a step to evaluating your reactions. You have read the phrase ‘taking a step back’ a couple of times in this Unit. In the different ‘Self-Checks’ in the previous sections, you were understanding about self-reflection. Self-reflection is described as ‘a person’s ability to reflect on experiences, draw inferences about behaviour from these reflections and then use those inferences to construct and develop representations of the self’ (see Dishon N, Oldmeadow JA, Critchley C and Kaufman J, 2017).

Why is self-reflection important?

Self-reflection helps in developing skills and review the effectiveness of the same. If we don’t self-reflect then we are likely to continue carrying on doing things, and making decisions as we have always done. ‘Reflecting’ helps us to question what we do and why we do it. This then helps us to decide if there is a better or more efficient way of doing or feeling in the future. A good way to understand this is by taking an example of cooking. If you are trying to cook something new, you will first look at different recipes. Then you will cook. After cooking and tasting it, you are likely to think or talk about it – what was good about it, whether it lacked something or if you would like to add something to it. When you cook the same dish again, in the future, you are likely to recall your ‘internal review’ and make changes in order to cook the same dish but make it tastier. This ‘internal review’ is similar to reflecting. It helps you to think about something or someone in a more critical manner to meet an appropriate end which is positive.

Whether at home or at work or in relationships, reflection is thus an important part of learning. However, it is very important that when reflecting, while we think about positives and negatives, the process is used in a positive or constructive way. In other words, take for example, you have had an argument with a colleague. If you self-reflect, then you are likely to think about why you and the colleague argued the way you did. Was either of you having a bad day? Was the subject that led to the argument a sensitive one? Self-reflection will help you to examine this incident through different perspectives. However, finally the *learnings* from this self-reflection should be used in a manner which is constructive and not to put the other person or yourself down. This is constructive self-reflection. It has the capacity to improve relationships.

Reflection is a generic term for those intellectual and affective activities in which individuals engage to explore their experiences, in order to lead to a new understanding and appreciation. — Bound, Keough, & Walker, 1985

Self-reflection is a process that it not and should not be restricted to just personal and professional experiences but is an essential component in almost all aspects of life. The analogy of looking oneself in the mirror is often used for self-reflection

1.3.2 Benefits of Self-Reflection

According to Glaze (2001) reflection can improve understanding of the context you work in, transform perspectives, deepen understanding and help you re-appreciate the job you do.

Help Strategize

The essence of self-reflection is self-assessment, it can help devise a strategy to pursue a certain outcome. This outcome could be achieving a personal goal (gaining or losing weight, learning a skill, completing a training, starting a business etc.) or a professional one. It can help by enabling you to prioritise.

Spot Opportunities

SWOT matrix or SWOT analysis is a strategic planning technique to help a person or organisation identify Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats → SWOT. Even though this is used for business management and is not without its set of limitations, it can be adopted for other uses as well. We will speak about strengths and weaknesses a little later on. Self-Reflecting gives you space to identify opportunities, both long and short terms, and also pre-empt the challenges or threats. It helps you to understand your behaviour, beliefs, reactions, assumptions, values and so on.

Emotional Intelligence

Self-reflection and the ability to do so is a sign of good emotional intelligence. In order to self-reflect one has to use multiple lenses or perspectives to look at oneself. We often assume that emotions have a very small role to play in our professional or student lives. But in reality, our emotions frequently mould our responses. Using different lenses help to tap into our emotions; and this can help us to understand our weaknesses, attitudes, reactions, motivations and responses better. In other words, self-reflecting upon how one behaves and what thoughts enter one's mind in response to events and people in the world allows one to see what one needs to work on.

Improved Relationships

Self-reflecting helps us to understand how we treat others by thinking about how this is based on our own identity, values, approach to caste, religion, class, views on gender and gender roles, etc. as also on our own insecurities or uncertainties or lack of awareness or lack of knowledge. This

in turn enables us to see how and why we treat others the way we do. It can influence our interactions.

Growth and Productivity

Self-reflection helps in focusing the mind and energy on a particular goal. This helps in making us sharper and more productive. This in turn makes us more productive by removing uncertainty about our targets and our ability to reach them.

Clarity and Decision Making

One of the major benefits of self-reflection is clarity, which in turn leads one to become a better decision maker. A quick glance at the various benefits explored in the previous points also slowly develop and support this particular benefit. By conducting this internal check, we become aware of our goals, fears, shortcomings, strengths etc. This can help devise an optimum way to achieve results.

Overcome Conflict

Self-reflection is one of the key strategies to conflict resolution because one has to use multiple lenses and perspectives to understand the situation and people. For example, have you ever had an argument with your relative, friend or colleague for a long time, only to realise that you both perhaps agreed on most of the points or realised that there was a complete breakdown of communication? Imagine if you had simply thought calmly and asked the other person to sit down and asked some reflection-based questions like, what was the main concern or what made that person feel the way she/he did, etc. Was there a possibility that the conflict could have been handled more easily? Maybe you could have arrived at a mutually agreeable solution or decision.

1.3.3 Strategies for Self-Reflection

There are many strategies that one can adopt for self-reflection. We have been through many in different ways throughout this Unit. We will highlight two more in the following section.

Strategy 1: Gibbs' Reflective Cycle

Graham Gibbs, an academic researcher, developed, in 1988, one of the most famous cyclic models of reflection. It is a cyclic framework of six stages exploring an experience: description, feelings, evaluation, analysis, conclusion and action plan. Each stage has a set of corresponding guiding questions to ask yourself. This is one of the many models that are available. We will explore a couple of them.

Gibbs' reflective cycle can be used to reflect either a stand-alone experience or a situation you go through frequently, for example meetings with a team for collaboration. Let's take a quick overview of the six stages of the cycle.



If you notice, the six stages of the Gibbs' Reflective Cycle are no longer unfamiliar to us. We have been using the six terms through our unit. But in this framework, all six are brought under one process. Below is a table, in which the guiding questions for each stage are mentioned in Column 2. In Column 3 is the space for Self-Check. Read the cues and write your experience. The idea is to learn by self-reflection through Gibbs' framework by applying it.

Self-Check

Column 1: Stage	Column 2: Stage and Guided Questions	Column 3: Application
		Think about a group project that you did in the past. Use the guided questions in Column 2 and answer them. You may not be able to include all the points.
1	Description (of the experience) What happened? When and where did it happen? Who was present? What did you and the other people do? What was the outcome of the situation? Why were you there? What did you want to happen?	

2	Feelings (your thoughts or feelings during the experience and how they may have impacted the experience) What were you feeling during the situation? What were you feeling before and after the situation? What do you think other people were feeling about the situation? What do you think other people feel about the situation now? What were you thinking of during the situation? What do you think about the situation now?	
3	Evaluation (what worked and what didn't. It is important to be objective, fair and honest. Do include both positive and negative) What was good and bad about the experience? What went well? What didn't go so well? What did you and other people contribute to the situation (positively or negatively)?	
4	Analysis (done in order to make sense of what happened and extract meaning) Why did things go well? Why didn't it go well? What sense can I make of the situation? What knowledge – my own or others (for example academic literature) can help me understand the situation?	

5	Conclusion (time to make conclusions about what happened. Summarise your learnings and think about alternatives) What did I learn from this situation? How could this have been a more positive situation for everyone involved? What skills do I need to develop for me to handle a situation like this better? What else could I have done?	
6	Action Plan (helps you to think about what you would do differently next time, if in a similar situation) If I had to do the same thing again, what would I do differently? How will I develop the required skills I need? How can I make sure that I can act differently next time?	
Your self-reflection	Read what you have written down in Column 3. Reflect on it. In the space below note down what you have learnt about yourself from the Self-Check. Were you surprised by any thing? Why? What did you learn about yourself? How did this Self-Check help you?	

Strategy 2: Keeping a Springboard

A springboard is a flexible board from which you dive into a swimming pool. In writing, a springboard technique is often used to help in planning and developing an idea. You can use this technique for a personal project or a group project. It can be moulded in many ways. The leading questions below are one of the springboard strategies to help you start with self-reflection. This activity is taken from *Journal to the Self: Twenty-Two Paths to Personal Growth - Open the Door to Self-Understanding by Writing, Reading, and Creating a Journal of Your Life* by Kathleen Adams (1990).

Self-reflection

In your journal or notebook write down these questions on a few pages. Every alternate day, make a point of completing these self-reflections.

- “Today I feel _____ years old. [6? 16? 60?]
- I am excited about...
- Three things I want to accomplish [today, this week, this year, in my lifetime] are...
- Where am I in the movement of my [life, business, relationship, career, etc.]?
- What’s the most important thing to do right now?
- My ideal work environment would include...
- How am I feeling right now?
- The most important skill I need for [a task] is...
- What resources are available to me?
- How can I best use my resources?
- What I value most in my relationship with _____ is...
- How do I feel about [upcoming event]?
- I’m happiest when...
- What turns me on?
- What turns me off?
- I’m proud of myself for...
- How am I using my power?
- I’m alone, and it’s...
- Today was a [great, lousy, hectic, etc.] day.
- Why am I feeling so [angry, sad, paranoid, etc.]?
- What do I really want?
- How am I experiencing [joy, indecision, rage, etc.]?
- My biggest [secret, fear, wish, etc.] is...”

Excerpt From: Adams, Kathleen (1990). “Journal to the Self: Twenty-Two Paths to Personal Growth - Open the Door to Self-Understanding by Writing, Reading, and Creating a Journal of Your Life”. New York: Hachette Book Group. This book has very good strategies to help in self-reflection.

Look back on the Springboard questions of Adams. This list is somewhat different and yet similar to the various self-reflecting exercises that we have been doing. However, keep this Springboard list for a month. You don’t have to fill it every day. After a month, take some time and go over the entries. Reflect how this process changed your attitude and its impact on the quality of your life.

Kathleen Adams has another strategy which is very useful. It is known as List of 100. Below are a few lists which you would start.

1. 100 Things I’m Grateful For
2. 100 Ways I Could Nurture Myself

3. 100 Ways I Beat Myself Up (Sabotage Myself)
4. 100 Things I'm Good At
5. 100 Things I Like About Myself
6. 100 Blessings
7. 100 Things I've Accomplished in My Life
8. 100 Things I'm Feeling Stressed About
9. 100 Things I'd Do If I Had Time
10. 100 Things I Need or Want to Do
11. 100 Things I Want to Accomplish in the Next X Months
12. 100 Things I Want to Do Before I Die
13. 100 Things That Are Going Right
14. 100 Things That Are Going Wrong
15. 100 Reasons I Don't Want to Stay Married/Committed
16. 100 Fears I Am Having Right Now"

Excerpt From: Adams, Kathleen (1990). "Journal to the Self: Twenty-Two Paths to Personal Growth - Open the Door to Self-Understanding by Writing, Reading, and Creating a Journal of Your Life". New York: Hachette Book Group.

Check your progress 2

1. What is self-reflection? Explain why it is important.

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2. Give at least four benefits of self-reflection.

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3. What is SWOT matrix? How can you use SWOT in your own life?

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4. Identify which two benefits of self-reflection you feel are most important. Give a justification for your choice.

1.4 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit on Self-Reflection, you started by learning and then recognising how and why it is first important to understand the self. The idea of self or self-concept does not develop in isolation but is constantly influenced by the world around us. Many of us, in fact, don't realise how outside influences affect our identity, which in turns affects how we respond to situations and others. Equally connected to understanding the self is the practice of self-reflection. This practice helps us to become aware of ourselves, others and gain a more nuanced understanding of our actions, feelings, motivations and also help in managing our personal as well as professional lives. The key is to take the many Self-Checks that have been shared in this Unit and practice them.

1.6 SUGGESTED READINGS

Adams, Kathleen (1990). *Journal to the Self: Twenty-Two Paths to Personal Growth - Open the Door to Self-Understanding by Writing, Reading, and Creating a Journal of Your Life*. New York: Hachette Book Group.

Ashley, Greg C. and Reiter-Palmon, Roni (2012). "Self-Awareness and the Evolution of Leaders: The Need for a Better Measure of Self-Awareness". *Psychology Faculty Publications* 7. URL: <https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/psychfacpub/7>

Blackburn, Bill (2019). “Self-Awareness: The Key to Resolving Conflict Effectively,” in Academic Leadership. URL: <https://academyleadership.com/news/201902.asp>

Gibbs G (1988). Learning by Doing: A guide to teaching and learning methods. Further Education Unit. Oxford Polytechnic: Oxford.

Wignall, Nick (August 12, 2019). “The Elements of Self-Reflection,” on *Medium*. URL <https://medium.com/the-understanding-project/the-elements-of-self-reflection-cdf7aa70ed2e>

Yocco, Victor (2016). Design for the Mind: Seven Psychological Principles of Persuasive Design. New York: Manning Publications.

1.7 ANSWERS

Check your progress 1

Please note that these answers and examples are suggestive and indicative. Learners have the freedom to formulate their own answers.

1. What is a self-concept?

Self-concept in simple term is what and how each of us see ourselves as. For example, you can see yourself as strong or even insecure. And this will affect how we behave, interact or make decisions.

2. How is our image of ‘self’ formed? Support this with a personal example.

Our image of self is formed and affected by many factors. These could be internal or external. Some examples of this are a girl born in a traditional Indian middle-class family with very traditional parents and friends is more likely to follow the cultural rules about her life choices like education, profession, clothes, marriage etc. even though they may not make her happy. This can be true for a boy born in a similar background. He may face different kind of pressures.

3. How are ‘self-reflection’ and ‘understanding the self’ connected?

‘Self-reflection’ and ‘understanding the self’ are very closely connected. Self-reflection is the ability of a person to take a step back or look into self to understand more critically the choices a person makes or attitude adopted. This in fact then helps us to understand the self-more clearly.

4. Give an example of an event that might raise ‘self-esteem’ of a person. What could be the possible consequences of high self-esteem?

Many examples can be given for an event that might raise the self-esteem of a person – getting a promotion or getting admission into a course or getting a new thing or getting married or losing weight or gaining weight etc. A balanced raise in ‘self-esteem’ is healthy and can help a person become more confidence and overcome insecurity or gain approval. It could also make a person feel valued. This in turn could lead to improvement in quality of life and further motivate a person.

5. Why does our idea of ‘self’ change and evolve?

Our idea of ‘self’ changes and evolves for many reasons. As we grow older, we gain more experience and we are also exposed to more ideas, people etc. Our circumstances change too. The world around us keeps changing. All of this influence and mould our idea of ‘self’, and leads to its evolution.

6. Make a list of possible social identity factors? Pick any one of these to write expand by giving an explanation and example.

For this question, learners should look at Section 1.2.3 Self-Check and design the answer.

Check your progress 2

1. What is self-reflection? Explain why it is important.

Self-reflection is the exercise of undertaking self-assessment. It is like looking in the mirror at your own reflection very carefully in a critical manner in order to analyse your own actions, motivations, plans and so on. This self-reflection is important as it helps us to understand why we do what we do or say or hear or even enjoy the things that we do; and their consequences on us. In a lot of ways, a healthy self-reflection can help us improve ourselves. For example, at the end of the month I might realise that I am unable to save money. After self-reflection, I might find the different examples where I am spending the money buying things or doing things just to feel happy or to show off. Self-reflection can help me in identifying what motivates me to spend money carelessly and then I might devise a strategy to avoid this habit.

2. Give at least four benefits of self-reflection.

Four benefits of self-reflection are:

- a. It can help in achieving a personal goal.
- b. It can first help identify a gap in work/opportunity or goal; and then help in planning a Strategy.
- c. It can help increase emotional intelligence
- d. It can help resolve conflict.

3. What is SWOT matrix? How can you use SWOT in your own life?

SWOT matrix or SWOT analysis is a strategic planning technique to help a person or Organisation identify Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. It can help us understand our behaviour, beliefs, reactions, assumptions, values and so on

4. Identify which two benefits of self-reflection you feel are most important. Give a justification for your choice.

- a. One benefit of self-reflection is its ability to help resolve conflict. [Learner to devise a justification for this benefit after self-reflection]
- b. Secondly, self-reflection can help attain personal goals. [Learner to devise a justification for this benefit after self-reflection]



UNIT 2 ADAPTABILITY

Structure

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Understanding Adaptability: The first step
 - 2.2.1 Self-Check
 - 2.2.2 What is Adaptability?
 - 2.2.3 Consequences of Lack of Adaptability and Why Some Don't Adapt
 - 2.2.4 Benefits of Adaptability
 - 2.2.5 Consequences of Adaptability
- 2.3 Taking Adaptability a Step Further
 - 2.3.1 A word of Caution
 - 2.3.2 Types and Strategies for Developing Adaptability Skills
 - 2.3.3 Strategies for Self
- 2.4 Let Us Sum Up
- 2.5 Key Words
- 2.6 Suggested Readings
- 2.7 Answers

2.0 OBJECTIVES

This Unit will enable you to:

- Understand the concept of 'adaptability' and its importance
- Understand the benefits and consequences of adaptability.
- Apply the learnings through reflection.
- Learn strategies for developing adaptability skills

2.1 INTRODUCTION

We will remember the year 2020 for a very long time. This is one of the years which people, across the world, will remember. This was the year when the pandemic caused by the

Coronavirus brought the world and the people to a standstill. All of us faced situations which we would have never imagined. Many lost our family and friends to the virus. Millions of people lost their livelihoods when they lost their jobs once lockdowns were implemented. Millions of people faced cuts in salaries and lost their savings. Things and pleasures that we had come to enjoy and love were the things that we could not experience. In the recent past, freelance professionals, new start-ups and industries like tourism and hospitality, fashion and more had become very common place. But these were also the very industries that suffered massively because of the pandemic. Billions of students had to switch to virtual schooling. Millions of educators had to switch to teaching online almost immediately. Non-app users had to learn how to order and make transactions using mobile or internet services. Each one of us was forced to change, to learn new things or in other words adapt. We had to learn how to Work from Home (WFH) almost overnight. Students, educators, corporates, service providers and everyone had to quickly start working online. This meant that billions had to learn new software, and skills very fast. We all had to adapt. Imagine what our lives would have been like in 2020 and also 2021 if we had not adapted. Adaptability is one of the key skills that we need to possess. The title of one of the books by Max McKeown (2012) is very interesting and revealing – *Adaptability: The Art of Winning in an Age of Uncertainty*.

Re-read the title.

Re-read the paragraph.

Think: How far would you agree with the title of the book?

2.2 UNDERSTANDING ADAPTABILITY: THE FIRST STEP

2.2.1: Self-Check

Before you begin reading the Unit, let us do a quick self-check. Write your responses in your journal/notebook.

1. Identify four ways in which you were affected because of the remote learning?
2. What were the challenges that you experienced in 2020?
3. What steps did you take to overcome these challenges?
4. Did you learn any new skill in order to meet these challenges? Give details.
5. How did you cope with not meeting your family or friends?
6. How did you cope with having not to hug people you love or sit together?
7. How did you cope with social distancing?
8. How did you cope with having to wear mask for long durations?

Read your responses once again. Were you able to enhance/improve/add (to) your abilities? Did you take steps that helped you cope better? If your responses to these is positive, it means that you were able to adapt yourself to meet new challenges. Now imagine what your 2020 would have been like if you had not adapted to suit online-learning/working/teaching/interacting or to handle the restrictions imposed by the lockdowns.

1.2.2 What is adaptability?

In the simplest form adaptability is the ability to learn new skills in response to evolving circumstances. In more formal terms, adaptability refers to “an individual's ability, skill, disposition, willingness, and/or motivation to change or fit different task, social, or environmental features” (Ployhart and Bliese, 2006²). Adaptability is one of the key life skills that everyone needs. Let's take a real life example in order to explore adaptability – mobile phones. All of us cannot imagine a life without smart phones. However, smart phones are a very recent development. In late 1900s or in 1990s, people had phones in which you either had to press numbers or dial them. Phones were used for basic communication. Postal communication or parcels were used in different forms to transfer materials. In order to complete a school or college project, the students had to go to the libraries or search books and magazines to gather materials. Face-to-face meetings were important.

Then in 2000s mobile phones slowly became popular. More people had access to mobile phones. But since the data charges were high and the smart features of 2020 were yet not present in the mobile phones of the first decade of 2000, use of mobile phone was limited. Yet, there was less reliance on dial phones. People started using search engines to look up information for their work but this access was limited. Then in 2010s, the rates of data reduced, more people started using mobile phones, development of technology increased the smart features of smart phone – apps could be downloaded, search engines became more efficient, more data was made available, one could video-chat or send files and so on. All this transformed our way of life, of doing work and connecting. Less people bought calendars as people switched to online calendars. Online calendars were used to coordinate meetings, events and keep track. It increased efficiency because it saved time. Communication over email was more efficient because one could transfer materials and communicate faster. People who were uncomfortable using emails and various tools provided by Microsoft office found it harder to progress in their work. Employees who

² Zhou, Mi, and Weipeng Lin. “Adaptability and Life Satisfaction: The Moderating Role of Social Support.” *Frontiers in psychology* vol. 7 1134. 28 Jul. 2016, doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2016.01134. Ployhart R. E., Bliese P. D. (2006). Individual adaptability (I-ADAPT) theory: conceptualizing the antecedents, consequences, and measurement of individual differences in adaptability, in *Understanding Adaptability: A Prerequisite for Effective Performance Within Complex Environments*, Vol. 6, eds Burke C. S., Pierce L. G., Salas E. (St. Louis, MO: Elsevier Science ;), 3–39.

were ‘tech savvy’ were preferred and because of this people who wanted to remain relevant in their work, had to adapt and adopt technology. In turn, because of the advances made in mobile technology, the ways students learn and are taught had also to transform. Come back to year 2020 and think of the role that a smart phone played in our lives; and the degree of ‘adaptability’ that people across the world had to embark on. In this example, a small device like phone help in giving a very small glimpse into what is adaptability, why it is an essential skill and what happens when we don’t adapt. We adapt in response to circumstances, situations, etc.

The value of adaptability lies in the fact that it is not restricted to professional life. Adaptability is a key skill for a more positive and constructive personal life, mental health, professional life, social relations, business, making products and more. Take another example, water. Water is amazingly adaptive. When it flows freely as a stream or river, it does not let rocks and other obstructions hinder its movement. It continues to flow. When it is in a dam, it will stay contained but only for some time. The dams had to be constructed to make space for water to flow out if water reaches a certain level. And if the structure of the dam is weak, then the pressure of water can burst the dam and lead to devastating floods and slides. Water responds to the conditions it finds itself in. Read below an old Chinese saying and imagine the proverb

“The wise adapt themselves to circumstances, as water moulds itself to the pitcher.”

But adaptability is not so simple. In order to be adaptable one has to use a range of other skills as it requires using a range of critical thinking skills. One has to understand the circumstances, the people, the conditions, the limitations, be able to predict, be able to look at different perspectives and also put aside your own pride. It requires taking a step back or reflecting, and like an eagle looking at a wider picture. Taking risks is also an important part of it.

Let us explore adaptability more in details. We usually start with benefits. However, let us take a different perspective. We will start by looking at what happens when there is lack of adaptability.

2.2.3 Consequences of Lack of Adaptability and Why Some Don’t Adapt

Just like being adaptable helps you cope with the changing circumstances, not being adaptable too has consequences. We will explore a few of these consequences and some of the reasons why people do not adapt. Both these issues are interconnected. As you read, take a minute to imagine an example.

Scenario 1: Imagine that you work in an office where promotion is always based on seniority. However, there are few younger people, including you, who have been working hard, bringing innovative ideas and new clients because of which the company has been doing very well for three years. The sales of the Company have risen significantly. But

these younger people are not being promoted because of the policy of promotion based on seniority.

Do you think this policy is fair?

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If this policy is fair, give your reasons.

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If this policy is unfair, give your reasons.

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Why is this policy unfair?

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What could be possible consequences of this policy? Think carefully about this question. Think what you, as a younger employee of this company, will do if you are not promoted even though your contributions have led to increased sales.

Understanding the Self

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Why do you think this company has chosen not to revise its policy?

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Look at the words in the text boxes below. Take a minute to imagine how these words may explain the approach of the Company in above example.

FEAR

DECISION BIAS

HABIT

RIGID
STRUCTURES

INSUFFICIENT
EXPERIMENTATION

Task: Match the word/phrase in column 1 with its correct explanation. In explanation, often the consequences or description of the word/phrase is given. You have to think creatively. Some may overlap and that is fine too.

Word/Phrase	Explanation
Fear	Having a firm belief that traditions are important and while innovation is useful, ‘traditions’ and ‘old policies’ are best because they have been tested over the years and proven right.
Decision Bias	Emphasis on command-and-control system set-up discourages employees on account of a possibility of punishment in some form.
Habit	Making policies on the basis of outdated models of management
Insufficient Experimentation	Having a policy of observing strict distinction in roles or departments, and discouraging the flow of ideas and roles
Rigid Structures	Lack of pro-active change because of set mind-sets and behaviours.

Have you observed above features anywhere? It could be at work, at school, in teachers, or management or even in family.

If you have observed this lack of adaptability in any of the above categories- work, at school, in teachers, or management or family, think about the consequences.

2.2.4 Benefits of Adaptability

Let us explore benefits of adaptability through the business model of McDonald’s. We are all familiar with McDonald’s.

McDonald’s is one of the famous fast-food chains. The success and popularity of McDonald’s is very familiar to most of us. Many of us may have even celebrated important life moments in McDonald’s. McDonald’s Corporation is one of the most successful global restaurant chains around the world. As of 2019, it “operated and franchised a total of 38,695 restaurants in 118 countries and territories.” One of the many factors of its success is because of its adaptability and willingness to innovate.

The menus of McDonald’s, for example, in Japan, India, and USA, are vastly different. You will immediately notice the differences and connection between the menu and local preferences. But this was not always the case. When McDonald’s was first introduced in Japan, its menu was similar to the one offered in USA. But this gradually changed. McDonald’s introduced flavours and portions sizes more suitable to the Japanese tastes. The new menu included Rice Burger, Seaweed Shaker, Green tea milkshakes etc., similarly, in India, the menu of McDonald has evolved over the years. As a large number of Indians are vegetarians and many people do not eat beef or pork, McDonalds customised its menu to include more vegetarian options, increased the spice level and their non-vegetarian options also have culturally familiar names – tandoori etc. McDonald’s understood the appeal of street food in India, and introduced a 20 rupees Aloo Tikki Burger. In Indonesia, with a majority Muslim population, McDonald’s has replaced pork with fish and also follow halal method of cutting meat. Take a look at the info graphic of McDonald

below. Notice how it communicates its ability to adapt to local cultural and culinary tastes. What is amazing about this info graphic is that even the people who do not know about local cuisines of other countries and their preferences, will learn about them through it.

However, it was not just about customising the menu. In India, kitchen fabrication is done locally – chillers, freezers, and refrigeration. It had to adapt its business practices and business model to suit Indian regulations. In fact, when McDonald's first started in India there was no local supply chain for lettuce. People simply used cabbage leaves. McDonald set-up the supply chain for lettuce from scratch³.

Self-Check

Think about what you have read of McDonalds. List four to five benefits of adaptability.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Adaptability is important not only in personal life but also in professional spaces. Just imagine how education across the world, including India, had to adapt when lockdowns were implemented. Schools and universities were forced to switch to virtual learning. Teachers were using various messaging services and other more formal applications to teach.

2.2.5 Consequences of Adaptability

Our world has always evolved and changed but it is doing these at a faster pace. Adaptability skills are both an attitude and present in action because they both are interconnected.

Becoming a better leader

³Kannan, Shilpa (19 November 2014). "How McDonald's Conquered India," in BCCC Business. URL <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-30115555> and Mourdoukoutas, Panos (22 July, 2011). "How MacDonald's Wins through Adaptation and Innovation," in *The Forbes*. URL: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/panosmourdoukoutas/2011/07/22/how-macdonalds-wins-through-adaptation-and-innovation/?sh=67e121c45faa>.

Change is inevitable and one cannot stop it. Good and efficient leaders know this and acknowledge it. This makes them more open to find solutions, change strategies and be more flexible. Such leaders do not get stuck when faced with new threats or challenges but are also likely to positively motivate others. According to Shirley Tan, “adaptability is the personality trait that helps determine how you respond to change. People with high adaptability are often described as ‘flexible, team players,’ or as someone who ‘goes with the flow⁴’”.

Being relevant

People who are adaptable or willing to change or learn are likely to remain relevant professionally because of their ability to learn new skills or understand new requirements. Instead of getting stuck in the rut, adaptable people respond positively to new changes.

Being more satisfied with life

Guy Winch, a psychologist, believes that happiness is one of the consequences of adaptability. According to him, we constantly face psychological challenges. Some people react like an ostrich who when sensing danger simply buries its head while its remaining body is visible. In other words, some people give up and this negatively impacts our satisfaction and happiness quotient. Being adaptable means that one does not give up but responds to the situation by adapting – learning a new skill, becoming more acceptable of others or the unknown.

Being able to handle career transitions better

The year 2020 is the best example of this point. Millions of people lost their jobs in 2020 because of the lockdowns across the world. Many people were able to get new jobs even during the lockdowns because of their ability to recognise changes and pick up new skills.

Self-Check

Think about a situation where you adapted to change. What steps did you undertake to adapt? What were the consequences of adapting? How does this make you feel?

*Who Moved my Cheese?*⁵ - is a classic book for business written by Spencer Johnson. It uses a simple parable or storytelling technique to reveal some truths about dealing with change so that one can enjoy more success in your work and life as well as less stress. In the book, Johnson through the characters of the story posed a few questions or quotations. Let us have look at them:

“What would you do if you weren’t afraid?”

“What you are afraid of is never as bad as what you imagine. The fear you let build up in your mind is worse than the situation that actually exists.”

“See what you're doing wrong, laugh at it, change and do better.”

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⁵Johnson, Spenser (1998). *Who Moved my Cheese?* US: Putnam Adult.

“When you stop being afraid you feel good”

“He knew sometimes some fear can be good. When you are afraid things are going to get worse if you don't do something, it can prompt you into action. But it is not good when you are afraid that it keeps you from doing anything.”

“If you do not change, you can become extinct!”

“The fear you let build up in your mind is worse than the situation that actually exists”

Self-Check

Choose any two quotations from above. These quotes should strike a chord in you. Take a step back and write what makes these quotations appealing to you. How do they connect with your life?

Conclusion of *Adaptability*

To summarise, adaptability is the quality of being able to adjust to new conditions or the capacity to be change for a new use or purpose. We constantly modify our lifestyles because our world is changing rapidly. Adaptability skills help us to cope with challenges which may leave us at a disadvantage if we don't change. Developing adaptability can also mean developing connected skills of communication and interpersonal skills. Having adaptability skills means you are open and willing to learn new things, take on new challenges and make adjustments to suit transitions in the workplace. However, as we will explore in the next section, adaptability and the desire to be adaptable is not as simple as that.

Check your progress 1

1. What is adaptability?

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2. Why is adaptability important?

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2.3 TAKING ADAPTABILITY A STEP FURTHER

2.3.1 A Word of Caution

Adaptability is one of the most important skills for all to possess but employers especially should not force people into adapting nor expect them to adapt on a short notice. Employers have the power and often the resources to enhance the skills of their workforce. They have the responsibility to train their workforce. It is also important for both employers and employees to have conversations and discussions with each other in order to ethically understand the needs, fears and find possible workable solutions

2.3.2 Types and Strategies for Developing Adaptability Skills

As mentioned before, adaptability skills a variety of skills that enable a person to adapt and to change positively. Some of the important adaptability skills are:

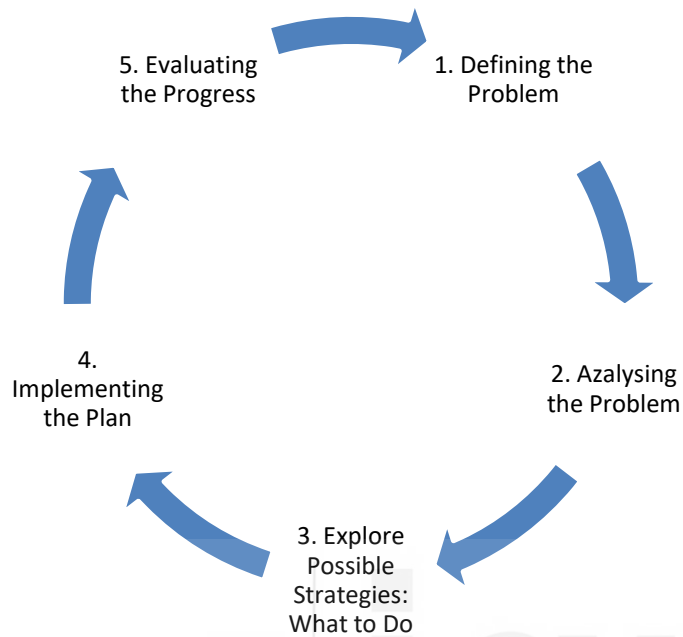
- Problem solving skills
- Creative and strategic thinking skills
- Communication skills
- Interpersonal skills
- Teamwork skills
- Organisational skills

We are going to look at each of these skills and strategies for developing *some of them*.

Problem Solving Skills and Strategies

This skill is self-explanatory and is about being able to respond to an issue rather than react or panic. Problem solving is the process of identifying a problem, developing possible solution paths, and taking the appropriate course of action.

The info graphic below helps in identifying the problem-solving process and is a very common model.



The five steps of problem solving are very common to different models. Each of the phase has some leading questions. Let us take a look at these:

1. **Defining the problem:** Is there a problem? What is the problem? How significant is the problem? What do you know about the problem? What do you not know about it?
2. **Analysing the problem:** Why is it happening? What led to it? What triggered it? How far back can it be tracked to? Are there any underlining problems? What are the different perspectives or stakeholders involved?
3. **Explore possible strategies:** What shall we do about it? Consider all or as many potential solutions as possible.
4. **Implementing the plan:** Are you doing what you set out to or are you going off track? How do you know? What kind of self-checks or checklist are you following?
5. **Evaluating progress:** Did the plan work? What needs to happen next? What revelations were surprising?

If you look carefully, communication is the key requirement at each stage. One cannot identify the problem without reflection and research. It is important to not assume that you know what the exact problem is and the root cause. Often a conflict or immediate problem builds over time before becoming visible. Think about an argument at home or with a friend. Many times, when an argument is going on, people make reference to an incident in the past even though one of the parties may not understand why reference to the past is being made. Why do you think that happens?

Creative and strategic thinking skills

There is a close connection between creative and strategic thinking skills and problem-solving skills. Creative thinking in simple words means coming up with something new – new ideas, new product, new growth strategy, or even new solutions to old problems. Let us look at an infographic – **11 Strategies to improve your creative thinking skills** as explored by Mario Peshev, a global SME Business Advisor.



Communication Skills

Communication is one of the key activities that we all undertake every day. We communicate our needs, greeting, emotions, appreciation etc. ‘Small talk’ is another form of communication in which we fill gaps before starting the main body of talk or when we don’t know what to talk about. Small talk include talk about weather or general sport. Effective communication is one of the most essential qualities. This is even more valuable when reflecting and working your way through conflict and problem solving. Effective communication develops only through being consciously aware of your limitations in communication and identifying the need to improve it. Below are some strategies or tips for clear communication of an issue:

- Avoid including your own opinion or personal attacks in your explanation

- Acknowledge the contributions and efforts of other people.
- Start by giving a clear summary of the problem, give relevant facts, timelines, and if possible, examples.
- An essential part of effective communication is to avoid certain words – always, never, as these give a sense of exaggeration.
- Remember communication is a two-way process, especially while solving a problem and hence, it is extremely important to listen to others.
- Keeping note of body language: verbal communication is only part of effective communication. Body language is non-verbal communication. It includes postures, placement of hands, expression, nature of eye contact, etc. Often the body language can effectively indicate whether one's intentions are clear or their doubts.

The target in this section was to look at some of the strategies for developing adaptability skills. In the final section of this Unit, the focus will be on some personal steps that one can take to develop adaptability.

2.3.3 Strategies for Self

Take some time to review the previous Unit on Self-Reflection. Take a step back and think about the following points.

1. What are the connections between understanding the self, self-reflection and adaptability?
2. Can adaptability develop in isolation, without self-awareness and without interacting with others?

Our personal self, as explored in the previous Unit, is moulded and influenced by our background – family values, religion, ethnic identity etc. When we interact with the outside world and in the workplace, we interact with people. It is important to realise that other people's notion of self and how they interact with others' is also moulded by their own set of influences. Below are a few techniques that can help you develop adaptability skills. Do remember that self-reflection is an important component of this.

Learn from others

Even if you are good at something, be willing to admire the same quality or personality in others. In addition, think about a skill that you admire in a friend, colleague or family member. It could be managing money or organising household, ability to motivate others etc. Take time to observe

them and talk to them. Learn from them in order to either develop a new skill or improve your level.

Be willing to make mistakes

This is often hard for us to admit and accept. We want to be perfect and when we make mistakes, it embarrasses us. And often we don't adapt to new ideas or methods because of the fear of making mistakes. Absolute success is a myth. The focus should be on developing constructive ways to handle mistakes. They can help you improve.

Ask questions and clear your doubts

It is clear that in order to be adaptable, one has to consider many perspectives. Asking questions is a great way to learn and increase your awareness. However, when asking questions, it is important to be respectful of other people's spaces and also to first do research. Doing research also means that your questions are not basic but lead to a more constructive discussion.

Leaving your comfort zone

All of us have comfort zones which are our ways of thinking or approaching problems. Very little learning takes place within our comfort zone. It includes interacting with friends and colleagues who share the same background, values or ideas and think similarly. True learning takes place outside our comfort zone where we experience different perspectives, ideas, experiences etc. If you want to go beyond the comfort zone, then you can start taking baby steps – try a new skill, try out a new type of food, take initiative for starting something new.

Be goal-oriented

There is very little value in adapting or learning something new randomly. Choose a goal for yourself – getting a promotion, getting a job, becoming physically healthy etc. Setting goals also help you to combat anxiety that is brought on by change. Follow the S-M-A-R-T strategy for setting your goals⁶.

Specific

Measurable

Attainable

Realistic

Time-bound

Have confidence in your abilities

⁶Taken from article “Goal Setting and Social Anxiety Disorder” by Arlin Cunic. (23 September 2020). URL: <https://www.verywellmind.com/goal-setting-and-social-anxiety-disorder-3973936#citation-2> and “Remove the Pressure of Resolutions and Set Realistic Goals” by Sarah Sheppard (1 February 2021). URL: <https://www.verywellmind.com/skip-the-new-year-s-resolutions-and-set-realistic-goals-5095010>

A lot of people lack confidence in themselves and in their abilities. This could be for many reasons. It could be because of lack of opportunities or exposure. It could be because one comes from a very different background. For example, first generation of college goers find it hard to fulfil the demands and requirements of higher education. Some people struggle with mental health issues like depression, anxiety etc. There are many ways in which we can address this. Asking help or seeking advice from experts is a good step. Keeping a journal is an excellent way to keep track of goals.

In this section, we explored small steps that we can undertake to improve adaptability. Awareness is an important component of self-reflection, adaptation and learning new skills.

Check your progress 2

1. Is it ethical for employers to force their employees to adapt to new circumstances? Discuss.

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2. Identify three adaptability skills that you consider important. Give one reason each to support your choice.

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3. Think of a situation in which you were forced to adapt to a situation/person. Complete this reflection task below

a) Describe the problem or challenge

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b) What was your first reaction? How did it make you feel?

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c) What steps did you take to adapt?

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d) List the new skills that you learnt in the process.

2.4 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit on Adaptability, we started by looking at how in the year 2020 people across the world had to adapt to new ways of living. Adaptability is the ability to learn new skills in response to evolving circumstances. It is also an essential life skill in personal and professional life. It is a learnt skill. Fear, decision bias, habits, rigid structures and insufficient experimentations are some of the common roadblocks to adaptability. However, the consequences of adaptability often help in improving the quality of life, relationships and work. It is equally important that employers do not use lack of adaptability as an opportunity to force people out of work but that they create conditions which empower employees. There are various strategies and techniques that one can take up to develop the skill of adaptability. Self-reflection or taking a step back is an essential part of adaptability.

2.5 SUGGESTED READINGS

Adams, Kathleen (1990). *Journal to the Self: Twenty-Two Paths to Personal Growth - Open the Door to Self-Understanding by Writing, Reading, and Creating a Journal of Your Life*. New York: Hachette Book Group.

Goleman, Daniel, McKee, Annie et al (2017). *Harvard Business Review Everyday Emotional Intelligence: Big Ideas and Practical Advice on How to Be Human at Work*.

Harford, Tim (2011). *Why Success Always Starts with Failure*. London: Hachette Digital.

McKeown, Max (2011). *Adaptability: The Art of Winning in an Age of Uncertainty*. London: KoganPage.

Articles

Cunic, Arlin (23 September 2020). “Goal Setting and Social Anxiety Disorder,” in VeryWellMind. URL: <https://www.verywellmind.com/goal-setting-and-social-anxiety-disorder-3973936#citation-2>

Sheppard, Sarah. (1 February 2021). “Remove the Pressure of Resolutions and Set Realistic Goals,” in VeryWellMind. URL: <https://www.verywellmind.com/skip-the-new-year-s-resolutions-and-set-realistic-goals-5095010>

2.6 ANSWERS

Word/Phrase	Explanation
Fear	Emphasis on command-and-control systems set-up discourages employees on account of a possibility of punishment in some form.
Decision Bias	Lack of pro-active change because of set mind-sets and behaviours.
Habit	Having a firm belief that traditions are important and while innovation is useful, ‘traditions’ and ‘old policies’ are best because they have been tested over the years and proven right.
Insufficient Experimentation	Making policies on the basis of outdated models of management
Rigid Structures	Having a policy of observing strict distinction in roles or departments, and discouraging flow of ideas and roles

Check your progress 1

1. What is adaptability?

Adaptability is the quality of being able to adjust to new conditions or the capacity to change for a new use or purpose. In more formal terms, adaptability refers to “an individual's ability, skill, disposition, willingness, and/or motivation to change or fit different task, social, or environmental features” (Ploy hart and Bliese, 2006).

2. Why is adaptability important?

We constantly modify our lifestyles because our world is changing rapidly. Adaptability skills help us to cope with challenges which may leave us at a disadvantage if we don't change. Developing adaptability can also mean developing connected skills of communication and interpersonal skills. Having adaptability skills means you are open and willing to learn new things, take on new challenges and make adjustments to suit transitions in the workplace.

Check your progress 2

1. Is it ethical for employers to force their employees to adapt to new circumstances? Discuss.

Being adaptable is one of the most important skills especially in the 21st century professional life because of disruptions caused by technology. And as the pandemic has shown the format of working keep changing constantly. This means that it is important for employees and employers to update their skills. If an employee doesn't update her/his skill then the employer may face reduction in output. Thus, it is important for an employee to adapt. But this transition can be made smooth by a planned action by the employer or company. They could start by counselling and understanding the fears of the employees. The employees could be made to understand the importance of adapting to the circumstance.

In conclusion, while it is not completely ethical employers to force their employees to become adapt to new circumstances, the transition can be made in a more planned and humane manner.

2. Identify three adaptability skills that you consider as important. Give one reason each to support your choice.

NOTE for the learner. Below is the list of the possible adaptability skills. Your task is to choose any three of them. Then reflect on one or two reasons why you consider these three as important.

Some of the important adaptability skills are:

- Problem solving skills
- Creative and strategic thinking skills
- Communication skills
- Interpersonal skills
- Teamwork skills
- Organisational skills

UNIT 3: LEARNABILITY

Structure

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 What is Learnability?
- 3.3 Understanding Learnability: The first step
 - 3.3.1 Basics 101
 - 3.3.2 Behaviour Indicators of Learnability
 - 3.3.3 Why is Learnability important?
 - 3.3.4 How to develop learnability?
- 3.4 Practical Matters: Learnability in Students, Adults and Mind Mapping
 - 3.4.1: Tips for students to improve how they learn and their learning capacity
 - 3.4.2 Note taking to Learn
 - 3.4.3 Mind Mapping: What and How
- 3.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.6 Suggested Readings
- 3.7 Answers

3.0 Objectives

This Unit will enable you to:

- Understand the concept of ‘learnability’ and its importance
- Understand the benefits and consequences of learnability
- Identify the challenges in the process of learnability
- Learn strategies for developing learnability skills

3.1 Introduction

If you take a look at the syllabus covered thus far you will notice a flow in the concepts that you have been covering. Here is a clue:

Block 2: Understanding the self

Unit 1: Self-reflection

Unit 2: Adaptability

Unit 3: Emotional Intelligence

Unit 4: Learnability

All these Units are interlinked as you may have by now realised. This was an intentional design while discussing the curriculum. Have you, as a student of IGNOU, ever thought of how your study material is organised, written or designed? But before we look at this background information, it is important to undertake the Self-Check below.

There is a high chance that you are aware of your reasons and motivations for choosing this course. In case you selected this course because your friends too selected it, let us undertake a short exercise in the form of a Self-Check, which will help in understanding your motivations.

Self-Check

1. List three reasons or motivations for selecting this course.

- a.
- b.
- c.

2. Take a step back and reflect the answer to: Write down three things that you hope you achieve by completing this course

- a.
- b.
- c.

3. After reading the previous Units in Block 2: Understanding the self, list four things or characteristics or skills that you possess. Keep in mind that these four should be from what you have learnt about in these Units.

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.

4. After reading the previous Units in Block 2: Understanding the self, list four things or characteristics or skills that you have realised that you need to learn. For each thing, characteristic or skill, identify one justification or reason. In the final column, write down your plan of action for achieving that goal.

List the four things or characteristics or skills that you need to learn	Give a reason or justification on why this is important for you	How do you plan to learn this skill or characteristic? What kind of help or guidance do you need?
a.		
b.		
c.		
d.		

5. This last self-check question can be a tough one to answer – What are the things or traits or characteristics that you have realised that don't help your personal or professional life? Make a list of four such things or traits or characteristics, and complete the table below:

List four things or traits or characteristics that hamper your personal and professional lives.	Give either an example or reason	Reflect and note down what you can do to correct this.
a.		
b.		
c.		
d.		

The Self-Check above is one of the important parts of what you have been reading, studying, understanding and, hopefully, applying in Block 2. When the contents of this Block were being discussed, there were discussions about the following:

- a. The most important question was- what are the skills that students of today need to have or know, which will help in arming them with skills that they will need when they work as well as want to enrich their personal life.
- b. The topic of each Unit, then was researched, discussed, and then identified. This included the content and the rationale of the content.

For all the above discussions, the objective was very clear – that the course and the content should ***add to the skills*** of the learners. Learning of these skills and awareness of these skills, it was understood by the subject experts, to be very important in order to emphasise the significance of LEARNABILITY.

3.2 What is Learnability?

Learnability – it is the **desire and ability to continuously acquire new skills and in faster cycles**

The three parts in the above definition on learnability have been deliberately emphasised → ‘desire and the ability’ --- ‘continuously acquire new skills’ --- ‘in faster cycles’. The main question is, why there is emphasis on these three? Think back in the time triggered by the coronavirus beginning in March 2020. Millions of people across the world lost their jobs, and majority of the people had to adapt to different ways of training or working almost overnight. There were many people who realised that they would need to learn new skill(s), software etc. or in other words upskill themselves very quickly to continue working under new conditions. This need to upskill has been highlighted because of the changes triggered by the Coronavirus.

However, upskilling or learnability is one of the most important qualities required in professional life in the 21st century. Coronavirus has merely proven that individuals who are employed or studying (and will become the future workforce) *need to be willing and have the ability to continuously acquire new skills and in faster cycles*.

Look at the gear graphic of the four concepts of Block 2: Self-reflection – Adaptability – Emotional Intelligence – Learnability. If any part of the gear is rusted or does not perform well, then the whole machine works poorly. One can hear the machine make growling sounds or not work at all. If the gears are not oiled, then it affects the whole. The ability to self-reflect, adapt and balanced emotional intelligence makes learnability possible and more approachable.



The infographic below from Australia reflects what employees look for when looking for work in potential professions. This is also true for the majority of potential employees across the world. And in order to sustain this career development, learning new skills and being aware are very important habits.



3.3 Understanding Learnability: The First Step

3.3.1 Basics 101

We have looked at one understanding of learnability. Let's look at another definition of it. According to the Manpower Group, a Fortune 500 American multinational corporation with headquarters in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, USA, Learnability is: "the desire and ability to quickly grow and adapt one's skill set to remain employable throughout their working life." The digital revolution, which started in the 1980s and refers to transformation of the advancement of technology from analogue electronic and mechanical devices (for example a device known as a turntable or a record player) to the digital technology today. Think how in 2020 people who would go out to buy groceries or vegetables, started using apps to order these. This change was made possible because of the digital developments. Another example is of service providers like Big Basket, Grofers, etc. In 2000 majority of Indians would have never even thought of a service like Big Basket {Bb hereafter}. But now in 2021 it is one of the largest online groceries supermarkets in India. It was founded in 2011 by a group of people Hari Menon, VS Sudhakar, V S Ramesh, Vipul Parekh and Abhinay Choudari. This group of people had some experience of physical grocery business as they had experience in setting up More Stores⁷. The launch of Bb was made possible by the slow spread of internet.

Amazon was started by Jeff Bezos in his garage in 1994. Can you imagine that Amazon started as an online marketplace for ... BOOKS! However, both Bigbasket and Amazon have led to many people starting their own businesses and these two companies have also evolved over the years. Both the companies as well as connected new businesses have created new customers and consumer tastes, new business models, new skill-sets and more. Schools, universities and technical institutions too have had to offer new courses and skills in order to meet the needs of such business and the changes brought on by digital revolution. Adaptability and learnability were some of the key concepts that have made this possible. More and more young people are setting-up their own start-ups but without constantly acquiring new skills at a faster pace → LEARNABILITY. Continuous learning and curiosity are essential to learnability.

3.3.2 Behaviour Indicators of Learnability

According to Meghana Jitendra, there are key behavioural indicators of learnability. These are as follows:

Demonstrating an Interest in Learning

- Demonstrates an interest in personal learning and development

⁷ The bigbasket story with Hari Menon. December 11, 2018. CNN Disruptors. URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2P3vENLPkIU>

- Seeks feedback from multiple sources about how to improve and develop, and modifies behaviour based on feedback or self-analysis of past mistakes
- Treats unexpected circumstances as opportunities to learn

Participating in Training

- Identifies when it is necessary to acquire new knowledge and skills
- Takes steps to develop and maintain knowledge, skills, and expertise necessary to achieve positive results
- Participates fully in relevant training programs and actively pursues other opportunities to develop knowledge and skills

Identifying Career Interests

- Takes charge of personal career development by identifying occupational interests, strengths, options and opportunities
- Makes insightful career planning decisions based on integration and consideration of others' feedback, and seeks out additional training to pursue career goals

Integration and Application

- Integrates newly learned knowledge and skills with existing knowledge and skills
- Uses newly learned knowledge and skills to complete specific tasks
- Uses newly learned knowledge and skills in new or unfamiliar situations.⁸

3.3.3 Why is Learnability important?

In the 21st century the scope and nature of employment have changed drastically from earlier centuries, especially even when compared to early 2000s. We no longer hold on to the same job for the rest of our lives.

According to an article, “today’s professional places greater value on doing what they love as a career choice (73%), followed by a healthy work-life balance (70%), a job that makes them a lot of money (57%), and finally 56% of respondents say that a job that provides learning and growth opportunities is also important. While 62% professionals had chosen their careers because it is something they have always wanted to do, 53% chose their careers as it fulfils them, and only 38% say they chose it because it makes them a lot of money.

⁸ Jitendra, Meghana. ‘So you think you can learn?’” Understanding ‘Learnability in the workplace,’ *Merittrac*. URL: <https://www.merittrac.com/blog/so-you-think-you-can-learn-understanding-learnability-workplace>

LinkedIn's new Career Pathways survey finds that one in three Indian professionals feel like they are 'career sleepwalking' - they feel stagnant as though they are on a treadmill going nowhere, and 57% would consider career pivoting in order to build a more fulfilling career. However, an impact on their pay packets and designation is deterring close to 51% of professionals from making the switch⁹.

The figures in the above reference are startling. The article further stated that the young professional are more open to change and that 61% of millennials would consider changing their jobs. "One in three Millennials (33%) has had two jobs within the last five years, compared to one in five Gen X respondents (20%). Half of Gen Z respondents (50%) were in their last job only for six months to one year, and 28% of Gen Z respondents are likely to change their job in less than a year, the report says."

In conclusion, the younger professionals are more open to changing their jobs and taking more risks. Apart from money increment and job satisfaction, getting opportunities to learn and develop themselves are important motivations for the fluidity. It is against this background that a strong network and possessing the right skills play important roles. The possession of right skills or learnability is, thus, an important component. In fact, employers are willing to hire professionals who may not have the right skills and then invest in training them. Given the chances that the employers are willing to take, the willingness of the employees to learn or their learnability quotient is of paramount importance.

The below infographic highlights the benefits of including learnability as a skill¹⁰:



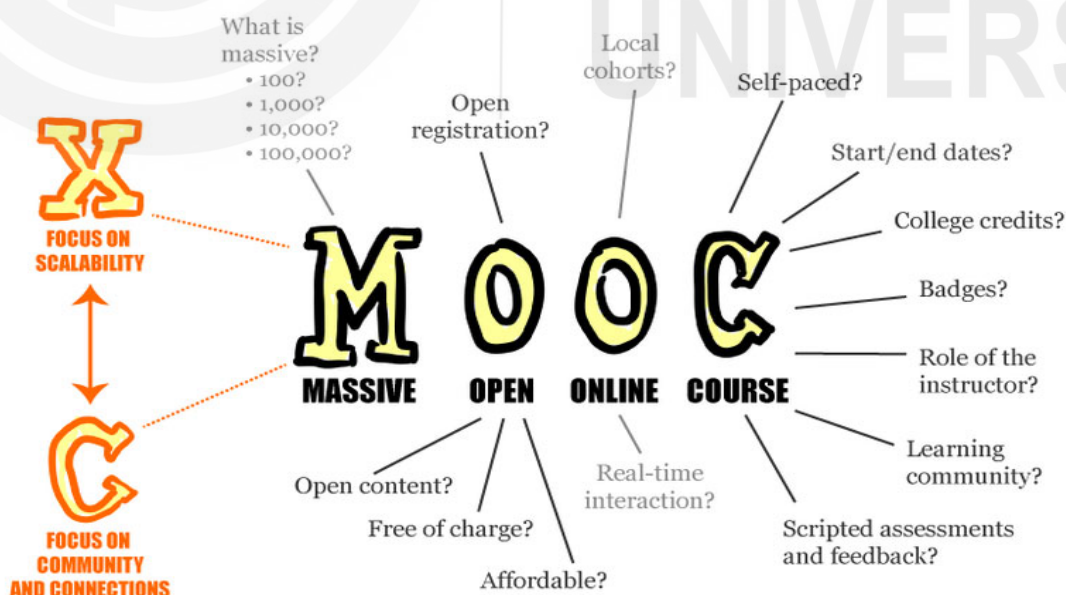
4.3.4 How to develop learnability?

⁹ One in three professionals in India are 'career sleepwalking': LinkedIn study. 5 April, 2019. URL: <https://news.linkedin.com/2019/January/57--Indian-professionals-would-consider-switching-careers-to-get>

¹⁰ Blog post. 10 June, 2021. "Learnability: The most important skills of the future," in *Edvantic*. URL: <https://www.edvantic.com/blog/learnability-the-most-important-skill-of-the-future>

We all have the capacity and the ability to learn irrespective of our age, ability or disability, gender, and other differentiations. The process of learning can never stop. We may not realise this but most of us are learning something new almost every single day. It could be borne out of seeing an advert (old or new), new fact, new awareness or new word. We can maximise this every day learning too through self-reflection, which we learnt about in Unit 1 of this Block. At the end of the day the practice of reflection and writing what we observed and learnt can gradually become a tool of enhancing one's learnability. The things that we learn in school or college are limited. In many ways our true learning starts when we work or our range of experiencing the world grows.

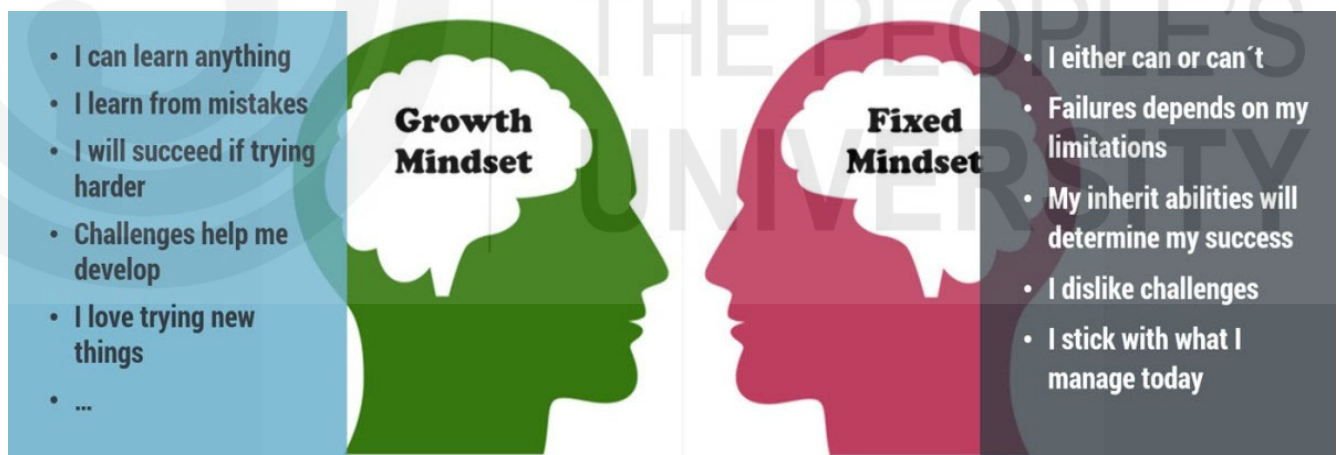
We all have different styles of learning. Some like to read and then learn. Some learn as they work because experiencing is important for them and makes it easier for them to understand, learn, and then recall. Some go to school or train to learn. In the 21st century, there are many ways one can learn. The digital world has made access to and acquisition of knowledge easier in many ways. For example, courses designed by prestigious international universities can be studied without going to foreign countries. This can be done by enrolling in the course through MOOCs or Massive Open Online Course(s). For example, sitting in India, one can take a course Big Data or Python offered by Massachusetts Institute of Technology or by Harvard University. One can learn a language and earn a certificate from a reputable international university. In fact, in many ways, evolution of MOOC also reflects evolution of learnability. The poster below that explores the meaning of MOOC by Mathieu Plourde can be used to highlight how learning is no longer *completely dependent on classroom education*.



MOOC courses are self-paced, which means that one's own time restrictions is no longer a limitation. Even though in order to earn a certificate one has to pay the fee, one can audit any course for free. This has the capacity to make learning skills more accessible. The lessons are recorded and a combination of reading, discussions, applications, real time interaction with students taking the course while sitting from different parts of the world and self-paced assessment are the key. Thus, MOOCs have made learnability reachable and achievable. This is just one pathway to learn new skills at a faster pace. Many experts have their YouTube channel, Instagram pages etc., where they share their skills, and we can learn these free of cost. In short, taking advantages of ALL learning channels is the key to develop our learnability.

Johan Skoglöf is a visionary and a senior consultant who has helped many companies like Ericsson, Volvo and many more in building learning organisations. His focus is on developing frames for introducing new abilities in the organisations as new ways of working, new learning methods etc. He has put forward a list of areas that **we need to work** on 'to develop our learning skills'¹¹. These are important to read, understand, know and inculcate.

1. Motivation: Knowing and understanding our own attitude and motivation to learn and develop. Why is it important for us? What are the short- and long-term goals? What steps are we willing to undertake in order to accomplish this or what type of mind-set do we have?



2. Planning: this requires exercising our awareness of the trends – current and future, recognising our limitations, identifying (even seeking help/advice in this process) the

¹¹Skoglöf, Johan. 7 October 2019. "Learnability: Develop your learning skills," in Future Learning Organisation. URL: <https://futurelearningorganisation.com/en/learnability-develop-your-learning-skills/>

steps that we need to undertake in order to gain a skill or knowledge. After recognising this, translating them into achievable plans.

3. **Experience:** As we go about our daily tasks, we are presented with many opportunities to learn. It could be something that one has read in the newspaper or has heard on T.V. What we experience is one of the main sources of learning. But the key is in being aware of it and using or applying it. For example, as a teacher I read about different ways of teaching and engaging students. I can come across a newspaper article that may not be directly related with the topic that I am teaching but I can see the connections. I have two choices. Choice 1 is not to use the article at all. Choice 2 is to share the article with the students and have a discussion or activity around it. When I compare the two options, Choice 2 has far reaching benefits. My students would probably learn a new perspective and vocabulary and I would benefit because I adopted a different tool and connected my routine experience with my work. This reflects my ability to learn and apply and, in some ways, indicates my learnability quotient.

In the above example, I did something different as a teacher. Doing things differently is important. This does not mean that we need to do something drastic or dramatic. But small step like talking to an unfamiliar colleague or unfamiliar class mate or servicing a new customer can also help us see things with a different perspective and learn something from that experience.

4. **Experimenting:** Experimenting is not restricted to science. It means trying out different things, approaches, asking for other people's perspectives. Experimenting helps by making us aware of possibilities. And by default, it is also important to learn from mistakes. Not all experiments will prove successful or profitable. Some experiments may in fact end up being mistakes. The key lies in learning how to manage mistakes. Instead of denying or running away from them, it is important to take ownership of the mistake, try and understand what-how-why of it. This reflection of mistake can, in fact, translate into a learning curve.
5. **Social:** We neither live nor learn in isolation. Building networks, extending them and sharing them as also the ability to collaborate are important steppingstones in learnability.
6. **Information/Environment:** Since 40% of the skills needed today may change within the next 5 years, information or an environment of awareness become a very important learning channel. Search engines, performance support, instructions/guides, articles, blogs, performance reviews, books/reports, podcast, learning portal, etc. can help us in creating an environment of awareness. One of the channels that most people know but often neglect is talking to colleagues about skills or latest trends. Application of the information in work or life is the guiding factor in this process.

Many of us tend to think that we should simply hoard this knowledge or information and not share. This creates roadblocks in information flow. While it is not advisable perhaps to share everything, it is important to maintain the flow of information because this flow may in fact hold the 'missing piece' for us or someone else.

7. Education: Learning the necessary skills remains an important gear in the learnability cycle. As explored through an example of courses on MOOC, there are many avenues through which one can learn the skills. But simply learning is not enough. Learning skills and not applying those makes learning static. Application of that learning is a key in retaining it.

So, remember to explore course catalogues if found at work or school or in adverts on social media.

8. Evaluation: After undertaking the process discussed above, it is equally important to continuously evaluate one's own progress and growth. It is easy to be fooled by a sense of accomplishment. We should evaluate our learning and the objectives that we set for ourselves. Self-reflection is one of the keys to this evaluation process. According to Charles Jennings¹², another leader in the areas of learning, development and performance, reflection is one of the most important habits to develop in a changing world. A small habit of reflecting at the end of the day on what went well and what did not, can give some important insights and impact the learning curve.



9. The infographic below is taken from the website of Edvantic. Its focus is to develop technology that enables educators and stakeholders adopt best practices in education. Curiosity is one of the keys, as visible in the discussion thus far, to learnability. This infographic helps outlines additional ways in which continuous learners develop learning muscles.

¹²The info graphic has been taken from Jennings' webpage. In this info graphic, he boils down the deep learning process into four key areas. To know, read and learn more about deep learning, visit: <http://charles-jennings.blogspot.com/2016/07/the-power-of-reflection-in-ever.html>



4.3.5 Check your progress 1

1. What is learnability?

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2. Why is learnability important?

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3. What hinders learnability?

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4. Which mindset is more beneficial – fixed mindset or growth-mindset? Give two reasons to support your choice.

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5. Why is self-reflection an important part of learnability?

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3.4 Practical matters: Learnability in Students, Adults and Mind Mapping

Learnability is important not only for professionals- employers or employees or potential employees but also for students in schools and universities. In this section, we will explore what students can do to increase their learnability quotient. We will also discuss how LQ reflects your desire and ability to grow and adapt to the new circumstances and challenges.

3.4.1: Tips for students to improve how they learn and their learning capacity

Benedict Carey starts his Chapter One: ‘The Story Maker’ in *how we learn* with a very interesting note on learning. He says,

“The science of learning is, at bottom, a study of the mental muscle doing the work—the living brain—and how it manages the streaming sights, sounds, and scents of daily life. That it does so at all is miracle enough. That it does so routinely is beyond extraordinary¹³.”

According to Carey the moment we are born, we are all learning quickly, efficiently, and automatically; but in our zeal to systematize the process we have ignored valuable, naturally enjoyable learning tools like forgetting, sleeping, and daydreaming. He outlines some tools that can help students to learn.

¹³ Carey, Benedict. 2014. *How we learn: The Surprising truth about when, where and why it happens*. New York: Random House

1. *Vary your learning routine, locations and materials:* Many students have a fixed place and time to study. This is an age-old belief. But research has shown that varying the location and time of studying – a different room, a different sitting position in class etc., can improve learning. Simple changes like using different pens or speaking to a voice recorder while revising can help learn and retain well.
2. *Getting a good night's sleep:* Our brain does not remember or learn everything equally. There are sometimes when certain learning is easily done by the brain. For example, if you are trying to learn facts like names, formulas and dates, go to bed early and get the deep sleep of the early evening. Then get up early and review what you had been learning the day before. The sleep that best consolidates creative thinking and motor skills happens in the morning before awakening. So, to learn these skills you may find it best to go to bed a little later than normal and sleep in a bit.
3. *Learning by 'cramming'... short term:* Most of us are familiar with the practice of cramming when exams are drawing close. The biggest disadvantage of this method is that it is effective only short-term. Majority of the things crammed are also forgotten easily.
4. *Use self-testing:* This is tried and well-researched method for learning. One can administer self-test by explaining it aloud to self or recording it over the phone or teaching someone else. If you are administering self-test with someone else, the feedback can be immediate. This way of learning by experiencing enables you to pick up faster.
5. *Taking notes and reviewing them as regular practice:* Most of us tend to write complete sentences and try to record everything that the teacher or speaker says. And then spend a lot of time trying to find relevant points in that flood of written text. There are many efficient ways of taking notes, such as mind mapping, Cornell method of note taking etc. The benefits of these methods are that they help in reviewing them fast when needed. Note-taking and note-making through these methods are more active processes for the brain which means that the retention power of the brain is also used. We will look at these two methods of note-making: Cornell and Mind Map in one of the succeeding sections.
6. *Don't worry about short breaks or distractions while you're studying:* Learning scientists know that a short break while you are trying to solve a problem you're stuck on is one of the best ways to succeed. When you take a break, your brain will continue to work on the problem subconsciously, without the imposition of preconceived ideas you may have had.
7. *Create learning sessions where you mix knowledge areas or skills:* We tend to focus on one task while learning. This process may help in learning faster, but it can really limit the *EXTENT* of learning. A resolution to this is to mix the knowledge areas in a learning

session. For example, working on BEGE 145, then switching to another subject or task in a single learning session. This was you can start at least two or three things that you need to work on and progress at the steady pace in all three. One of the factors that help in this method is that moving between different knowledge areas, helps the brain to think faster as it is working creatively between two different skill sets. It may take some practice to adopt this method of learning.

In addition to the above points by Carey, a few additions have been listed below:

8. *Clearing the doubts:* If there are any questions that you may have related with the topic or from a discussion in a work meeting, make a note of it. Before the conclusion of the meeting or the class, ask the main speaker or teacher for clarification. A doubt means lack of clarity and if left unresolved can hamper learning or lead to learning a wrong thing.
9. *Start with the harder tasks:* As a natural response, we tend to pick up the easier task when starting. Instead, we should start by picking the harder task first and then progress to the easier one. The rationale and science of learning behind this is that when we start our task, our brain is fresher and more motivated. It is able to process faster and more efficiently. The progression to easier task would also be faster. However, if we start with the easier task, then by the time we reach the harder task, we're likely to feel tired with lower motivation.

3.4.2 Note taking to Learn

Note taking is one of the key skills that students, teachers, employers, employees, individuals need to know. Note taking is not restricted to just work or study. If one is learning a new craft or recipe or skill, note-taking becomes an essential method of keeping track and remembering. As mentioned before, writing the entire content of the speaker is a self-defeating task.

In this Unit and the previous ones, you must have noticed use of many info graphics. Take a few minutes and go over the info graphics once again. After this, do the following Self-Check?

Self-Check:

1. Did the info graphics help you to understand the content faster? Give two reasons for your answer

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2. After answering the above question think about the definition or meaning of infographic. What is an infographic? Use your own words

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Infographic is one of the many ways in which information or knowledge can be presented. One can use this to also make notes.

In the following sub-section, we will focus on one method of note taking: Mind Mapping

3.4.3: MIND MAPPING: WHAT AND HOW

Let us jump right into what a mind map is. Look at an example of mind map below¹⁴. The person in the centre is Tony Buzan. He is regarded as the inventor of Mind Map and has been recognised as a forerunner in *promoting mental literacy*.

As you look, observe, and read, you will start to formulate information about Tony Buzan without ever having to read a long biography on him.

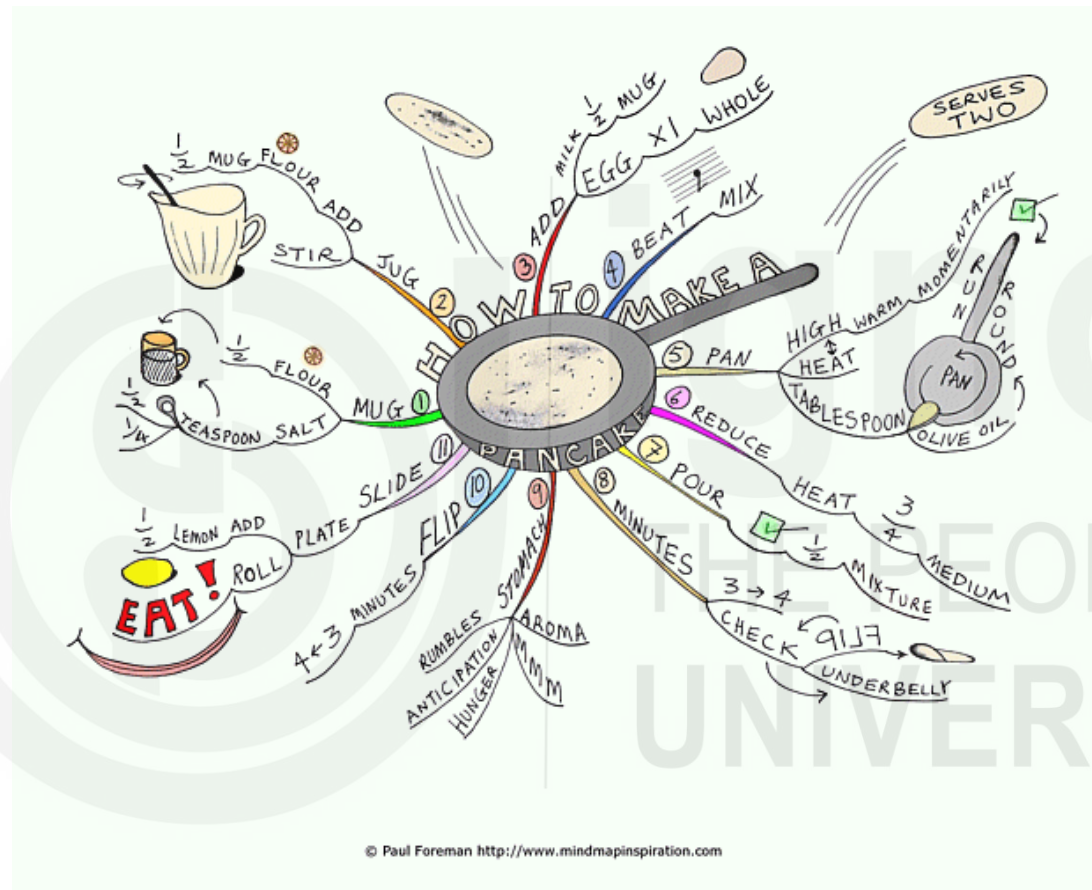


¹⁴This mind map has been taken from tonybuzan.com.

Imagine that you have moved from not knowing anything about Tony Buzan to gaining an overview of his life and contribution. The combination of colour coding, short text, doodles, short phrases, division of knowledge or information and more are the features that make mind mapping an effective and active tool.

Let's look at other examples of mind maps:

Example 2: How to make pancake



Example 3: Combat Global Warming¹⁵

¹⁵Combating Global Warming mind map: <https://learningfundamentals.com.au/resources/>



65



A mind map for 'WORDS' with the following branches and sub-branches:

- WORDS**
 - Centre**
 - Size**
 - Shape**
 - Length**
 - Connected
 - Image
 - Word
 - in
 - Key**
 - Select**
 - Other**
 - Creativity**
 - Time**
 - Clarity**
 - Express**
 - One**

66



With the development of software and apps, there are many tools of making a mind map. But it is not important to have access to computer or a smart phone to create a mind map. One does not even need to be an artist to make great doodles or drawings.

Let's look at easy step on how to create a Mind Map from Tony Buzan's book *Study Skills Handbook: The Shortcut to success in your studies with Mind mapping....* However, as emphasized mind mapping is not restricted to students!

1. Focus on the core question or task or the precise topic.
2. Turn your sheet to landscape layout. This will give you more space to make the mind map
3. Draw an image or write the main topic in the middle. An image or a doodle by capturing the eyes help to jumpstart the mind map.
4. Use colours even when you start. You should use at least three colours. Identify a colour code. For example, look at the mind maps above, each sub-category of the example on Uses of Mind Map, Meetings, Study, Note taking, Recall, Note takingetc. has been assigned a different colour.

5. Draw a series of lines radiating from the centre of the image or main topic. These are the primary branches of the Mind Map. These branches can be compared to the branches of the trees that support the idea. Curved lines are more interesting than straight lines.
6. Write one key word on each branch. For example, each sub-category of the example on Uses of Mind Map, Meetings, Study, Note taking, Recall, Note taking etc. This is the basic ordering of Main Thoughts or Concept.
7. Add a few empty branches just in case your brain thinks of something new later on.
8. Next create second-and-third-level branches for your related associated and secondary thought. Association is EVERYTHING. The secondary level connects to the primary branch, the third level to the secondary branches and so on.

End Result¹⁸: After completing the Step 8, the Mind Map will look like the one below:



It is hoped that by now, you are familiar with the following aspects of Mind Map:

1. What is a Mind Map?

¹⁸The manifestation of the end result taken from Tony Buzan. 2018. *Mind Map Mastery*. Watkins

2. What are the uses of Mind Map?
3. How to create a Mind Map?

3.5 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit of Learnability, you discovered and realised that the world is changing at a much faster pace than we can imagine. Finding job, job satisfaction and professional development are not important but also challenging. Many of the skills that we now know and that have helped us gain an employment may not be even relevant in 2031! In these challenging times, learnability is one of the key skills in order to remain relevant. Factors like unwillingness to learn, lack of motivation or inability to understand the current trends in employment, education, life etc. and predict future trends are some of the hindrances in learnability. Learnability can be acquired and also become a way of life. Reading or using digital platforms to stay tuned in to current and future trends, undertaking necessary training and self-reflection are some of the key gears of learnability.

Check your progress 2

1. Read the tips for students to improve their learnability. Identify three tips that you feel are important for you to adopt. For each give a reason how this might benefit you.

- a. How will this benefit you?

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- b. How will this benefit you?

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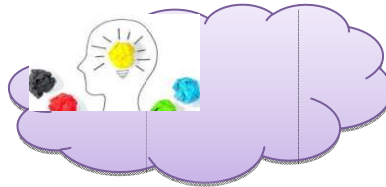
c. How will this benefit you?

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2. What is a Mind Map? What are the benefits of Mind Map? Create a Mind Map to explain your answer. Use the central image to create your response.

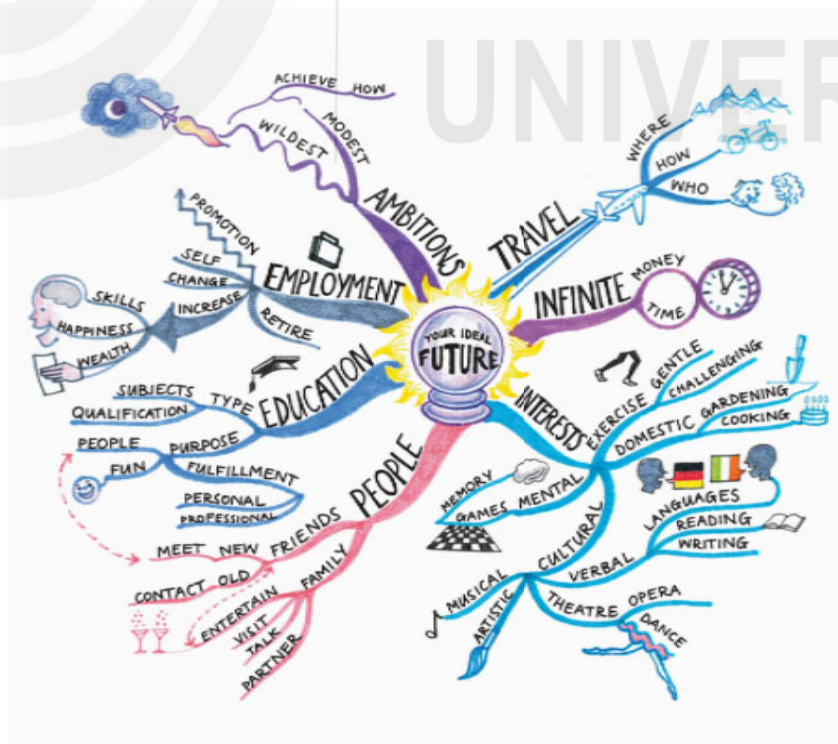


3. Mapping Your IDEAL FUTURE:

Ideal means perfect or desired. A template has been given below from Tony Buzan's book on Your Ideal Future.

Your task is to add specific details onto this mind map of your own ideal future. For example, under Ambition, there is a third level of Wildest Ambition—add an associated line and write what is YOUR WILDEST AMBITION.

Complete as many sub-categories as possible.



3.7 Suggested Readings

The bigbasket story with Hari Menon. December 11, 2018. CNN Disruptors. URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2P3vENLPkIU>

Jitendra, Meghana. ‘So you think you can learn?’ Understanding ‘Learnability in the workplace,’ *Merittrac*. URL: <https://www.merittrac.com/blog/so-you-think-you-can-learn-understanding-learnability-workplace>

LinkedIn study. 5 April, 2019. URL: <https://news.linkedin.com/2019/January/57--Indian-professionals-would-consider-switching-careers-to-get>

Blog post. 10 June, 2021. “Learnability: The most important skills of the future,” in *Edvantic*. URL: <https://www.edvantic.com/blog/learnability-the-most-important-skill-of-the-future>

Skoglöf, Johan. 7 October 2019. “Learnability: Develop your learning skills,” in Future Learning Organisation. URL: <https://futurelearningorganisation.com/en/learnability-develop-your-learning-skills/>

Charles Jennings Blog: <http://charles-jennings.blogspot.com/2016/07/the-power-of-reflection-in-ever.html>

Carey, Benedict. 2014. *How we learn: The Surprising truth about when, where and why it happens*. New York: Random House

Following books by Tony Buzan are suggested

- *Use Your Head*, January 1974,
- *Speed Memory*, 27 January 1977.
- *Make the Most of Your Mind*, February 1984.
- *The Mind Map Book*, 6 September 1993.
- *Mind Maps for Business*, BBC Publications, 2010

3.8 Answers

Check your progress 1

1. What is learnability?

Learnability is the desire and ability to continuously acquire new skills and in faster cycles.

2. Why is learnability important?

Learnability is important as it helps in giving a person an ability to learn new skills at a faster pace which in turn will enable and empower an individual to find appropriate employment that would be more fulfilling.

3. What hinders learnability?

Factors that hinder learnability are:

- a. Unwillingness to learn
- b. Being comfortable to rely on old skills or knowledge
- c. Lack of motivation
- d. Inability to understand the current trends in employment, education, life etc. and predict future trends
- e. Lack of curiosity and lack of self-reflection
- f. Lack of awareness

4. Which mindset is more beneficial – fixed mindset or growth-mindset? Give two reasons to support your choice.

[This answer would depend on personal preference]

5. Why is self-reflection an important part of learnability?

Self-reflection is an important part of learnability because it helps us to take a step back and objectively analyse, evaluate, check etc. our work, thoughts, speech and more in order to either understand.

UNIT 4:EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

Structure

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 The Changing Scenario in the Twenty-first Century
- 4.3 What Employers Want
- 4.4 Qualities of a Star Performer
 - 43.4.1 Personal Competence
 - 43.4.2 Social Competence
- 4.5 Implementing the Change
 - 43.6.1 Knowing Who and What Triggers You
 - 43.6.2 Becoming Aware of Our ‘Blind Spots’ and Learning to Overcome Them
 - 43.6.3 Building Your Self-Confidence
- 4.6 Collaboration and Cooperation
- 4.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 4.8 Suggested Readings
- 4.9 Answers

4.0OBJECTIVES

The objective of this unit is to help you

- understand that the twenty first century has brought about and will further bring about drastic changes in our lives. In the midst of this fast changing scenario, you have to find positivity and emotional equilibrium.
- realize that mere subject expertise is not enough for success in your professional life. You need to be life-long learners, ever ready to be flexible and change your ways of working whenever the situation demands it.
- develop certain personal and social qualities that will enable you to be a star performer and a potential leader at the workplace

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The workplace is rapidly changing. While it is important to have our degrees and diplomas in place, it is equally important to remember that for upward mobility in our professional lives, it is no longer just about our education and expertise but on how well we can **handle ourselves and others**. This is crucial when we are hired and even more so when it is our time to get promoted.

So, what are the qualities that matter? Of course, your academic and intellectual qualities, but along with that – personal qualities such as “initiative and empathy, adaptability and persuasiveness” (Goleman, 2013:3)

Please remember that this is not a fact that will fade away in time, but a seriously researched phenomenon based on detailed studies. These studies clearly differentiate which employee is likely to be a “star performer” and a leader and who is going to be left behind in the race. As people who are soon to enter the job market or who are already working, we need to cultivate some of those qualities, which are now broadly called “emotional intelligence” if we want to have a successful professional and personal life.

Check your progress 1

- 1 Think of your own personal qualities. Do you have the qualities of initiative, empathy, adaptability and persuasiveness? Give examples of each of these qualities from your personal, academic and professional life.

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4.2 THE CHANGING SCENARIO IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

We are in the age of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Unlike the first three revolutions (dictated by the inventions of steam engines, electricity and digital technologies – leading to mass production), the Fourth Industrial Revolution which is triggered by Artificial Intelligence and other disruptive technologies is making the world volatile, unpredictable, chaotic, and ambiguous. Nobody can be certain about their jobs or their future professional trajectory. So, you need to be prepared for this (to put it positively) “dynamic” future. You need to be lifelong learners, ever ready to innovate and adapt to the future events. You need to also develop the prime qualities which will keep you always employable: critical and reflective thinking and emotional intelligence.

Check your progress 2

- 1

Why is the 21st century different from the other centuries?
- 2

How do you expect to be always employable?

4.3 WHAT EMPLOYERS WANT

More and more employers are complaining both in the developed and the developing countries that half the people working for them lack communication as well as social skills. Many of them also lack the motivation to keep learning and updating themselves continuously at their jobs. These people are familiar with the era of their parents who lived in the world of the 70ies and the 80ies where people got ahead by going to the right schools and colleges and doing well there. Now the world is full of well-trained people with expertise in their respective fields but who have either plateaued in their jobs, or worse, have been derailed because they have not developed certain essential personal qualities. These qualities can be listed as follows:

- Communication skills – especially listening and oral communication
- Adaptability and creative responses to setbacks and obstacles.
- Personal management, confidence, motivation to work toward goals, a sense of wanting to develop one’s professional life and take pride in one’s accomplishment.
- Group and interpersonal effectiveness, cooperativeness and teamwork, skills at negotiating disagreements.
- Wanting to contribute for the well-being of the organization, showing potential for a leadership role.

(Ideas adapted from Goleman 2013)

Check your progress 3

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What are the employees deficient in? Why?

2 What according to you are the qualities that the employees must develop?

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4.4 QUALITIES OF A STAR PERFORMER

In this section we will look for the capacities and capabilities that will enable you to be successful at the workplace.

It must be realized that earlier it was intelligence quotient(IQ) which was the apparent measure of a successful leader. It is now been found that people have multiple intelligences (Howard Gardner,1995) --- and emotional intelligence counts more than IQ and expertise in one's field for determining who excels at their job. Research has found that there is a "common core of personal and social abilities" which are required for a person's success at the workplace.

This is not to suggest that technical/subject expertise is not important. Of course, it is – but one must remember that it is a "**threshold requirement**" which is imperative for all of us working in that particular area. What distinguishes outstanding employees and managers from others is not only their technical/subject expertise, but how well they can work with and manage their respective teams.

As Goldman (2013) says Emotional Intelligence skills are "synergistic with cognitive ones" and top performers have both. The more complex the job, the more emotional intelligence matters – because a deficiency in these abilities can hinder the use of whatever technical expertise or intellect a person may have" (p-22). In other words, out-of-control emotions make even the intelligent people look stupid. Therefore, in order to access the potential of your talent, you need to be emotionally intelligent.

Of course, just being emotionally intelligent does not guarantee personal competencies required for a job but it does suggest that one has the means to acquire them. Goleman (2013) has clustered the emotional competencies into two broad groups. One group primarily looks inwards into one's *personal qualities*, while the other group leverages the *social qualities*.

Check your progress 4

1 What is a "threshold requirement"?

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- 2 Does emotional intelligence always guarantees success? Discuss with reference to your own life.

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4.4.1 Personal Competence

These competences are about ourselves and our patterns of behavior. Here we have to understand how we have to manage our own emotions. These have been divided into three states with their respective sub-states. They are *Self-awareness*, *Self-regulation* and *Motivation*.

Let us look at *Self-awareness*. This is about knowing one's internal states, preferences, resources and intuitions. Under this we have three clusters: -*Emotional awareness* which is primarily recognizing one's emotions and their effects on oneself and others; *Self-assessment*-this is about knowing one's strengths and weaknesses; *Self-confidence* here we recognize our self-worth and capabilities. As you can see that all the three sub-categories are related to each other.

The next major competence is *Self-regulation*. Here we need to learn to *manage* our internal states, impulses and resources. Under this, we have five sub-categories. The first is *Self-control*—we need to keep our emotions and impulses in check; *Trustworthiness* – this refers to maintaining an ethical lifestyle; *Conscientiousness*— you need to take personal responsibility for your performance or lack of it. *Adaptability* – this has reference to your flexibility to handle different situations that you may encounter. Lastly, we have *Innovation* – it refers to your ability to accept novel ideas and practices and be ready to implement them.

The final personal competence is *Motivation*. Under this we have four sub-categories which are self-explanatory: *Achievement drive*, *Commitment*, *Initiative* and *Optimism*.

Check your progress 5

1. List the major Personal competences and their sub categories.

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4.4.2 Social Competence

These competencies deal with on how we handle our relationships with others. For good relationships we need to have **empathy** and **social skills**. **Empathy** makes us aware of others' feelings, needs and concerns; while **social skills** reveal our adeptness at inducing desirable responses in others. First, let us discuss **Empathy**. Goleman (-2013) includes five sub-categories

under this. These include *understanding others* in terms of being sensitive to their feelings and perspectives and taking an active interest in their concerns. We also need to be *developing others*, i.e., being sensitive to their need to progress and helping them by bolstering their abilities; we need to be *service oriented*— always anticipating and meeting customer needs. *Leveraging diversity* is about accepting different kinds of people and getting along with them. Finally, there is a need to have *political awareness* – which is primarily the ability to read “a group’s emotional currents and power relationships”.

Social skills: As mentioned before, these relate to inducing desirable responses in the people around us. The sub-categories include *Influence*: this is the ability to persuade others to our point of view; *Communication*: the ability to listen with an open mind and in turn send convincing messages; *Conflict management*: this involves the ability to negotiate and resolve disagreements; *Leadership*: these are the qualities we must cultivate so that we can inspire and guide individuals and groups. *Change catalyst*: the capability of initiating and managing change without hurting the feelings and interests of others; *Building bonds*: it means the ability to nurture relationships in office spaces; *Collaboration and Cooperation*: working with others towards shared goals and finally, *Team capabilities* which involve creating group synergy in pursuing the collective goals of the organization. Therefore, to be a success at the workplace, you need to work on your personal qualities constantly as well as keep fine-tuning the social skills.

Check your progress 6

1. How do you bring about a feeling of empathy at the workplace?

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2. Which are the social skills you particularly need to develop at your level of career. Discuss with examples from your life.

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4.5 IMPLEMENTING THE CHANGE

We have discussed certain theoretical models with you which will help you at your workplace. Now let us look at ways in which you can, at a very practical level, bring about a change which will impact your professional life for the better.

People are generally courageous, innovative and resilient when they are forced to deal with the truly challenging problems. What actually disturbs us and ruins our happiness are the basic day-to-day hassles and little problems. Just ask yourself “how much energy is expended being stressed-out, frustrated and angry over relatively minor things” (Carlson, 1998). If we used the same energy on being “more productive, creative and solution-oriented” our life will take quite a different turn. We often treat the daily irritants as huge problems. If we learn to treat the small

hassles with more perspective, wisdom, patience and humour, we would be able to bring out the best in ourselves and others. It is in a calm and peaceful state of mind that solutions are found.

So, it is important to make incremental improvements in the quality of our lives by making small daily changes in our attitude and behavior. These positive changes will make us become happier people and also encourage us not to be mentally disturbed by little issues at the workplace.

For example, if you develop the skill of *emotional awareness*, i.e., recognizing your emotions and their effects, you will develop more empathy for your clients and be better able to build long-term, trusting relationships with them. This would, of course, lead to high sales per customer.

What is the way to build emotional awareness you may ask? Well, it means that you must be totally conscious of:

- What emotions you are feeling and why
- Realize how these feelings are linked to what you think, do and speak.
- Recognize how these feelings affect your performance at the workplace – and of course, in your day-to-day life.

From this awareness comes another important realization – how our feelings affect those we deal with. The important thing is to recognize the physical manifestations of our feelings and then show social appropriateness in expressing them.

Most of the time we are unable to even recognize our emotions. The pace of our modern life gives us too little time to assimilate, reflect and respond appropriately. Our bodies work at a lower rhythm. We need time to be introspective, but we don't have the time or don't want to have it, which leads to an impasse. People who are unable to know their feelings are also at a tremendous disadvantage – they particularly lack the ability to express positive moods like satisfaction, joy, etc., ending up feeling always disgruntled and unhappy.

This self-awareness can be cultivated. It can be created by the daily practice of meditation or taking time to do things that interest us. For instance, some corporates say that they go for long walks, someone rides his Harley, someone else paints and someone else plays golf. This is the way of retreating from the hustle bustle of your job in order “to get down to reality again.” As Goleman (2013) says self-awareness serves as an inner barometer, gauging whether what we are doing (or are about to do) is, indeed worthwhile.

The difference between star performers and average performers is that star performers made career choices that allows them to work with their sense of meaning intact or enhanced. These performers find the project they are working on to be invigorating and stimulating—something to be enjoyed, while the average performer is merely content to complete the project adequately.

Check your progress⁷

1 What is emotional awareness?

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Understanding the Self

2 How can you cultivate emotional awareness?

4.5.1 Knowing Who and What Triggers You

We all have our triggers points, i.e. things that really irritate and irk us. Sometimes it is an over-competitive colleague or a demanding boss. Both these entities leave us forever stressed and even revengeful. There are two ways of dealing with such people. We can complain about them, talk about them behind their backs, wish them ill or secretly plot against them in our minds. Or we can take an absolutely different path and try, however hard it may be, to focus on the positive aspects of the person or situation.

Remember that such people are pushing us out of our comfort zone and helping us to rise to a new level of competence. For instance, where the boss is concerned, we can learn from her/his skills rather than focusing on the flaws. Remember, there are always two sides to all people, even demanding, and unpleasant ones – both positive and negative. So, focusing on what they may teach you, and not taking their behavior personally, may be one way of coping with the situation. Often our over-reaction to demanding people has a lot to do with how difficult they are to deal with. Learn to take them in your stride and see it as “small stuff” (Carlson, 1998)

Check your progress 8

1 What is it that triggers you? In the light of this unit, how will you overcome your situation?

4.5.2 Becoming Aware of Our ‘Blind Spots’ and Learning to overcome them

Robert Kaplan of the Centre for Creative Leadership after researching on forty-two successful executives found that certain aspects of their character led to difficulties and challenges in their lives. We list some of them so that you may work on yourself and eliminate these qualities from your life:

- Blind ambition: the desire to win at all costs. Always competing instead of cooperating.
- Setting unrealistic goals: setting goals which are impossible to achieve for yourself and others.

- Compulsively working: always working at your job at the cost of other aspects of your life. In effect, becoming a one-dimensional, closed person.
- Pushing others: pushing others too hard and micromanaging them. Becoming abrasive, ruthless and insensitive to others.
- Becoming power hungry: always thinking of your goals rather than the organization's.
- Great need for recognition: When you are so addicted to glory that you take credit for the achievements of your juniors and blame them if there are any mistakes. When you want to look “good” at all costs.

How do you overcome all these negativities? Because remember, these are your “blind spots” which will prevent you from being a “star performer” and sustaining your position there.

- 1) Probably the first thing that needs to be done is to **“ease off your ego”**. This is the part of us which “brags, exaggerates, criticizes and judges others...” Because of our ego we get so self-centered and preoccupied in ourselves that we forget to be sensitive to and show compassion to our colleagues and juniors. Needless to say, we also stress ourselves in the process.

You may ask how should we do that? You must have the *intent* to “shrink your ego” with the realization of its destructive qualities. If you do that, you will find yourself being a kinder and more generous person and a better listener.

- 2) **Also avoid being a “corporate bragger”**. Such people not only talk about their achievements, but also how busy they are and so devoted to their jobs. Remember nobody is really interested in the conversation about you, so you merely end up being a really boring person.
- 3) **Take regular breaks from your work**. Failure to take regular breaks is a big mistake. It not only wears you down over time, increases your expectations of others, but also makes you less productive. Before you know it, your creativity and insights will fade away and your frustration will grow.
- 4) **Listen to your colleagues and juniors**: Do you listen to your colleagues? Do you let them articulate their ideas before you take your turn? In meetings, are you patient and responsive – or just impatient or reactive? People who listen well are highly respected and sought after. If you become a good listener, you are likely to be a good team player and later on an effective leader. So, it is worth cultivating this skill.
- 5) **Remember to appreciate the people you work with**: Whether we work in junior or senior positions, it is important to appreciate your colleagues for the good work that they do. People who are appreciated are generally happier and more loyal than those who feel that they are being taken for granted. They work better and harder and are less likely to quit. Conversely, people who feel unappreciated, feel resentful and lose their enthusiasm for work.

Check your progress 9

- 1 List the blind spots that most people have. Do you possess any of them in your character?
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- 2 Do you use any of the strategies mentioned in the unit to deal with them? Elaborate with examples.

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3.5.3 Building Your Self-Confidence

People who have self-confidence have a strong sense of their self-worth and capabilities. They present themselves with assurance, have the courage to voice unpopular opinions and can take decisions despite being accosted with uncertainties and pressures.

How do you build up genuine self-confidence? Remember, if you are too self-confident, you will merely end up being cocky and arrogant. So do not confuse confidence with brashness which has a negative impact on other people. On the other hand, lack of self-confidence manifests itself in a feeling of self-doubt which leads to powerlessness, helplessness and eventually poor performance. In order to cultivate self-confidence, you need to follow self-discipline where you keep challenging yourself moment to moment. Some of the steps that successful people like Oprah Winfrey (who came up literally from the bottom of the heap) advise us to take are:

- 1 Believe in yourself and have dreams
- 2 Figure out your good qualities and strive for excellence in them – and striving constantly in an act of self-discipline. It is about running the race as hard as you can.
- 3 Realize that everyone makes mistakes. Don't go under because of them – but challenge to do better next time.
- 4 Seize the opportunity when it arises – for this you need to be always prepared. So never let up on your self-discipline and working for excellence. In other words, be a life-long learner.
- 5 Stay grounded – no matter what level of success you achieve, continue being compassionate and willing to listen to your colleagues.
- 6 In every situation, no matter how banal and ordinary it may be, give your best to it.
- 7 Eventually, have fun and enjoy whatever you are doing.

All these qualities will build an indestructible self-confidence and give you an enormous amount of courage and confidence to face your professional and personal life with a sense of well-being.

Check your progress 10

- 1 Who is the most courageous colleague that you have come across? Why do you think/he is courageous? Give reasons.

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- 2 What are the three qualities listed that will build self-confidence in you? Why are they the most important for you?
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4.6 COLLABORATION AND COOPERATION

Humans have probably arrived this far because they have been primarily social beings, getting into teams whenever required, which gave them a "crucial survival advantage". When you look back into the ancient past, the human species survived because of complex social coordination while hunting and gathering. Darwin's idea of the survival of the fittest is not measured merely by toughness of individuals but by the group's ability to work together, nurture their children and fend off predators (Goldman 2017). This legacy has allowed us to progress tremendously and it is this ancient skill that organizations and individuals need to leverage in order to be successful.

A great deal of social competence which we spoke about earlier is required for skill of cooperation and collaboration. In fact, many successful people will tell you that most of the knowledge and wisdom that they have acquired is from the people around them, not through books/internet or any great cognitive ability. Indeed, there are very few "Lone geniuses" – everything requires collaboration. Research has proven beyond doubt that the "group mind" is much more intelligent than an individual brain; no matter how brilliant s/he may be.

What does collaboration and cooperation entail? It of course means working with others towards *shared goals*. What kind of competence does one need for this? Some of these factors have been listed below:

- 1 Finding a balance between our focus on the task and at the same time not losing sight of our relationship with the team.
- 2 It is also imperative not to 'hide' our brilliant ideas from the group to win "brownie" points with the boss. We need to share plans, information and resources. In other words, always keep your colleagues in the loop.
- 3 We need to build rapport with our team mates. This would help in establishing a trusting long-term relationship which is based on mutual honesty and integrity. It also helps us to be better negotiators and overall smarter and wiser business persons. Rapport would also assist us in bringing out the best in ourselves and in others – as there would not be a need for pretensions between our teammates. But you must remember that rapport is not something that you establish at one time and it lasts forever. In fact, it is important to reconnect with people on an ongoing basis. Once genuine rapport is built in a team, the rest of the interaction carries on fairly smoothly.
- 4 Along with rapport it is important for the team to build a team identity. This happens when everyone on the team love what they are doing together, when they have a "shared competitive drive, strong social bonds, and confidence in each other's' abilities." Those on this team share a "common motivational pattern" and a commitment to the group goal.

Check your progress 1

- 1 List the four essentials of collaboration and cooperation.

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- 2 Reflect on your life and say which aspects of this collaborative framework which you need to challenge yourself on.

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4.7 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit, we have looked at important aspects of corporate success. It is apparent in the 21st century that upward mobility in the professional sphere cannot only be by subject competency and expertise. Much more is required if one is to be a “star performer” in a world of disruptive technology. It appears that the threshold requirement is one’s academic excellence and area expertise. More important is developing “people skills” which will help you cooperate healthily to build understanding and rapport with your colleagues. The unit also discusses at length the theory of ‘Emotional Intelligence’ espoused by Daniel Goleman. It has been well-researched that the most successful people are those who have worked on themselves to be positive people who are sensitive to the concerns of their team members and colleagues and honed their emotional and social intelligence.

4.8 SUGGESTED READINGS

Goleman, D 2013. Working with Emotional Intelligence. Bloomsbury, New Delhi
 Carlson 1998. Don’t Sweat the Small Stuff. Hodder and Stoughton, London

4.9 ANSWERS

Check your progress 2

- 1 The fourth industrial revolution in the 21st century is triggered by Artificial Intelligence and other disruptive technologies such as the Internet of Things (IoT), robotics, virtual reality which is changing the way we live and work. It is making the world volatile, unpredictable, chaotic, and ambiguous.

The third industrial revolution, sometimes called the digital revolution, involved merely the development of computers and IT (information technology) since the middle of the 20th century.

The fourth industrial revolution is growing out of the third but is considered a new era rather

than a continuation because of the explosiveness of its development and the disruptiveness of its technologies.

2 We need to be lifelong learners, ever ready to innovate and adapt to future events. We need to also develop the prime qualities which will keep us always employable: critical and reflective thinking having emotional intelligence.

Check your progress 3

- 1 Half the people working for them lack communication skills as well as social skills. They lack the motivation to keep learning and updating themselves continuously at their job.
- 2 Communication skills – especially listening and oral communication
 - Adaptability and creative responses to setbacks and obstacles.
 - Personal management, confidence, motivation to work toward goals, a sense of wanting to develop one's professional life and take pride in one's accomplishment.
 - Group and interpersonal effectiveness, cooperativeness and teamwork, skills at negotiating disagreements.
 - Wanting to contribute for the well-being of the organisation, showing potential for a leadership role.

Check your progress 4

- 1 Educational and technical expertise in one's area of work

Check your progress 5

1 Personal competences are: Self-awareness, Self-regulation and Motivation
Self-awareness: emotional awareness, self-assessment and self-confidence
Self-regulation: Self-control, Trustworthiness, Conscientiousness; Adaptability; Innovation
Motivation: Achievement drive, Commitment, Initiative and Optimism

Check your progress 6

- 1 We can bring about empathy at the workplace by understanding others, by having a sense of service which will not only make the customers happy but where we show our colleagues that we are ready to assist them as well in any challenges that they may face. We also need to accept with respect the diverse people that we come across. However, it is wise to have political awareness – which is primarily the ability to read “a group's emotional currents and power relations.

Check your progress 7

1 Emotional awareness is recognizing our emotions and their effects. It means that we must be totally conscious of:

- What emotions we are feeling and why
- Realize how these feelings are linked to what we think, do and say.
- Recognize how these feelings affect our performance at the workplace – and of course, in our day-to-day life.

- 2 This self-awareness can be cultivated. It can be created by the daily practice of mediation or taking time to do things that interest us.

Check your progress 9

- 1 i) an enormous ego, ii) brag how hard working and over-worked they are, iii) constantly
- 2 work without a break iv) not listen to colleagues v) not appreciate others

Check your progress 10

1.
 - Believe in yourself and have dreams
 - Figure out your good qualities and strive for excellence in them – and striving constantly in an act of self-discipline.
 - Realize that everyone makes mistakes. Don't go under because of them – but challenge to do better next time.
 - Seize the opportunity when it arises – for this you need to be always prepared. In other words, be a life-long learner.

Check your progress 11

1.
 - Finding a balance between our focus on the task and at the same time not losing sight of our relationship with the team.
 - It is also imperative not to 'hide' our brilliant ideas from the group to win "brownie" points with the boss. We need to share plans, information and resources. In other words, always keep your colleagues in the loop.
 - We need to build rapport with our team mates. This would help in establishing a trusting long-term relationship which is based on mutual honesty and integrity.
 - It is important for the team to build a team identity. This happens when everyone on the team love what they are doing together, when they have a "shared competitive drive, strong social bonds, and confidence in each other's' abilities."