

## **Essential Life Skills for Personal Success**

It is at Njiiri School that our biology teacher Miss Maina taught us about Phototropism ; the orientation of a plant or other organism in response to light, either toward the source of light ( *positive phototropism* ) or away from it ( *negative phototropism*). In regard to success all human beings have a ‘tropism’ towards success; every human has a need to be safe, secure, able, healthy, prosperous, rich, happy, loved, appreciated and recognized. All human beings in a way or another possess a great desire to succeed.

Just like adults the youth possess a great desire to succeed. It is important to first understand what success is. How do we achieve something we do not even know? The Business Dictionary defines success as; the achievement of an action within a specified period of time or within a specified parameter. Success can also mean completing an objective or reaching a goal. Success can be expanded to encompass an entire project or be restricted to a single component of a project or task. It can be achieved within the work place, school or in an individual’s personal life. For example, if an individual's personal goal is to be accepted in a career, success would occur after the individual has been accepted.

From this definition we need to understand the need for skill in the achievement of success. It is said that knowledge is power. The business Dictionary again defines skill as; An ability and capacity acquired through deliberate, systematic, and sustained effort to smoothly and adaptively carry out complex activities or

job functions involving ideas (cognitive skills), things (technical skills), and/or people (interpersonal skills).

Life skills are the centre that holds all others skills together. They are problem solving behaviours used appropriately and responsibly in the management of personal affairs. They are a set of human skills acquired via learning (teaching) or direct experience that are used to handle problems and questions commonly encountered in daily human life. As a young person you need to understand that success is personal.

***Success is not an accident neither is it natural.***

There are some skills you may not need to live a successful life, like you may not be able to build the standard gauge railway, but there are some skills that you need to make you a success in almost all that you focus both in school and career.

Our education system is single sided, geared towards producing students who can only answer questions in an exam but nothing much beyond the class. It is the reason for frustrated geniuses. Dr. Allan Mackenzie a high school classmate called them the poor millionaires. Developing important life skills will help you to fill the educational gaps because we cannot learn all we need in life at school.

### **Know Yourself.**

Top on the list is **the ability to know yourself**. The Greeks say ‘Know Thyself’. Know what you are good at and what you are not. This will help you to develop competences. You could be unconsciously incompetent but once you know yourself progress is possible. Take time to discover your unique talents and passions. We all are born eagles, with gifts and talents but if not discovered they die a natural death and we join the chicken to become perpetual ground scratchers.

Unfortunately, at school we only learn how to find x but never ourselves. No wonder writers never write, singers never sing, designers don't design and ‘eagles’ never fly. I never also knew I was a writer.

## Decision Making

Knowing yourself is not the end. For any progress you must **learn to decide**, to make logical and informed decisions. Remember you don't have to be great to start but you must start, to be great. Most youth never start. Those who start are never decided. To make the better choice table down all the options at hand and go through them while consulting from those ahead and you shall be guided. He who wants to know will know for destiny favours the doer of deeds. Decision making is the bridge that leads from analysis to action.

Decision making is about knowing what to do based on the information gathered.

## Networking

When Nancy Baraza told the security guard “you should know people” everyone was offended but I think it's good to know people. After making the right decision you need to get to the right people. Those who will make your dream a reality. You can not be the single consumer of your product. It is called **Networking**. The good book says show me your friend I tell you who you are. You cannot grow taller than your friends, you are either equal to or shorter than. The youth must learn to make the right contacts. With the right people ideas will be sharpened and doors will open. Meeting the right person in your life will help you do in one week something you could have done in one year. Where I come from they say ‘*andu ni indo*’ (people are wealth).

## Communication Skill

A well connected youth with poor **Communication Skills** is like a new car with deflated tyres. He will go nowhere. Once you know what you want and who you need it's your **Effective communication and negotiating power that will determine your success**. Speak out your idea. Exhibit high level of confidence. Believe in yourself and others will believe in you. The only way to make people know what you want is to make them know. In communication you need to know which language to use where and when. I have seen some youths get into offices and leave disappointed because they use slang even where they

shouldn't. The language you use will always say more than you wanted to say. Avoid using 'sheng' when addressing people you want to take you seriously. You also must watch what you put on when going for important meetings. Your dress code speaks before you do. Remember, you cannot not communicate.

The ability to speak clearly, persuasively, and forcefully in front of people, whether one person or thousands of people, is one of the most important skill anyone can develop. People who speak well are more confident and make more friends. The ability to speak effectively means you can sell anything whether products, ideas or even yourself. That means more opportunities for career advancement, bigger clients, or access to business funding.

### **Self Discipline**

In life distractions are almost inevitable. They are everywhere. They come even when we least expect them. Remaining focused to the end is a mountainous task, it is **Self-discipline**; the ability to stay focused and overcome distractions that keeps the tough going when the going gets tough. Self discipline is not doing what you want when you want but doing what you should when you should. It is the substance that sacrifice is made of. You cannot talk about self discipline in the absence of self control. To reach great heights in life you must give up the urgent to gain the important. They say 'Motivation got you started but self-discipline is what keeps you going.

### **Research**

You don't have to know everything, but you should be able to quickly and painlessly find out what you need to know. In this you need to be able to do online research. Equipping yourself with the skill to search information through the available search engines will make you stand a shoulder above the rest. Thousands of young people are growing their business through research. Apart from the online platform you should be able to research from books by visiting libraries and consulting professionals. In short learn as much as you can. It is said that the world belongs to the learners while the learned are left waiting to inherit a world that no longer exist.

### **Prioritizing and time management.**

If success depends on effective action, effective action depends on the ability to focus your attention where it is needed most, when it is needed most. This is the ability to separate the important from the unimportant, which is a much needed skill in all walks of life, especially where there are ever increasing opportunities and distractions.

These skills are not the only thing you need to know in order to succeed in life. There are thousands of other things to learn but they are the foundational skills that hold together all the other factors.