

# SKILLS FOR LIFE 101

By Joan David, Ph. D.



# Table of Context

Anger Management .....	2
Anxiety .....	4
Assertiveness .....	6
Communication .....	8
Coping Skills .....	10
Dysphoria, Sadness .....	12
Empowering Self .....	13
Happiness .....	14
Health .....	16
Identity .....	17
Marriage .....	18
Parenting .....	19
Problem Solving .....	21
Relationships .....	23
Resilience .....	25
Self-Confidence .....	26
Self-Esteem .....	28
Stress Management .....	29
Tolerance .....	31

# Anger Management 101

- Know that anger is a normal emotion, you are suppose to get angry, it is when it harms us or harms others that it is not good.
- When angry, always give yourself some time to calm down and think about what you are angry about and how you would like to respond. Being reactive gets people into trouble and harms relationships.
- Think through the things that you are angry about, make sure you have all the information that you need, that you are not misinterpreting or misperceiving a situation. Get all the information before you act, count to 10 or 100 if need be.
- Try not to hold on to anger, verbalize how you feel to someone that you trust, someone who is a good listener and someone who can give to you support.
- Have healthy outlets that you can go to; exercise, meditation, sports, or a hobby that you enjoy.
- Attempt to not ruminate and allow anger to build up, always try to put things in perspective.
- If there is someone that you need to talk to, be assertive not aggressive. Let that person know how you feel and let them know what you want from them or what you do not want from them.

- **Try not to distort or build things up in your head, attempt to see a solution or a positive side to a given situation if you can.**
- **Don't hold grudges they hurt you more than the person you are angry with.**
- **Don't get into power struggles or take revenge, no one wins it is a lose/lose.**
- **Use humor to release tensions.**

# Anxiety 101

- Remember, we all have some level of anxiety, you would not have a pulse if you did not have some anxiety.
- There is good anxiety and not good anxiety, when it is not healthy is when it gets in the way of your functioning.
- If you spend a lot of time worrying, remember the amount of worry that you do has no direct correlation in terms of making a problem better.
- Have times during the week that you specify as “worry free” time.
- Look into “Mindfulness.”
- If you have thoughts that are intrusive or trouble you, try to remember that it is only a thought and means absolutely nothing, it probably does not even reflect how you truly feel. Do not give power to these troubling and intrusive thought. You cannot control what goes into your head but you do have some control of what stays there and what you give power to.
- When you have a thought that creates negative feelings, have a competing thought that is the opposite and truly the way that you feel or would like to feel.
- Let the thought come in and simply go out.
- If there are some things that you are afraid of, try to understand why you are afraid and give the fear some perspective.

- **Avoiding the thing, person, situation that you are afraid of is a more powerful conditioner of fear than the fear itself. Try not to avoid.**
- **Take small steps to deal with your fear or fears.**
- **Never look at yourself as weak because you have fears, we all do.**
- **Sometimes being afraid has something to do with caution and that is never a bad thing.**
- **Try not to use illegal substances or alcohol to deal with anxiety, this only makes things much worse.**
- **Attempt not to think in terms of “I should have” or “What if”, both of those ideas create anxiety. As for the world of the “should” the value of the past is learning and for “what if,” we really cannot know the future, therefore, ask yourself often, “What is”.**
- **Have some relaxing outlets such as; meditation, deep breathing, exercise, talking to others, music, creativity, laughter, being with people who love you, positive self thoughts and messages.**
- **Do not hesitate to seek out counseling, we see medical doctors when we have a physical problem, it is also okay to give ourselves permission to seek out therapy when we need professional assistance.**

# Assertiveness 101

- Be assertive without being aggressive.
- Tell yourself that your feelings, ideas, and verbal messages are just as important as any other individual. They are!
- Use I statements; “This is how I feel, this is why I feel the way that I do and this is what I need from you or don’t need from you.”
- Let people know what you want.
- Don’t expect people to read your mind and do not try to read theirs.
- Think things through and say what is on your mind.
- Learn to say “no” without feeling guilty.
- Stick to your script or what it is that you need to say.
- Try not to be a people pleaser.
- Take responsibility for your own problems and not for others.
- Make eye contact and have confident body language.
- Tell yourself, “you can do this” “what you have to say is important.” Remember, you have value.

- **Get rid of negative thoughts about yourself, be your own cheerleader and never see yourself as a failure.**
- **To be assertive helps you with your confidence and very importantly, your self-esteem.**

# Communication 101

- Be clear with your message, make sure you know what it is that you want the person you're speaking with to understand.
- Always make eye contact with whomever you are speaking to.
- About 80% of effective communication is to be a good listener. If you are not sure what the person is saying or asking for, ask questions, do not assume you know.
- Try to listen to affect or emotion and be able to read body language.
- If there is an issue, use "I" statements and not go to a blame place, for example, "I feel bad when you call names and I would like you to stop doing that."
- Make sure that what you are saying is accurate or as much as you can know. Stay away from rumors or gossip, that will come back to haunt you and can be harmful to others.
- Be able to make small talk, it is not always easy to do but will
- help you to be able to connect with others. Look interested with the person you are talking to.
- Unless you really know who, you are speaking with, try to stay away from hot button topics; religion and politics.

- **Be fair with the person you are talking to, don't do all of the talking and show a genuine interest in what they have to say.**
- **Always be polite and demonstrate respect to those you are speaking to.**
- **Connecting with others is the key to communication.**

# Coping Skills 101

- Be resilient, the belief that if you get knocked down, you will get back up again.
- Understand that there are things that you can control and there are things you cannot, but always attempt to see yourself as in control of your life making decisions for your life.
- Have a healthy support group and be able to ask for help when you need help.
- Listen to your feelings or deal with a situation when it happens, be proactive. Don't numb yourself or practice avoidance.
- Tell yourself that things may not be going well at the moment but they will get better. Hope is very powerful.
- If your religion or spirituality is what gives you strength, become an active participant.
- Take some time for yourself, take a time out or get away if you need to.
- Express how you feel to others, let them know what you need from them, become more assertive.
- Have a sense of humor about things, humor functions in two important ways; it enhances the immune system and makes us feel better psychologically.

- **Try to be flexible when warranted and adapt to change when it comes up.**
- **Tell yourself, I am dealing with my feelings, I am working on solutions for this problem and mean it!**

# Dysphoria or Sadness 101

- Talk about your feelings with people that you trust.
- Try not to isolate.
- Think outside of yourself, try not to be so hard on yourself.
- Allow yourself to be less than perfect.
- Maintain some level of activity.
- Surround yourself with positive people.
- Try to remind yourself what is good or positive in your life.
- Get at least 8 hrs. of sleep.
- Expose yourself to sunlight.
- Tell yourself that things will get better, have hope.
- Use relaxation and meditation techniques to help you with grounding yourself.
- Do things that you enjoy, make a list.
- Exercise and eat the right kinds of food, avoid alcohol.
- If your sadness becomes more severe, seek counseling.

# Empowering Self 101

- **Remind yourself daily that you are strong and you are competent.**
- **Take care of your Self in all ways.**
- **Do things that are creative or fun, things that give you joy.**
- **Exercise.**
- **Wake up in the AM and say to self, “I have a purpose.”**
- **Get rid of old tapes & the “ghost” that are in your head.**

# Happiness 101

- I am never really clear what “happiness” means to people. It might mean, “Something good has happened” “I am content” “The problem has been resolved” “Some things have been good today and some things have not.” I have never met anyone who is delirious with joy 24/7 so I know that happiness is very individual and has to do with the perspective of that individual.
- Every day, try to keep track of what is going well.
- Keep a gratitude journal or a list of all the things that you have in your life that make you happy. Try not to focus on what you do not have.
- Remember, the things that can give us the most happiness are the basic things; health, family and a positive state of mind.
- Try not to focus on what others have in terms of what you don’t have; it takes away from your own potential of personal focus and personal happiness.
- Remember that no one gets through this life without some pain and some unhappiness. Many believe that from those painful experiences come personal growth and learning which can pave the way for happiness.
- Self-acceptance, change what you feel needs to change, except what you cannot change and remind yourself of all of your strengths. Love and take care of yourself.

- **Do not see yourself as a victim in this life, that is a definite prescription for unhappiness. See yourself as in charge of your life, in control of your life. . .you will feel better.**
- **Exercise and eat healthy and get rest, all good for happiness.**
- **If you have a lot of angry or sad thoughts, counter with positive thoughts, you can choose to be happy.**
- **Don't hold grudges, let the past go, focus on the present and look forward to the future.**
- **Surround yourself with healthy relationships, people that love and enhance you.**
- **Have goals or meaningful activities that give you direction and make you feel that you have a purpose...because you do.**
- **Laugh and love all the way through your wonderful life.**

# Health 101:

- Exercise and eat healthily.
- Have balance in your life, all that you do, with work and with play.
- Healthy positive relationships, that encourage you, enhance you.
- Committed relationships.
- Optimism
- Laugh...a lot.
- See yourself in control of your life.
- Give to others, it makes us feel better.
- Spirituality/religion.
- Have short and long term goals, give yourself direction.
- Physical and psychological checkups when needed.
- Learn how to relax and just let go.
- You are important, believe that, treat yourself in that way and take good care of your SELF!

# Identity 101

- Self-acceptance is important, accepting your strengths and the knowledge that no one is perfect. Change will come for you, not only physically but how you feel and how you think. Embrace the idea of change and becoming.
- Remember, we are all a work in progress. Teens are learning so many things; who they are, who they want to be, relationships, problem solving, communication, career, etc. Try not to get too frustrated with all of this, be gentle with yourself, you will get there.
- Identity is complicated, it involves genetics and learning (experience). Don't be so willing to slap a label on yourself and don't let others do this too, see yourself as evolving.
- Embrace your uniqueness while being able to see your connection with others.
- Always allow learning in, even if you do not like or agree with a point of view.
- Don't be afraid to make mistakes that has a lot to do with how we learn.
- Having a mentor or someone to look up to is a good thing, whether it is a parent, teacher or someone that you have read about. It gives us a kind of blue print to aspire to and be all that we can be.

# Marriage 101:

- Trust is the foundation of all relationships.
- Communication – LISTEN to each other, value what your partner says and be able to express your own feelings.
- Do not say things that you really do not mean.
- Take time for each other and take time for yourself.
- Let your partner know often and frequently, that you appreciate them, do not take them for granted.
- If there are problems, be able to look at yourself and ask, “how can I make things better”.
- Compromise!!!
- Be supportive of one another, good friends, best friends.
- Date Nite/some romance is always a good thing.
- Make each other laugh, laughter is the best of medicines.

# Parenting 101:

- **Parent need to have well defined rules and structure in the home; bed time, dinner, electronic time, homework, television, outdoor play time, etc.**
- **When rules are broken, there needs to be defined consequences for example, logical consequences. An example of this is, when a child needs to clean their room they cannot do any other activity until the room is clean, if they do not eat their dinner they cannot eat the rest of the day, if they do not pick up their toys they might lose the toy for a couple of days, etc. The misbehavior fits the punishment.**
- **The important idea is that children clearly know what the rules are and equally what the consequences are. They may in the beginning need some reminders.**
- **Parents need to always be a united front, if there is a disagreement regarding the child, they must talk about it privately. All hired child care people need to be on the same page as the parent in terms of the rules.**
- **How you as a parent model the behaviors you want your children to be is critical. If you want them to demonstrate respect you must behave yourself respectfully and so on.**
- **Parents need to present in a calm but firm manner. Children pick up on the parents stress or anxiety and it feeds their own stress and anxiety.**

- **Allow your child to have input, freedom of expression and when appropriate, choice making. Take all feelings into consideration. The final decision is the parents because they are in charge.**
- **Very early teach your child problem solving skills, this will be invaluable to them as they are growing.**
- **If the child is having an emotional melt down, give them a time out in their room or a quiet space where they are not interacting with others. This is not really a punishment, it gives the child time to calm down and you can let them know that. They need to know why the time out and what changes are expected in terms of their behavior.**
- **Always let your child know when they are doing well and that you appreciate that.**
- **Always let them know what their strengths are.**
- **Try to have family dinners together, include all members in family discussions.**
- **Assign your child chores, have a chore list. Giving an allowance is up to you, but chores and taking care of their environment gives them a sense of responsibility and makes them feel more a cohesive part of the family.**
- **One night a week, for 30 minutes, have a Family Meeting to discuss any problems or positive things that may be going on with individual family members.**
- **One night a week have Family Fun Night, play board games, watch movies together and everyone takes turns deciding what things to do. It helps the family to connect.**

# Problem Solving 101

- Try to remember that every problem has a solution usually more than one solution.
- Attempt to make your problem as concrete as possible. Sometimes people make their problems more complicated than they really are. In this way, you will see your problem as manageable.
- Get all of the information that you will need or talk to all of the people that you need to talk to in order to arrive at a working solution.
- Change your expectations regarding the solution of a problem; make solutions as realistic as you can. Remember, rarely is there a “perfect” solution.
- Remember the art of compromise, you may not get everything that you want but you will get some of what you want.
- Do not procrastinate; dealing with a problem in the immediate is best. Problems do not go away because you hide out from them; sometimes they get more problematic and cause you psychological distress.
- If you have a problem with someone else, try not to view things as “I need to win” because the only other alternative is that you lose. That does not give you much wiggle room and, again, usually most situations fall into a gray area and more likely will produce a better outcome and you will feel better.

- **It is also important to acknowledge that problems are tremendous places for learning. What you do, how you take care of things, gives you much information about yourself and situations for the next time.**

# Relationships 101:

- We are social beings and because of this having relationships is something that we naturally gravitate toward. Having relationships also correlates positively with health and longevity.
- Developing strong relationships takes some time. Put in the time before you make the commitment.
- The foundation of any relationship is the development of trust. You have to want to trust and also feel that you can make good decisions about a relationship. If you do not have trust in a relationship, you do not have a healthy relationship.
- Relationships have the quality of reciprocity that is there is give and take which there needs to be in balance.
- Don't be afraid to reach out to others, connect with people, and be a part of the social world.
- Invest in your relationships; spend time with the people that you care about. Nurture your relationships, try not to neglect them.
- Be a good communicator; don't be afraid to ask for what you need from others.
- Conversely, be a good listener, show interest and don't assume you understand something when you may not.

- **It is important to note that how many relationships you have makes little difference; it is the quality of those relationships that is really important. Truly good friends take some time to cultivate.**
- **Even good friends don't always see eye to eye on everything, if a friendship is strong, you will be able to sort things out with a true friend.**
- **Humans do not do well in isolation, connect with others in whatever way that you can, it is important to your well being.**

# Resilience 101:

- From all negative or difficult situations in life comes learning and growth, be aware of that.
- Hope, one of the most important coping skills that we have.
- Problem solving, remember every problem has a solution usually more than one. Become good at this.
- Remember life means change you need to learn to adapt and be flexible with change. Change can be scary but it can be a good thing too.
- Having faith, whether it is religious faith or from another source.
- Creating life goals or having a direction, gives life meaning and purpose.
- Attempt to see the positive, not focus on what is negative.
- The belief that you have control of YOU and your life.
- Creativity, whatever form, can build resilience.
- Develop strong support systems and be a good support for others.

# Self-Confidence 101:

- Try not to compare yourself with others, it is not realistic to do this and takes your focus off of you.
- Attend to your strengths, everyone has strengths, be able to verbalize what they are and if you choose, make them stronger.
- Be realistic about what you want to change, we all have some limitations (I will never be good at Algebra), but we also want to learn and grow. That should never stop.
- Give yourself positive messages, be your own private cheerleader.
- Try not to let others judge you, when you do this you lose your personal power and you also lose your personal happiness.
- Know that your feelings, ideas and what you have to say is just as important as any other person. Don't be afraid to express yourself.
- Give yourself "muscle talks"; tell yourself that you are strong and that you are capable. Messages like, "I can't" or "The world is against me," "I have bad luck" only make you feel incompetent and a victim. Don't be a victim.
- Walk with assertiveness, make eye contact, speak loudly and clearly as if you have all the confidence in the world. Even if you don't feel that way, feelings, thoughts and behavior eventually catch up with each other.

- **Give yourself daily or weekly short-term achievement goals.**
- **Remember you are here, on planet earth, for a reason. Make a statement, make your mark, express yourself, and make your life count.**

# Self-Esteem 101

- **Accept yourself.**
- **Be kind to yourself.**
- **Don't compare yourself to others.**
- **Trust yourself.**
- **Take good care of yourself.**
- **Forgive yourself.**
- **Identify your successes.**
- **Give yourself compliments.**

# Stress Management 101

- Always be realistic about what you can change and what you cannot.
- Take breaks from stressful situations.
- Don't sweat the small stuff.
- Learn to prioritize.
- Attempt to not be reactive, take a breath and give yourself time to know what you want to say or how you want to deal with something. Don't procrastinate, that too creates stress.
- Get enough sleep.
- Take mental health days and take care of YOU.
- Do minimal caffeine and sugar.
- Learn relaxation techniques; deep breathing and meditation.
- Bite off only what you can chew, learn to say "No".
- Laugh a lot!
- Be realistic and flexible with your "To Do List."
- Be proactive, if you need to put something off to the next day, that is okay, but try not to procrastinate there is a difference and procrastination is a huge stress inducer.

- **Don't surround yourself with people who stress you out.**
- **Learn to reframe situations, they do not have to be stressful if you learn to see them differently.**
- **Remember you always have choices and there is a solution to every problem.**
- **Think about the things that are going well, not what is not going well.**
- **Start every day with a meditation, reflection, spiritual verse or something that helps to ground you and helps to create calmness.**

# Tolerance 101

- **Everyone who is born into this world deserves two things automatically; respect and love.**
- **Know that while we all have commonality that connects us, we also have individuality and uniqueness which should also connect us if we are open to the idea.**
- **How I sense, feel, think and experience is unique to me and will not be sensed, felt and thought about in quite the same way as you or others.**
- **Listen to others without judgment. Understanding is all that you need to do, nothing more.**
- **Actively learn about other people, cultures and ideas. That is knowledge, knowledge is powerful.**
- **Know that more than one belief and even opposing beliefs can be housed in your head with very little difficulty.**
- **Analyze your intolerant feelings and ideas, where do they come from? You may find a source and you may come to understand that those feelings and beliefs are irrational.**
- **Practice objectivity; see the world, people, a person in terms of experience without the filter of good/bad, right/wrong or classifications...just experience.**
- **Be able to put yourself in another person's shoes and walk around a bit.**

- **Be able to see another person's strengths because everyone has them.**
- **Last, the old adage, treat others the way in which you would like to be treated.**