

## **SELF-CONTROL AND MORAL DEVELOPMENT**

### **20.1 Introduction**

Human beings are generally regarded as social animals. They are expected to contribute, in whatever way they can, to the healthy development of the society to which they belong. For this, they will have to develop themselves first and later on, they can simultaneously build up their society when they are further developing their skills. This development is a never ending process.

Let us take a few famous individuals like Mahatma Gandhi, and Mother Teresa. These individuals, who have contributed to society, are psychologically stable. One of their notable characteristics is that they have a strong and well developed conscience. Their thinking, saying and doing were on the same level, that is, they had an integrated personality. Mahatma Gandhi thought that truth would always triumph; so he spoke only truth. He further carried out what he spoke. Likewise, Mother Teresa thought for the poor and the sick. She spoke for their welfare and she dedicated her entire life for them. Thus many famous people all over the world, contributed to the welfare of society. All of them are known for their integrity. Such well integrated people can contribute to the growth or development of society.

To achieve this integrity, each individual should develop all the skills which he/she is capable of, and in the long run, these individuals become psychologically competent to lead a healthy life. Ultimately they gain social competence as well, and their contribution, to society at large, becomes significantly noticeable. The present lesson deals with self control and moral development.

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## 20.2 Objectives

After reading this lesson, the student should be able to

- explain what is self control and list out the various methods of development of self control and;
- explain what morality is and give different methods of moral development.

## 20.3 Concept of Self-Control and Method of Developing it.

Self control is a process of learning to regulate one's own behaviour in a manner maximally rewarding or satisfying. There are a number of self control strategies which train individuals to use psychological self-management methods for dealing with problem behaviours. For instance, an obese person is taught to use self-control methods to lose weight, a chain smoker to decrease smoking, and an extremely tense person to reduce tension. Following are the steps to develop selfcontrol.

- (1) Performing a task : the action taken to solve a specific problem.
- (2) Self-monitoring of performance and outcome : the actual observation and recording of the action taken.
- (3) Self-evaluation : the individual revises his or her beliefs in self efficiency or competence.
- (4) Self reinforcement : this means that the individual acknowledges and approves of accomplishment which may lead to a tangible reward or a positive self-statement.

Following is an example where a child is taught to remain calm and to take control of a difficult situation and not get provoked to react.

- (1) Prepare for provocation : teach the child to anticipate difficult situations and tell him not to get provoked into an adverse response.
- (2) Confront the difficulty : through imagination, play-acting or rehearsal, the child could be taught to confront the provocation but at the same time be in control so that desirable response follows.
- (3) Cope with provocation : the child is made aware of the physical response to confrontation like tightening of the muscles and rising fear or anger and this will be followed by teaching simple tasks such as "count one to twenty before you say or do anything" as coping skills.
- (4) Reflect on consequences : the child is taught to think about the outcome of handling the provocation, whether positive or negative. The child is also encouraged to become more reflective about

himself, others' responses and other consequences by keeping a diary, talking to friends, parents and generally becoming more aware of the possibilities of self control.

There is yet another self control method called "Self Instruction Training" (SIT). This focusses on the development of major skill areas emphasizing "self-talking" responses. The steps are given below :

- (1) teach problem identification
- (2) teach self interrogation skills
- (3) teach attention - focussing and appropriate responding skills.
- (4) teach self-reinforcement skills so that the youngster evaluates his own responses and rewards the adaptive ones.
- (5) self correction and coping options enable the youngster continuously to monitor his behaviour, evaluate alternatives and arrive at optional solutions.

Take the following as an illustration:

- (1) Problem Identification : You cannot sit to read.
- (2) Interrogation Skills : Since when have you had this difficulty ? At what times of the day does this happen to you ? Is it related to any subject ?
- (3) Attention : (i) sit for only 30 mins at a time; (ii) take rest for five minutes by going away from the books and doing what you like (e.g. chatting with your mother, listening to the radio, etc.) (iii) return to reading and voluntarily draw your wandering attention to the reading.
- (4) Self Reinforcement : (i) Reward yourself when you have achieved undistracted reading for some time with "I could do this for 10 mins, I can do it for twenty mins. now" or reward yourself with what you like to do most when you achieve the goal after a few days. On the other hand, if you get distracted even after your efforts, punish yourself by denying what you like doing most.e.g. watching your favourite TV serial.
- (5) Self correction and coping options : Correct yourself when you do what is not desired. Eg. in this case, when you get distracted, attempt focussing back on your work.Cope with the distractions by perhaps changing your place of reading e.g. go to a quieter place than in library.

Thus, self control procedures can be used for self improvement.

## Intext Questions 20.1

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1. What is self control ?

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2. Give any two conditions where self control will be effective.

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### Try it yourself

Employ the self-control procedure on your friend or somebody in your family for overcoming any problem like nail biting, excessive eating, etc.

## 20.4 Concept of Morality and Moral Development

Practically every day we have to make judgments about "right" and "wrong". Although the specific values and behaviours vary from culture to culture, all societies have a system of rules about the "right" and "wrong" in behaviours. In the process of socialization, these ethical beliefs are internalised and thus the foundation is laid for moral development. Moral concepts evolve in a child from an early age. The first stage of morality is based on consequences. That is, before the age of about seven, the individuals tend to view acts which yield positive outcomes as "good" and those which yield negative outcomes as "bad". This pattern is called *objective moral orientation*. After the age of seven years, we focus our attention on the intentions behind various actions. This is called *subjective moral orientation* and generally it develops by the time we are ten years old.

Moral reasoning passes through three different levels, namely

- (i) pre-conventional,
- (ii) conventional, and
- (iii) post conventional levels.

In the pre-conventional level, the reasoning is somewhat self-centred and it focusses on the personal consequences of the individual's behaviours. Then in the conventional level, reasoning fits what is considered, acceptable moral rules. Later during adolescence, the individuals enter the post conventional level in which they rely on abstract principles.

The following table describes the stages of moral development as envisaged by Kohlberg and his associates.

### KOHLBERG'S STAGES OF MORAL DEVELOPMENT

<p><b>PRECONVENTIONAL LEVEL</b></p>	<p>Stage One : moral judgement is based on obedience and punishment. Actions which demonstrate obedience to authority and allow the individual to avoid punishment are viewed as "good".</p>
<p><b>CONVENTIONAL LEVEL</b></p>	<p>Stage Two : Actions which satisfy the individual's needs are viewed as "good" while those which do not, are viewed as "bad".</p> <p>Stage Three : Actions which are approved of by others are viewed as "good" and those which are disapproved of are labeled as "bad".</p>
<p><b>POSTCONVENTIONAL LEVEL</b></p>	<p>Stage Four : Actions through which an individual "does his or her duty" or which show respect for law and authority are viewed as "good". Actions which violate this sense of duty are viewed as "bad".</p> <p>Stage Five : Actions which are consistent with the rights and well-being of others are viewed as "good". Those which violate such rights or harm others are seen as "bad".</p> <p>Stage Six : Actions which are consistent with an individual's self-chosen standards of justice are viewed as "good". Actions which are not consistent with such standards are viewed as "bad".</p>

#### Intext Questions 20.2

1. From where does morality stem ?  
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2. How many levels does moral reasoning pass through as per Kohlberg's view ?  
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#### Try it yourself

Check whether you experienced changes in your attitude during late childhood and adolescence on morality. Eg : From when did you start noticing that certain things are forbidden because they are bad, where as right things are to be repeated ?

List out the persons responsible for your moral development.

## 20.5 Pro and Anti Social Behaviour

Prosocial behaviour is behaviour which benefits another person like cooperation, sharing, helping when others are in distress. Children pass through 4 predictable stages in the development of empathy which makes prosocial behaviour possible.

In the first stage infants have difficulty in differentiating self from others. They cry when others cry and they laugh when others laugh. After one year they gradually develop a sense of self as different from others and at that point they enter the second stage characterized by egocentric thinking. They "help" the other person in ways that they themselves would want to be helped. Then comes the third stage during which children show situation—specific empathy. Finally when they reach the fourth stage they come to relate their expression of distress to others when others are also in distress. Infact in the fourth stage, only appropriate exhibition of empathy is demonstrated, that is, others get emotional support from those who show appropriate empathic reaction.

Children can learn helping behaviour by imitating others. Opportunities for responsibility taking, role playing, reinforcing desirable behaviour as and when it occurs will strengthen the development of prosocial behaviour.

Anti social behaviour is characterized by truancy, delinquency, theft, vandalism and other forms of violation of common social rules. In some cases of antisocial behaviour the causal factors may be more personal than environmental, whereas in other cases it is vice versa. However there is always a mixture of both personal and environmental influences, in varying proportions, on individuals who indulge in antisocial behaviour.

Psychological management of antisocial behaviour would include counselling and guidance for coming out with socially constructive behaviours, assertiveness training or social skills training which will enable them to shed aggressive behaviour or channelize the aggressive behaviour into something constructive that would benefit society.

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### Intext Questions 20.3

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1. Give an example for pro-social behaviour.

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2. Mention any two methods by which pro-social behaviour can be strengthened.

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3. Give any three examples of antisocial behaviour.

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**What you have learnt**

- ★ Self control is a process by which an individual learns to regulate one's own behaviour in a manner maximally rewarding or satisfying.
- ★ Chain smoking, over eating, compulsive behaviour are some of the responses which can be modified by self control.
- ★ Self Instruction Training (SIT) is one of the methods of self control. It emphasizes the importance of self talking.
- ★ The foundation for moral development is laid when ethical beliefs are internalised. Jean Piaget, Kohlberg are well known among the theorists who put forth their views on moral development.
- ★ Prosocial behaviour is a response which benefits fellow members of society in their development which in turn enables society to grow and develop in the positive direction. Antisocial behaviour is an act which hinders the well being and development of society.

**Terminal Questions**

1. How will you apply the procedure of self control to any problem condition ? Illustrate with an example.
  2. How does morality develop ?
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## Key To Intext Questions

### 20.1

1. Self control is a process of learning to regulate one's own behaviour in such a way that it maximally rewards or satisfies the individual concerned.
2. Cigarette smoking, thumb sucking.

### 20.2

1. Resolution of inner conflicts
2. not mentioned
3. Three.

### 20.3

1. Cooperation.
2. Role playing and modelling.
3. Stealing, promiscuity, delinquency.

## Answers to the terminal questions

1. The general procedure of self control includes four steps namely
  - (i) performance of a task—let us take the example of an alcoholic addict as an example here. He must be taught to anticipate difficult situations, but he must be asked not to get provoked into an adverse response like drinking alcohol or any behaviour that would ultimately lead him to become aggressive or anxious, etc.
  - (ii) self monitoring of performance and outcome—the alcoholic client may monitor his own reactions and through imagination or play acting (role play) he could be taught to confront the provocation and learn to maintain perfect control over his reaction.
  - (iii) self evaluation—here the individual evaluates his own behaviour and learns to cope with provocation through self talk ; like "At any cost I will refrain myself from drinking" or "I will maintain total abstinence from drinking" etc.
  - (iv) self-reinforcement—the individual acknowledges and approves of his accomplishment which may lead to a positive self-statement like "I am capable of maintaining total abstinence".
2. Morality develops from the resolution of inner conflicts. Moral concepts evolve in a child from an early age when the child is being socialized by parents, teachers and other wellwishers. Always in

the beginning, the consequences of every set of responses would determine the future course of action. Acts which yield positive outcome are regarded as "good" while those which yield negative outcome are considered "bad". This objective moral orientation later the intentions behind various actions. This is how morality develops from childhood, as per Jean Piaget.

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