

Lift Every Voice

How can we lift our voices to advocate for a more compassionate, just, and democratic country and world?

Book 2: Social-Emotional Skills:



Overview



Voices Institute

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I think that to the extent that we focus on problems where we can build a moral and a political consensus, then I think that we move the country forward...

—Former Senator Barak Obama (2004)

Lift Every Voice

How can we lift our voices to advocate for a more compassionate, just, and democratic country and world?



1. Social Perspective Taking



2. Social Problem Solving



7. Health Awareness



Book 2:
Social-Emotional Skills



3. Relationship Skills



6. Emotional Awareness



5. Identity Awareness



4. Goal Attainment Skills



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We will be known forever by the tracks we leave in other people's lives, our kindnesses and generosity. Take the time to walk a mile in his moccasins.

—Mary T. Lathrap

Mary Torrans Lathrap (pen name, Lena; April 25, 1838 - January 3, 1895), known as "The Daniel Webster of Prohibition", was an American poet, preacher, suffragist, and temperance reformer. For 20 years, she was identified with the progressive women of Michigan who had temperance, purity, and prohibition as their watchwords, and the white ribbon as their badge. A licensed preacher for the Methodist Episcopal Church (1871), she served as president of Michigan's Woman's Christian Temperance Union (1882), co-founded the state's suffrage organization (1870), and worked on the amendment campaign (1874).— Wikipedia

Book 2: Social-Emotional Skills Overview

Introduction to *Lift Every Voice*



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We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battlefield and patriot grave to every living heart and hearthstone all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the **better angels of our nature.**

—*Abraham Lincoln's First Inaugural Address*



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I've long talked about the battle for the soul of America. We must restore the soul of America. Our nation is shaped by the constant battle between our better angels and our darkest impulses. It is time for our better angels to prevail.

—*Election Eve Speech by President-Elect Joe Biden (Nov. 7, 2020)*

The United States today is very divided and polarized. *Lift Every Voice* seeks to help overcome this division by providing a resource center of democratic competencies (democratic values, skills, and knowledge) that can help heal and unite our country, that can help restore the soul of our country, and that can help guide our country in the future.



The better angels of our nature are the democratic values that we can embrace, and which can unite and guide us as a country!

Overview of Five Democratic Competencies

Lift Every Voice promotes and teaches five Democratic Competencies. These competencies include the values, skills, and knowledge we need to create a more democratic society and country.

Competency #1: Democratic Values includes the democratic values that can guide the growth of democracy in our country. We argue that two of the most important values are love and freedom.

Competency #2: Social and Emotional Skills includes the skills that can help bring more love and freedom into our society such as social perspective taking and social problem solving.

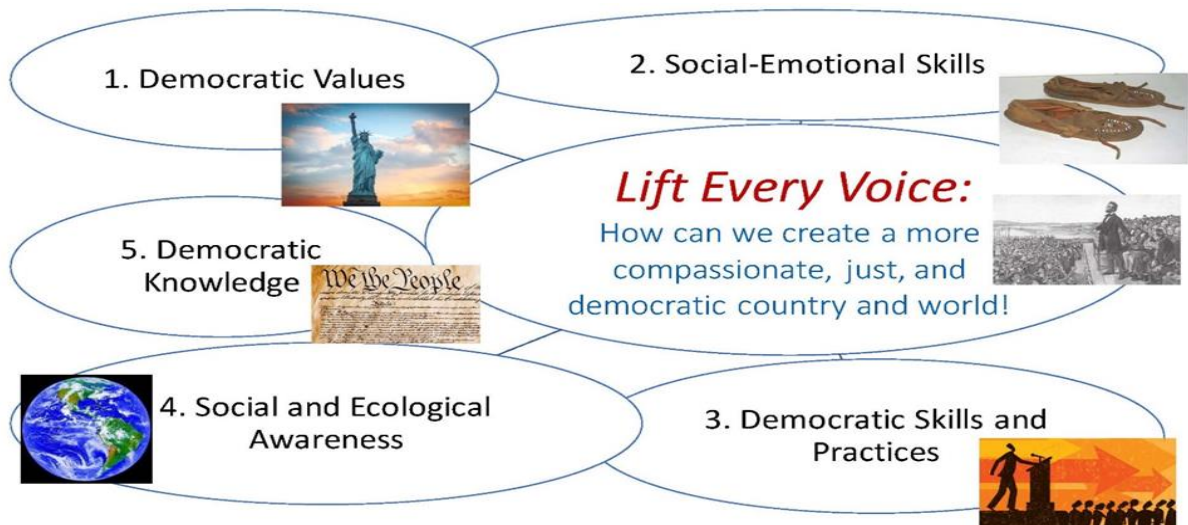
Competency #3: Democratic Skills and Practices includes the skills we need to participate in the civic life of our communities and our society such as learning to advocate, discuss, and debate ways to solve major social and ecological problems.

Competency #4: Social and Ecological Awareness helps us to explore the social, economic, and political features of our country so that we can more effectively advocate ways to improve them.

And in **Competency #5: Democratic Knowledge** explores the major features of our democratic government: U.S. Constitution, Bill of Rights, Constitutional Principles, the Amendments, the Branches of Government, major court cases, and the responsibilities of state and local governments.

With these Democratic Competencies, we will be able to use them to advocate ways to solve major social and ecological problems in our country, such as how to prevent gun violence, how to stop the pandemic, how to stop police violence, and how to stop global warming.

Book 2: Social-Emotional Skills Overview



Overview of Social-Emotional Skills

In *Lift Every Voice*, we define a competency as consisting of the values, skills, and knowledge needed to perform a task.

In the previous Democratic Values competency, we defined a value as an important belief (a valued belief) or more simply a guidepost that can help us make a decision.

By contrast a skill is the ability to do something well. Values help you decide the direction you want to go whereas skills are the tools that can help you get there.

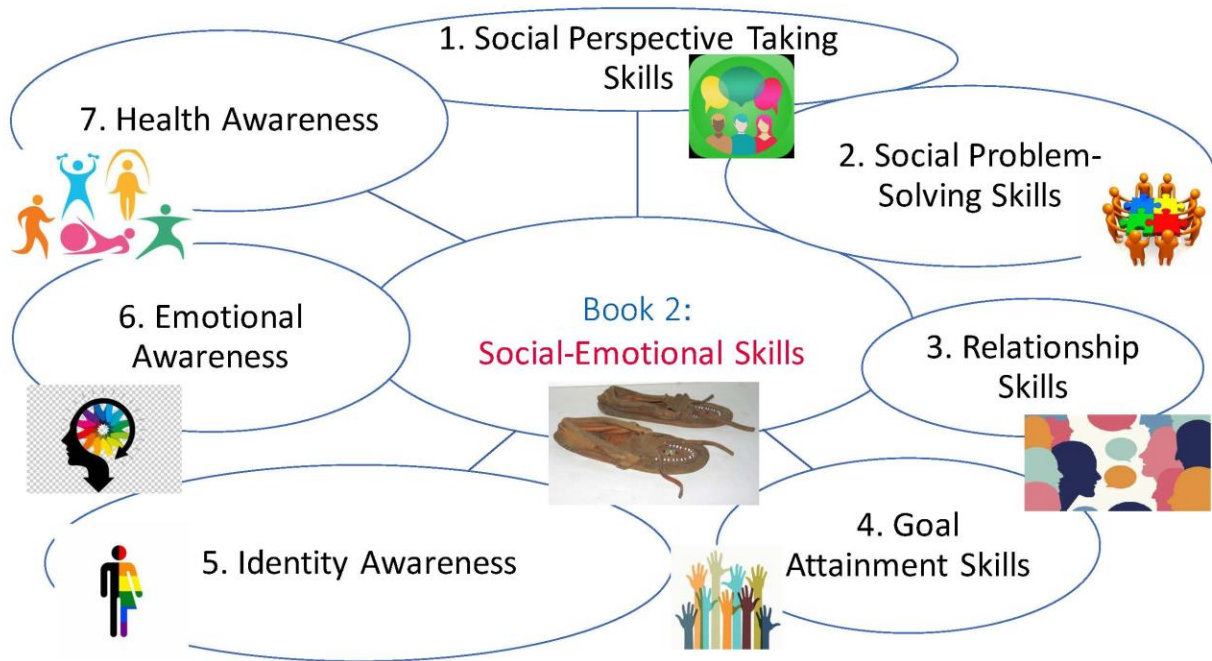
We distinguish between two types of complementary skills and practices; social skills and democratic skills.

Two of the most important social skills are social perspective taking, the ability to stand in someone else's shoes and take their point of view, and social problem solving, the ability to solve interpersonal and intergroup conflicts.

Two of the most important democratic skills are the ability to use your voice to advocate proposals for solving social problems and the ability to discuss and debate these proposals.

We believe that you will need all these types of skills in order to be able to cope with and overcome the social problems in your life, achieve your personal and academic goals, and participate in our democratic society.

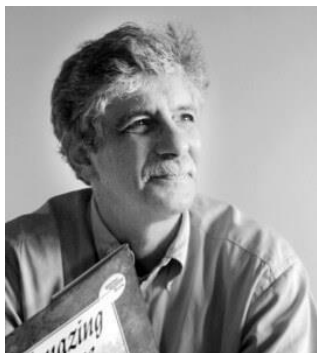
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Each of these skills is in fact a cluster or set of skills. For example, social perspective taking includes taking different points of view, deepening one's understanding of people's points of view, and coordinating different points of view. These are distinct and mutually reinforcing (sub-) skills.

The pursuit of love and freedom and all the Democratic Values depends in turn on helping our youth to master a broad set of transformative social, emotional, and democratic skills that will help them pursue these values in their lives and in our country.

In this section, we provide an introduction to some of the most important social and emotional skills for members of a democratic society to learn, master, and apply. Based on the research of Prof. Robert Selman of the Harvard Graduate School of Education and one of the Founding Voices Authors, we have decided to focus on social perspective-taking skills as a primary driver of social development. This means that the ability to coordinate one's point of view with other points of view is critical to the development of most other social skills. For example, it's not possible to solve social conflicts collaboratively without both parties being able to take each other's point of view.



Under this social perspective-taking umbrella, we have integrated and focused on a core set of transformative social and emotional skills that will help children and adolescents to overcome the social obstacles in their lives, achieve their personal and academic goals, and contribute to creating a more caring, free, just, peaceful, and democratic society.

Here is a brief summary of the seven social-emotional skills advocated for in *Lift Every Voice*.

1. Social Perspective Taking: Take Other People's Points of View



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Racism is still with us. But it is up to us to prepare our children for what they have to meet, and, and hopefully overcome.

—Rosa Parks

2. Social Problem-Solving Skills: Solve Conflicts Without Violence



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I affirmed in the strongest possible terms that violence could never be the ultimate solution to the situation in South Africa and that men and women by their very nature required some kind of negotiated understanding.

—*Nelson Mandela (Mandela, 1994)*

3. Relationship Skills: Give and Ask for Help

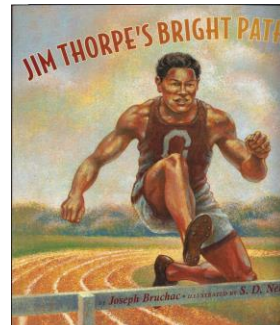


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Long before I learned to do a sum in arithmetic or describe the shape of the earth, Miss [Anne] Sullivan had taught me to find beauty in the fragrant woods, in every blade of grass, and in the curves and dimples of my baby sister's hand.

—*From The Story of My Life by Helen Keller*

4. Goal-Attainment Skills: Attain Important Goals

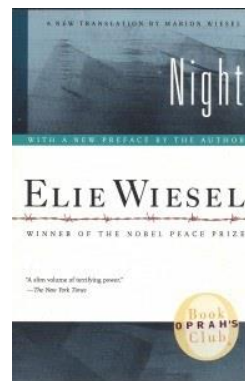


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I never was content unless I was trying my skill...or testing my endurance.

—*Jim Thorpe*

5. Identity Awareness: Know Yourself



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I swore never to be silent whenever and wherever human beings endure suffering and humiliation. We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented.”E

—*Elie Wiesel*

6. Emotional Awareness: Empathize with Others



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The most beautiful people we have known are those who have known defeat, known suffering, known struggle, known loss, and have found their way out of the depths. These persons have an appreciation, a sensitivity, and an understanding of life that fills them with compassion, gentleness, and a deep loving concern. Beautiful people do not just happen.

—*Elizabeth Kubler Ross*

7. Health Awareness: Eat Well, Exercise and Meditate



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You've got to keep your body active, even if that means just turning on some music and dancing for an hour. . . . That's how you'll prepare your bodies and your minds for greatness.

—*Michelle Obama, Let's Move! Active Schools launch (2/28/13)*

8. Democracy: Vote and Participate in Governing Our Society



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Our ability to participate in government, to elect our leaders and to improve our lives is contingent upon our ability to access the ballot. We know in our heart of hearts that voting is a sacred right - the fount from which all other rights flow.

—*Stacy Abrams, Gubernatorial Candidate in Georgia, Founder of Fair Fight*