By the end of this lesson, you should be able to:

- explain how a self-reliant person makes decisions.

What is the relationship between self-reliance and decision-making?

Self-reliance and decision-making are closely linked. Self-reliant people make good decisions because they make decisions based on facts and experience. They exercise constructive criticism and self-criticism and they are open-minded.

Self-reliant people engage in constructive criticism and self-criticism. Criticism means disapproval of faults. A self-reliant person has the courage to criticize others when he/she observes that their actions or ideas are wrong. But when you criticize others, you should try to be very tactful. You have to encourage others to do the right thing instead of blaming them for their faults.

It is not enough just to criticize others. It is also important to accept criticism by your friends, parents or teachers.

This does not mean that you accept all criticism. You have to think about what others have said and decide if the criticism is valid or not. If it is constructive you should accept it because it can help you to improve what you do. It is also important to accept and learn from your mistakes and apologize for your wrong-doings.

You have to exercise self-criticism. Self-criticism means evaluating your own actions and behaviour. It means thinking about your achievements and weaknesses in a fair way. We all need to do this sometimes. You have to assess yourself when you think that you have done something wrong or if you have certain weaknesses.

Self-criticism is one of the qualities of a self-reliant person. But do not over-criticize yourself. Do not blame yourself when you make mistakes because everybody makes mistakes. Being self-critical is only useful when you learn from your mistakes.

Open-mindedness is another good quality. It means to be receptive to different ideas and arguments. It includes openness and civility.
Self-reliance and Decision-making

Open-mindedness is being prepared to consider ideas different from your own. It means changing or modifying your own position when you find the other person’s idea better and more convincing. Open-mindedness does not mean that you need to accept all views of other people, because not all ideas are good. As an independent person you have to think about what other people say critically and carefully. You have to be open-minded to appreciate different ideas and arguments.

CASE STUDY

Discouraging or encouraging others

Hirut is a young writer while Takele is an experienced one. Hirut gave the draft of her book to Takele to get comments. The following is their conversation:

Hirut: Good morning Ato Takele, I have come to your office to get comments about my book.
Takele: Oh! Good!
Hirut: How do you like the book? What are its strong and weak points?
Takele: I have found your book to be very weak! It has no strong points at all.
Hirut: What do you mean?
Takele: I cannot count and list the weaknesses of your book because it is full of them.
Hirut: If you want to criticize my book, you have to tell me at least some of its weaknesses and strengths.
Takele: I do not want to waste my time. I advise you to throw it away and start writing a new one because the book is below the acceptable standard.
Hirut: Your comments are unfair and hurtful! I believe that any work could have some strong points and weaknesses. You fail to tell me this because you have not read it properly. Give me my book and let me go!

Read the following questions and discuss the points in groups.

- What is the problem with Takele’s criticism regarding Hirut’s book?
- How should Takele have given criticism on Hirut’s book?
- How will this type of criticism affect the relationship between Hirut and Takele?

Civility means politeness or a polite way of treating others. But it is more than politeness. Civility means treating others with respect, even when you do not agree with them. You have to be civil or polite when you take part in a public debate. Citizens stick to the common rules or standards of civility when they participate in debates. Here are some of the rules of public debate:

- Recognize that other people, including your friends, may have different points of view.
- Be ready to listen to the views of others and be willing to take part in a constructive debate.
Self-reliance and Decision-making

- Focus on solutions when you discuss problems.
- Deal with competing ideas based on their merits.
- Be objective. Do not make it personal and do not go in for personal attack. A famous writer said, “Separate the people from the problem.”
- Your argument should be based on facts and accurate information. This will help you to convince others.
- Civility requires that different people make an honest effort to understand the views and reasons of others.
- Respect the rights of others to be heard. Everybody at a public meeting has the right to be heard. You have to respect this. Do not interrupt when others are talking.

You have to try to persuade others but you also have to be ready to be persuaded. You may have a discussion with your classmates about a particular issue. You and your friends may disagree because you have different views about that issue.

You have to know that you may be wrong while your friend’s ideas may be better. Each of you should consider the points if they are persuasive. Accept other ideas if they are convincing. Defend your own point of view if the views of others are not convincing. Then, having made your decision, accept the consequences that follow.

In pairs discuss the following questions.

- Why is it important to be open-minded and civil in public debates and in everyday life?
- How can you persuade other people to agree with your point of view when you take part in a discussion? Do you use statements like these: I am right! You are completely wrong! Why do you not accept my ideas?

Persuade your partner to give you something of theirs. Think about that language that you use and listen to their side.

**CASE STUDY**

Tadesse, Desta, Emebet and Taye work together on a committee. They have weekly meetings. Their meetings are too long and full of disagreements. Emebet does not talk much; her comments are short and clear. Desta talks too much and repeats the same thing instead of raising new ideas. Tadesse talks even more and does not stop until interrupted by others. He discusses points which are not related to the agenda. In most cases Desta and Tadesse attack one another instead of talking politely. Taye is moderate; he listens carefully while others talk. The last meeting of the committee was interrupted because of a disagreement between Tadesse and Desta. Tadesse was talking when Desta interrupted:

Desta: Tadesse, I have a comment.
Tadesse: Do not interrupt! Let me finish my idea!
Desta: I am not interrupting. The points that you raise are not related to the agenda. You like talking too much! This is a bad habit. You have to focus on the agenda.
Tadesse: You interrupt while I am talking because you do not want to listen to my points! You do not want to listen; what you like is...
Self-reliance and Decision-making

talking, talking and talking! That is all.

Desta: I do not want to listen because the points that you raise are not related to the agenda. This wastes our time!

Tadesse: I am not wasting time! I am contributing ideas!

Desta: If we raise unrelated points we waste our time. My point is clear: let us stick to our agenda and discuss relevant points!

Discuss the following questions as a class:

‘Do not focus on people; do not criticize people but their ideas; be ready to listen.’ These are among the rules of public debate.

➢ What kind of problems do you observe in this discussion?
➢ Who spoke politely? How?
➢ How can they resolve their differences for the future?

REMEMBER

➢ Self-reliance and decision-making are related.
➢ Self-reliant people are critical and self-critical.
➢ Open-mindedness is a good quality.
➢ Open-mindedness is the readiness to consider the ideas of others.
➢ Civility is being polite in the way you treat others.
UNIT SUMMARY

Self-reliance means to support and take care of yourself and to make decisions by yourself. Self-reliant people are dependable. They have good relationships with others because they appreciate other people in their work and are ready to learn from them. If you are able to communicate well with others and have good social skills, you will feel more confident and it will be easier to talk to and work with other people.

Dependency is a belief that people cannot solve their own problems without outside help. The signs of dependency include lack of dependability, lack of courage, lack of motivation to take action and lack of initiative to do something important.

Self-reliance and decision-making are related. Self-reliant people are critical and self-critical. Self-reliant people are also open-minded. Open-mindedness is the readiness to consider the ideas of others. Civility is being polite in the way you treat others.

GLOSSARY

**Criticism:** The act of showing disapproval of opinions, faults and bad qualities in others.

**Debate:** A formal discussion expressing different opinions.

**Dependable:** A person or thing that can be relied on to do what you want.

**Harmonious relation:** A good relationship with others.

**Initiative:** The ability to decide or act on your own without waiting for somebody to tell you what to do.

**Motivation:** Eagerness or interest in doing something.

**Objective:** Not influenced by personal opinions or feelings, considering only facts.

**Open-mindedness:** To be ready to listen and consider different ideas and arguments from your own.

**Rationality:** To try to find reasons to explain your behaviour, decisions, etc.

**Self-criticism:** Criticizing one’s own actions and behaviour — to think fairly about one’s achievements and weaknesses.

**Subjective:** A point of view which is based on one’s opinions rather than facts.

**Tactful:** Being careful not to say or do anything that will annoy other people.

**Welfare:** The general health, happiness and safety of a community.
UNIT REVIEW EXERCISES

Do these review exercises in your exercise book.

Part I – Multiple choice

1. Which of the following is true about self-reliant people?
   - (a) they force others to accept their opinion
   - (b) they do not ask for apology when they do something wrong
   - (c) they accept the consequences of their decision
   - (d) they do not criticize other people
   - (e) none of the above

2. Which of the following refers to readiness to consider or accept the ideas of others?
   - (a) open-mindedness
   - (b) self-reliance
   - (c) being rigid
   - (d) civic commitment
   - (e) none of the above

3. Which of the following is an example of dependency?
   - (a) self-motivation
   - (b) having a harmonious relation with others
   - (c) changing decisions when others change theirs
   - (d) being inconsistent
   - (e) (c) and (d)

4. Which of the following goes with civility?
   - (a) listening to the views of others
   - (b) lacking long-term goals
   - (c) persuading people instead of forcing them
   - (d) giving priority to the common good
   - (e) (a) and (c)

Part II – Short answers

1. List three examples of good social skills.

2. Write three examples of the characteristics of a self-reliant person.