The affective domain contains learning skills that are predominantly related to emotional (affective) processes. The learning processes in the affective domain include being open to experience, engaging in life, cultivating values, managing oneself, and developing oneself. Within each of these general process areas are several “clusters” of specific learning skills that can be improved by means of constructive intervention and assessment. The classification of affective skills presented in this module incorporates many of the skills described in Bloom’s original work. Although these earlier authors and contemporary educators generally focus more on learning objectives, cognitive learning skills, or in some contexts, psychomotor skills, the movement to learner-focused teaching/learning methods makes clear the significance of integrating learner skills across all domains. Skills in the affective domain are strongly related to student buy-in, self-management, persistence, attitudes toward assessment, and level of success. The present classification provides a valuable reference for curriculum design, facilitation, and personal growth.

**The Importance of Affect in Human Behavior**

Affect or emotion influences one’s awareness of important sensory and situational changes, and motivates action. One example is the well-known “fight or flight” response. The importance of affect in human and animal life is clearly demonstrated in the extensive body of theory and research related to emotion and motivation. Oatley (1992), Nesse (1990), and Lewis and Haviland (2004) are examples of a wide range of approaches to affect that include neuroscience, psychoanalysis, behavioral psychology, cross-cultural psychology, and evolutionary psychology.

One indication of the increasing attention paid to affective skills is the work of Lopez and Snyder (2003), as described in their presentation of measurement options for positive psychology. Another is Goleman’s (1997) popularization of the finding that “emotional intelligence” is often a better predictor of individual success than general intellectual ability as measured by most IQ tests.

Individuals who learn to recognize and engage their emotions are ready to “grow” affectively so that they can respond to challenges appropriately and explore their values. At higher levels in the affective domain classification, growth involves managing oneself, managing one’s performance, and making commitments. Maslow (1970) calls this “self-actualization.” Peterson and Seligman (2004) have prepared an important resource for the affective domain in their comprehensive scholarly review of what they refer to as “character strengths and virtues” in the categories of wisdom and knowledge, courage, humanity, justice, temperance, and transcendence.

The present classification emphasizes “growable” skills that tend to be a combination of emotion and motivation, sometimes referred to as “conation.” What ties all of the processes, clusters, and skills together is the emphasis on affective skills that are commonly observed in learning and growth contexts.

**The Role of Affect in Learning**

Although many educators develop effective affect management skills in their classrooms and other learning contexts, this is often a process of trial and error. The assumption in this module is that affective skills are universally important in learning and growth and that these skills can be facilitated equally as well as those in the other domains. Table 2 provides guidance for assessing the level of competency a learner has achieved with specific affective learning skills. Learning in the cognitive, social, and psychomotor domains is often constrained if the learner is operating at a low level with key affective skills. For example, a large group of learners who do not recognize the significance of taking charge of their own learning will reduce the level of discourse in a course.

Even if a learning objective appears to be cognitive in nature, there will always be affective skills involved. For example, Halpern (1998), using a cognitive psychology perspective, emphasizes the importance of teaching transferable skills as the universal goal of effective teaching/learning. She illustrates this with a four-part critical thinking model that is empirically supported: students must be prepared for effortful cognition, there must be instruction in the skills of critical thinking, there must be training in the structure of problems and arguments, and meta-cognition is necessary for monitoring transfer of learning. The first component of her model is clearly related to the affective domain and includes aspects of a quality learning environment (3.1.3 Methodology for Creating a Quality Learning Environment) such as establishing respect, buy-in, and an assessment “mindset.” The second and third components are mostly related to cognitive domain skills, but learners with more advanced social and affective skills are more likely to persist with the difficult learning involved. While the fourth component involves advanced cognitive domain learning skills, it also requires affective skills related to persistence. When learning is considered in a systems
Perspective, there are many places where the level of growth in specific affective skills will make the difference between calmly persisting in a cognitive task and "bailing out" due to frustration (4.3.4 The Accelerator Model). It is essential, therefore, to incorporate techniques into facilitation plans to engage learners in ways that lead to active, self-challenging learning attitudes (3.2.5 Creating a Facilitation Plan). When learning attitudes like emotional control and objectivity are highly developed, they facilitate self-control, the deferral of gratification, stability, persistence, courage, and serenity. The affective skills are essential if one is to care enough to put in the considerable time, effort, and discomfort that it takes to improve as a learner and to grow as a person.

Description of the Affective Domain

Affective Domain Processes

As illustrated in Table 1, the affective domain is comprised of five affective processes. These processes are sequenced and identified as being open to experience (receiving), engaging in life (responding), cultivating values (valuing), managing oneself (organizing), and developing oneself (internalization). The processes, which are increasingly more complex and integrative, parallel Maslow's hierarchy of needs, Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives in the affective domain (Krathwohl, Bloom, & Mesia, 1964), and Mayer and Salovey's (1997) conceptualization of emotional intelligence. The process framework is intended to reflect the full range of affective development because adults vary widely in this area. Individuals may need to address basic emotional issues that were put on hold earlier in life which now require growth. The higher levels of the framework reflect the affective control and performance desired by wise, mature, and integrated persons.

Affective Domain Clusters

Clusters of learning skills are identified under each of the affective domain processes. As many as four clusters support each process area and each cluster contains up to seven unique learning skills. Skill clusters are named to communicate their role within each process area. The processes and skill clusters are listed in order of increasing complexity but there is no special order to the learning skills within a cluster.

Affective Domain Skills

The affective learning skills can be consciously improved with assessment and intentional practice; moreover, growth in these skills will enhance learning in skills in the other domains and for any learning goal. Each of the skills is described briefly to enhance its meaning to the reader. The set of over 80 learning skills identified in Table 1 are transferable, i.e., they can be applied in a broad range of life situations. They were selected according to the method described in the Classification of Learning Skills (2.3.3) and worded so that they would be accessible to educators and learners in all disciplines and contexts. The goal was to include enough skills to represent all major areas of affect but to limit the number to those most likely to be useful in higher education and related contexts.

Concluding Thoughts

Teachers and learners need to become familiar with the hierarchy of processes and skills within the affective domain and work to internalize how those processes and skills can be observed and assessed in real learning contexts. In traditional curricula, the skills in the affective domain are often neglected because it is assumed that students will "discover" them on their own. However, the challenges in facilitating active learning show that this is not true. Affective skills typically become an issue when instructors must build rapport and achieve buy-in. Later the level of affective challenge that learners can handle will significantly influence the quality of course outcomes. As with skills from the other domains, those from the affective domain involve performance improvement which leads to developmental growth and ultimately the empowerment to challenge oneself in all aspects of life.

References


### Affective Domain Learning Skills

**Table 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Competency</th>
<th>Description of Individual Response</th>
<th>Examples: a. Persisting b. Seeking mentoring</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level 5</strong></td>
<td>Is highly skilled in the timely use of the skill to improve others engagement or commitment</td>
<td>a. Serving as a coach for others who have habits of procrastination b. Serving as a mentor for others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level 4 Self-Reflective Use</strong></td>
<td>Uses the skill within planned strategies for improvement of control, e.g., reacting in a chosen, but genuine manner.</td>
<td>a. Being aware of the role of emotions in one’s personal level of motivation for challenges b. Taking on new challenges beyond those required for immediate needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level 3 Consistent Performance</strong></td>
<td>Recognizes affective states quickly and employs learned methods of self-management that fit the situation</td>
<td>a. Managing emotions such as frustration to assure completion of all tasks b. Expanding the range of emotional reactions shared</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level 2 Conscious Use</strong></td>
<td>Uses the skill passively but with an awareness of the need to grow; is limited in confidence, smoothness, and timing</td>
<td>a. Using a planner to increase persistence in finishing tasks b. Becoming open to the need to understand personal emotional reactions in some areas such as building relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level 1 Non-Conscious Use</strong></td>
<td>Is responsive if prompted by others; is attentive but does not consciously identify affective domain processes and skills</td>
<td>a. Avoiding all but obviously easy learning tasks; procrastinating b. Avoiding analysis of personal reactions to important performances</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2**

**Affective Domain Competency Levels**

- **Exploring Self**
  - Observing self – noticing one’s actions
  - Listening to self – being conscious of one’s point of view
  - Perceiving reactions – seeing how other people respond to you
  - Body awareness – recognizing the range of its capabilities
  - Identifying emotions – sensing feelings

- **Exploring Surroundings**
  - Being curious – wanting to find out more
  - Being open– welcoming, and expecting to find novelty
  - Being positive – having an optimistic state of mind
  - Being playful – seeking fun in experiences
  - Being active – seeking activity

- **Experiencing Emotions**
  - Feeling loved – being truly valued
  - Grieving – accepting loss
  - Feeling joyful – feeling connected with existence
  - Laughing – finding humor in experience
  - Responding to aesthetics – being moved by forms of beauty
  - Feeling secure – establishing a sense of security

- **Engaging in Life (Responding)**
  - **Emoting**
    - Loving – giving of oneself
    - Caring – responding to others’ needs
    - Respecting – demonstrating an appreciation of others
    - Giving – relinquishing possessions to others
    - Comforting – providing physical and verbal support
  - **Addressing Life’s Challenges**
    - Coping – managing stressors
    - Persisting – continuing despite difficulties
    - Accepting help – surmounting one’s personal limitations with help from others
    - Believing in oneself – developing and maintaining self-esteem
    - Responding to failure – growing in response to barriers and negative results
    - Appreciating evaluation – recognizing value in realistic feedback
  - **Leveraging Life’s Successes**
    - Responding to success – investing for the future
    - Being humble – allowing accomplishments to speak for themselves
    - Seeking assessment – analyzing past performance to improve future performance
    - Celebrating – acknowledging the meaning of accomplishments
    - Acknowledging others – recognizing contributions

**Affective Domain (Receiving)**

- **Being Open to Experience**
  - Exploring Self
  - Observing self – noticing one’s actions
  - Listening to self – being conscious of one’s point of view
  - Perceiving reactions – seeing how other people respond to you
  - Body awareness – recognizing the range of its capabilities
  - Identifying emotions – sensing feelings
  - Exploring Surroundings
  - Being curious – wanting to find out more
  - Being open– welcoming, and expecting to find novelty
  - Being positive – having an optimistic state of mind
  - Being playful – seeking fun in experiences
  - Being active – seeking activity
  - Experiencing Emotions
  - Feeling loved – being truly valued
  - Grieving – accepting loss
  - Feeling joyful – feeling connected with existence
  - Laughing – finding humor in experience
  - Responding to aesthetics – being moved by forms of beauty
  - Feeling secure – establishing a sense of security
Cultivating Values (continued)

Refining Personal Values
- Identifying values – labeling main beliefs
- Exploring beliefs – questioning, researching the basis of one’s values
- Clarifying one’s value system – achieving consistency
- Validating values – taking personal ownership from experiential “tests”
- Aligning with social values – acting according to mutually empowering ethics
- Accepting ownership – assuming responsibility for one’s behavior

Developing Oneself (Internalization)

Synergizing Feelings
- Associating feelings – connecting emotions such as love and fear
- Interpreting feelings – understanding the social and historical meaning of emotions
- Analyzing feelings – understanding causes of complex emotions
- Predicting feelings – anticipating future emotions
- Objectifying emotions – temporarily suspending feelings
- Exploring emotions – learning and growing from both pleasant and unpleasant emotions

Facilitating Personal Development
- Recognizing personal potential – identifying strengths and areas of improvement
- Seeking assessment – focusing on obtaining realistic growth-enhancing feedback
- Seeking mentoring – seeking relationships that will challenge one’s growth
- Being patient – being able to “stay the course”

Challenging Self
- Exploring potential – developing a life vision
- Expanding identity – engaging life in new ways
- Being courageous – taking risks to embrace the unknown
- Being proactive – planning ahead to create new opportunities
- Growing culturally – applying insights from human differences
- Being empathic – responding affirmatively to complex differences in others’ world views

Committing Beyond Self
- Committing to caring – taking long-term responsibility
- Accepting outcomes – adjusting to reality
- Acting on beliefs – being ethically consistent
- Enhancing self-esteem – activating one’s potential
- Maturing – increasing one’s integration and complexity
- Self-actualizing – taking responsibility for the future