

Life Skills Inventory Administrator's Guide

John J. Liptak, EdD



St. Paul

Contents

Summary and Background.....	1
Need for Effective Life Skills.....	1
Life Skills for Personal Change Management.....	3
Life Skills in Career Counseling.....	4
Life Skills in Employment Counseling.....	5
Life Skills in School-to-Career Transitions.....	7
Life Skills in Correctional Settings.....	8
Need for the <i>LSI</i>	9
Administration and Interpretation.....	10
Administering the <i>LSI</i>	10
Steps of the <i>LSI</i>	11
Understanding and Interpreting <i>LSI</i> Scores.....	11
Scales Used on the <i>LSI</i>	12
I. Communication Skills.....	13
II. Stress Management Skills.....	13
III. Anger Management Skills.....	13
IV. Money Management Skills.....	13
V. Time Management Skills.....	13
VI. Career Skills.....	14
Illustrative Case Using the <i>LSI</i>	14
Research and Development.....	15
Guidelines for Development.....	15
Scale Development.....	16
Item Selection.....	17
Item Standardization.....	17
Reliability.....	18
Validity.....	19
References.....	21
About the Author.....	23

Life Skills Inventory Administrator's Guide

John J. Liptak, EdD

This brief guide was written to provide additional information for professionals using the *Life Skills Inventory (LSI)*. In both print and electronic, web-based format, *LSI* helps individuals identify the basic skills and strategies needed to ensure success in life and career situations. It is designed to be self-scored and self-interpreted without the use of any other materials, thus providing immediate results for the respondent and/or counselor. It is appropriate for a wide variety of audiences, from high school age to adult.

Summary and Background

Regardless of whether people are seeking a job, making changes in their personal life, making the transition from school-to-career, or seeking help in developing a career, the consensus is that life skills—those basic things we need to take us through life every day—are very important. In fact, many employers find that their employees have knowledge of how to do their job, but lack effective life skills. Therefore, people who have developed effective life skills are those who can expect to be the most successful in their personal and professional lives. The following sections will describe life skills and how career counselors can help their clients develop effective life skills, the need for a way to evaluate life skills, and how the *LSI* was developed.

Need for Effective Life Skills

Life and career are full of transitions. These transitions are inevitable and are experienced by everyone at one time or another. Some of these transitions include moving from school to an occupation, searching for a job after becoming unemployed, changes that occur in your personal life like getting married, and searching for and changing career paths. Liptak (2008) suggested that people are dealing with a never-ending series of transitions that can be anticipated and even prepared for but remain difficult nonetheless (p. 4). In order to manage these transitions, people need effective life skills.

The term *life skills* refers to the skills you need to make the most out of life and be as successful as possible. Life skills are usually associated with managing and living a better quality of life, but they help us to accomplish our personal and professional goals and live to our full potential in an ever-changing society. Leider (1994) was one of the first researchers to write about the importance of life skills and felt that “with today’s accelerating rate of change, everybody needs to know how to manage change in their personal lives in order to survive.”

Leutenberg & Liptak (2009) suggested that life skills can be more important than traditional intelligence quotients because life skills can be learned, developed, honed, and practiced to produce the desired effect. They suggested that life skills

- are skills necessary for effective human development
- can help people deal effectively with personal challenges and changes
- can help people achieve their goals
- can help change the negative patterns that re-occur in the lives of people
- can help people deal with the unique challenges of a career
- can help people perform better on a job

Similarly, Leider (1994) suggested that the exploration and development life skills offer people “strategies for understanding the past, managing the present, and creating the future” (p. 4). He felt that developing life skills would allow people to

- understand the change process
- use personal strategies to manage and create change effectively
- view organizational change as opportunities, not threats
- manage their own feelings, motivations, and quality-of-life satisfaction
- develop their own value-based, purpose-centered vision
- renew their energy
- improve time and self-management skills (p. 5).

Liptak (2007) felt that life skills are actually more important than a person’s intelligence quotient (IQ). Life skills are those invaluable skills that, if used effectively, will allow individuals to create the life they desire and to access their inner resources needed to succeed, help people to take charge and manage their personal and professional lives in an increasingly complex society, help people manage change and deal effectively with their environments and the people in those environments, and dictate their level of effectiveness in meeting the demands of everyday life. He went on to say that the most important reason why life skills intelligence is more important than traditional intelligence is that, unlike the knowledge measured by traditional Intelligence Quotient (IQ) tests, life skills can be learned or refined so that you can lead a successful, satisfying, and productive life. He suggested that a person’s life skills IQ is comprised of many types of intelligence and include life skills such as:

- **Physical Intelligence** Life skills related to nutritional practices; interest in regular exercise; consistent and adequate sleep; practical and safe use of substances; optimism about one’s ability to take care of health problems; relaxation; and deep breathing.
- **Mental Intelligence** Life skills related to the ability to engage in clear thinking and recall of information, with minimal interference from emotional baggage; ability to think independently and critically about money; possession of basic reasoning skills; the ability to manage time; open to new ideas; knowledge of one’s cultural heritage; and an interest in lifelong learning.
- **Career Intelligence** Life skills related to maximizing one’s skills and abilities; the ability to maintain a sense of control over the occupational demands in the workplace; power to balance time and energy spent at work, with family and leisure; knowledge of one’s interests, values, and personality; and knowledge of workplace politics, policies, and procedures.
- **Emotional Intelligence** Life skills related to an awareness of one’s emotions; the ability to maintain an even emotional state with appropriate emotional responses in reaction to life events; the ability to maintain control over emotional states; the ability to experience happiness and positive emotional states; and the ability to understand one’s feelings.
- **Social Intelligence** Life skills related to sharing intimacy, friendship, and membership in groups; the ability to practice active listening and empathy; interest in caring for others; and open to caring and showing commitment to the common good of people, community, and the world.

As you can see, life skills encompass a large part of our personal and professional lives. The next sections will describe the ways that career counselors can use the development of effective life skills to help their clients manage a variety of personal and professional issues.

Life Skills for Personal Change Management

Life skills are critical in personal change management. People who prosper are those who have the ability to respond to change quickly and effectively in a career and in their personal lives. Leutenberg and Liptak (2011) said that “in today’s society, many people find themselves living through multiple extensive, often debilitating changes in their lives.” Your clients are among the people being affected by these changes. Change manifests itself in many facets of a person’s life including:

- **Workplace** Because the work-world is changing, people are finding themselves experiencing a variety of changes such as corporations outsourcing jobs to other parts of the world, jobs being eliminated to save corporations money, robots being

used in place of employees, loss of retirement savings due to downturns on the economy and increased competition for newly created jobs.

- **Health** As society changes and people find themselves trying to keep up with the changes, they experience more stress and anxiety. This increase in anxiety and stress then leads to more physical illnesses, psychological problems, changes in eating habits, increased injuries, and sleeping issues.
- **Home and Family** People are increasingly changing the notion of what constitutes a family, and are experience less meaning that is being derived from belonging to a family. Some of these changes include families experiencing divorce and separation, children being raised in single-parent homes or being raised by grandparents, changes in the way families celebrate together, and changes in the time that family members have to spend together.
- **Personal** Changes in the personal and social lives of people may be one of the biggest stressors people are experiencing. Some of these changes include people finding themselves experiencing financial struggles due to overspending and major debt, job loss, cultural differences, changes in residence, and struggling to keep up with changes in technology” (iii.).

Because of all of these different types of changes due to change in society, people need excellent life skills in order to manage increased perpetual levels of stress. Although change has always been a part of the lives of human beings, the rate of this change is increasing exponentially. Coping with various aspects of change is rapidly becoming a critical life skill that can be the difference between living a life of success or one of disappointment.

Life Skills in Career Counseling

The integration of the importance of life skills in career counseling has increased over the years. For use in career counseling, the identification and enhancement of life skills can be beneficial in helping people develop their career, network, and do well in employment interviews. By integrating the exploration and development of life skills into their practice, career counseling has become much more effective.

This integration of life skills has called for the development of a new, more holistic approach to the practice of career counseling. As early as the 1980s, career and employment counselors have suggested the need to help clients develop a wide variety of skills necessary for developing a career and coping with career issues and concerns that arise over a lifespan. Yost & Corbishly (1987) felt that personal counseling and career counseling are virtually synonymous. They felt that the purpose in any counseling situation was to develop the life skills necessary to handle any problem that clients express in the form of dysfunctional emotions, behaviors, and cognitions.

In the 1990s, career counselors stopped viewing career counseling as a separate entity from personal, more psychological counseling. Richardson (1993) argued that rather than

conceptualizing career counseling as a separate field from personal counseling, practitioners should consider career counseling as a brief, focused form of personal counseling. Using this concept, he suggested that counselors examine life skill deficiencies that effective career development. Similarly, Imbimbo (1994) also talked a great deal about the need to stop viewing personal counseling and career counseling as two distinct fields of practice. He felt that career counselors must be able to move back and forth between the active and directive role of the career counselor and the facilitative and exploratory role of the personal counselor. In this way, counselors can deal effectively with the career issues and help clients develop career-coping skills, as well as help clients develop effective life skills.

In the twenty-first century, career counselors have successfully integrated personal counseling into their career counseling practice by concentrating on life skills development. Bezanson (2004) suggested a solution-focused process in which career counselors would help clients develop a knowledge base of life skills from which they can begin moving toward solutions or plans of action for finding a job. These life skills might include developing better communication skills, manage time in a job search more effectively, and managing the emotions that accompany the loss of a job. Similarly, Zunker (2006) talked about the importance of helping clients manage life skills along with dealing with more career-related issues. He suggested that it was important to integrate both career counseling and personal counseling. In his model, career counselors had to learn to manage multiple sets of client needs including mental health issues, interpersonal skills development, coping skills, time management skills, stress management skills, poor self-esteem, and anger management.

Peterson & Gonzalez (2004) felt that most people who are making career decisions and searching for employment also have questions and concerns about their personal lives. They felt that career counselors need to help clients explore the dynamics and lack of skills that may be blocking the realization of career goals. Similarly, Liptak (2005) felt that “soft skills,” such as life skills and emotional intelligence skills are as necessary as career development and job search skills. He called this model the Confluence Counseling Model (CCM) and it has been used as a framework in the development of the *LSI*.

As you can see, the integration of personal counseling and career counseling through the exploration and development of effective life skills has had a profound impact on the practice of career counseling.

Life Skills in Employment Counseling

Liptak (2016) felt that the enhancement of life skills can be very beneficial for people who are unemployed and seeking employment. He conducted a meta-analysis of the research related to stress and unemployment and found that people who have effective life skills are more likely to find employment more easily and quickly.

The effects of unemployment can be very defeating. Research suggests that people who are unemployed, especially those for whom unemployment was sudden and unexpected, go through a developmental “grieving process” similar to that of people experiencing a personal loss or death (Amundson & Borgen, 1982; Winegardner, Simonetti, & Nykodym, 1984). Thus, people who are unemployed and searching for employment go through four stages as the stress of conducting a job search negatively affects the mental and physical health of the individual.

Stage 1. Enthusiasm The initial stages of the job search are characterized by high hopes, high energy, and unrealistic expectations about job possibilities. For example, individuals usually begin their job searches full of great expectations about the possibilities of finding a job.

Stage 2. Stagnation After the initial enthusiasm, job search efforts stagnate as the result of the job loss becomes apparent. Individuals at this stage might start to tire from the effort and work required in finding a job.

Stage 3. Frustration As the job search extends over time and the individual experiences repeated rejections, the individual often feels frustration and anger which results from continual rejection during a job search campaign. Unemployed individuals often vent their frustration and anger on friends and family.

Stage 4. Apathy During this stage, the individual now spends a minimum amount of time on the job search and a negative self-fulfilling prophecy begins to emerge. For example, individuals often give up at this point, believing there must be something wrong with them and consequently spend less time looking for a job (p. 563).

Mathews, Whang, & Fawcett (1984) developed an entire job-finding skills curriculum which was based on the development of effective life skills for searching for a job. In this training program, they stress communication skills, define career goals and developing career skills, and time management techniques. Similarly, Liptak (2015) suggested that a life skills approach can be very helpful in overcoming barriers to employment success.

Recent studies of unemployment and its effects seem to mirror those found in earlier research studies. Brewington, Nassar-McMillan, Flowers, & Furr (2004) investigated the factors associated with job loss and found that involuntary job loss has far-reaching effects on the well-being of individuals and families including loss of identity, social contacts, and self-worth; social isolation; stress related to role changes; economic loss and financial reassessment; feelings of helplessness and powerlessness; depersonalization; loss of meaning in life; loss of control; and feelings of anger, despair, and hostility.

Liptak (2016) suggested that:

Many critical factors were found in the research that could be used to help the unemployed to deal with unemployment and cope with the stress associated with unemployment. These factors primarily included

such things as helping people to cope with the physical and emotional effects of stress, manage their money differently, gain the support of friends and family while unemployed, carry out a comprehensive job-search campaign, and look at their careers for ways to enhance career development (p. 7).

The development of effective life skills can be very beneficial to people who have been fired, laid off or downsized, or had their job relocated to a different area.

Life Skills in School-to-Career Transitions

Liptak (2012) felt that students in the midst of any school-to-career transition must develop and rely on specific life skills to be successful in the twenty-first century workplace. He said that many people think that the school-to-career transition is a shift into adulthood and people need a different set of life skills to succeed in the adult workplace. Some of these life skills included balancing work and leisure, money management, managing emotional intelligence, conflict resolution, stress management, and time management. He concluded that “improving your life-management skills will help you keep all parts of the transition progressing smoothly, ensuring future career success” (p. 85).

By placing an importance of a client’s life skills, career counselors can help people make a smooth transition from school to the workplace. An inability to develop effective life skills will make the transition much more difficult than it needs to be. Liptak (2005) developed a holistic model, called the Confluence Counseling Model (CCM), for integrating life skills into the career counseling process. He suggested that CCM can be used by career and employment counselors to help clients learn to develop their personal lives and professional careers by helping clients explore and identify life skill deficiencies that might be blocking their career progress, and use and further develop life skill competencies. The CCM consisted of three sets of life skills.

Career and Job Search Skills The first set of life skills that prospective employees need in order to be successful is career and job search skills. These skills are the more traditional skills used by career counselors to help clients develop their careers. In helping individuals develop career management skills, they often begin by administering and interpreting a variety of career assessments; exploring irrational thinking; matching personal characteristics with similar occupations; teaching decision making skills and helping in the decision-making process; teaching job search skills; and helping people to adjust to the workplace and develop an appropriate lifestyle consisting of a balance between work, leisure, family, and education.

Personal Competence Skills The second set of life skills that prospective employees need in order to be successful is appropriate personal competence skills. In helping individuals develop these skills, the counselor can administer assessments to make them more aware of their personal competence strengths and weaknesses, increase their self-esteem by focusing on strengths they possess,

enhance their personal responsibility for their career development, and discuss the importance of being trustworthy and dependable in the workplace.

Social Competence Skills The third set of skills that prospective employees need in order to be successful is appropriate social competence skills. In helping job seekers develop these skills, the counselor can teach them to be more cooperative, be supportive of co-workers, take the initiative to lead when called upon, be a good follower of leadership, communicate effectively, value diversity, and relate well to customers.

As can be seen, the *LSI* can be very helpful for career counselors working in a variety of settings with clients who present a variety of career and life problems. The following section will describe the need for the *LSI*.

Life Skills in Correctional Settings

According to the World Health Organization (1999), life skills are:

A group of psychosocial competencies and interpersonal skills that help people make informed decisions, solve problems, think critically and creatively, communicate effectively, build healthy relationships, empathize with others, and cope with and manage their lives in a healthy and responsible manner.

They conclude that life skills are the abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life.

While there's no definitive list of life skills topics, some examples include:

- Time management
- Money management
- Housekeeping
- Communication skills
- Positive self-image development
- Growth mindset and self-improvement
- Stress management
- Anger management
- Career and job search skills

Many states' Department of Corrections are now offering life skills training programs to provide life skills to residents who will be returning to their communities upon release from prison.

The Utah Department of Corrections (2021) is using a National Institute of Corrections program to help people with restructuring, rethinking, and skill building to reduce recidivism. The Thinking for a Change curriculum uses, as its core, a problem-solving program embellished by both cognitive restructuring and social skills interventions.

Finn (1998) reported on a life skills program that the Delaware Department of Correction began over twenty years ago. This program gathered statistics related to recidivism for program participants and control groups. Some results of the effectiveness of the Delaware DOC life skills training program include:

- After one year, the recidivism rate for life skills participants was 19%, while the control group was 27%.
- The recidivism rates for women were remarkable: life skills graduates had 0% recidivism, while life skills participants (but not graduating) had a 3% recidivism rate, and all women in the study that year had a 35% recidivism rate.
- After two years, the recidivism rates include:
 - Women life skill graduates = 15 % recidivism rate
 - All other women = 51% recidivism rate
 - Male life skills graduates = 22.5% recidivism rate
 - All other males = 50% recidivism rate
- The numbers of people completing work release after having received life skills training are much higher than those not receiving life skills training.

The Life Skills Inventory (LSI) is designed to meet the need for a brief assessment instrument that could help people identify their life skills proficiencies and deficiencies upon returning to their communities.

Need for the *LSI*

The *Life Skills Inventory (LSI)* is designed to meet the need for a brief assessment instrument to help people identify their life skills proficiencies and deficiencies. It is based on the notion that success in developing a career, being successful in a career and life, and making effective career transitions is highly dependent on the effective use of critical life skills.

Life skills are a wide array of psycho-social and interpersonal skills, which can help people to make informed decisions, communicate effectively, and develop coping and self-management skills that may help an individual to lead a healthy life and a productive career.

Many critical life skills were found in the research that could be used to help people be more successful professionally and personally. These skills focused primarily on an ability to: communicate effectively, manage stress well, manage negative emotions such

as anger, manage money, manage time, and implement effective career skills. The skills make up the scales for the *LSI*.

Even though these skills have been identified in the literature as ways to help people develop their career and cope with career transitions, prior to the *LSI* there was no formal assessment available for career counselors to use to help clients identify proficiencies and deficiencies in critical life skill areas. Career counselors have been forced to rely on self-reported client information related to their life skill proficiencies and deficiencies in each of the areas. The *LSI* is designed to help people explore and identify the specific areas in which they possess the necessary life skills for career and life success, and those life skills which they need to develop further.

The *LSI* is intended for use in any type of program that provides career counseling, job search assistance, or vocational guidance including comprehensive career guidance programs, employment counseling programs, rehabilitation counseling programs, college counseling centers, college career and placement offices, outplacement programs, prisons and parole-oriented programs, military transition programs, school-to-work programs, welfare-to-work programs, and employee development programs.

Administration and Interpretation

The *LSI* has been designed for ease-of-use and can be administered electronically or in print format. It can be easily scored and interpreted by the respondent. The assessment consists of 60 items that have been grouped into six scales that are representative of the six critical life skills identified in the literature. The print assessment includes scoring directions. (Scoring is done automatically on the electronic, web-based assessment.) Both print and electronic versions of the assessment includes a profile and interpretation guide, a Suggestions for Strengthening Life Skills checklist, and a My Life Skills Success Plan form.

The *LSI* can be administered to individuals or to groups. It is written for individuals at or above the 8th grade level. Since none of the items are gender-specific, the *LSI* is appropriate for a variety of audiences and population.

Administering the LSI

The *LSI* can be self-administered, either using an electronic, web-based format or a print-based format. This guide will focus on administering the print-based assessment, but many of the details also apply to the web-based format.

The print-based booklets are consumable, and a pencil or pen is the only other item necessary for administering, scoring, and interpreting the inventory. The first page of the print inventory contains spaces for normative data including name, date, and contact information (phone and email). Instruct each respondent to fill in the necessary information. Then read the description and directions on the first page while all respondents follow along. Test administrators should ensure that each respondent clearly

understands all of the instructions and the response format. Respondents should be instructed to mark all of their responses directly on the inventory booklet. The *LSI* requires approximately 15 to 20 minutes to complete.

Steps of the LSI

The LSI is simple to take and can be easily scored and interpreted. Each assessment contains 60 statements that are related to the stress associated with unemployment. Each statement asks the test taker to rate how well the statement describes them on a 3-point scale ranging from “A Lot Like Me” to “Not At All Like Me.” The *LSI* also includes scoring directions, a scoring profile, descriptions of the six essential life skills areas, and an interpretive guide that helps test takers to connect their results to strategies that can help them to overcome life skills deficiencies and a space is provided for test takers to develop a life skills success plan. The *LSI* uses a series of steps to guide respondents. In Step 1, respondents are asked to circle the response that represents their answers for each of the 60 statements. Respondents are asked to read each statement and circle the response that describes them based on the following Likert-scale choices:

A Lot Like Me *Somewhat Like Me* *Not At All Like Me*

Each of the scales is made up of 10 items that represent specific life skills being measured by the *LSI*.

In Step 2 respondents add their scores for each color-coded scale. (In the electronic, web-based version, this step is done automatically for the test taker. The subsequent steps are then renumbered.) Step 3 provides a chart which allows test takers to chart their scores from 10 to 30. Results are recorded in the Coping Profile table. This Coping Profile table helps respondents to understand their scores better. Step 3 also helps test takers to interpret what their scores mean by providing descriptions of the six scales. Step 4 helps test takers explore activities for developing more effective life skills for personal and professional success. Step 5 encourages test takers to develop a life skills success plan, and apply what they have learned to assist them in career and life transitions.

Understanding and Interpreting LSI Scores

The *LSI* yields content-referenced scores in the form of raw scores. A raw score, in this case, is the total of the numbers circled for each of the ten self-report life skills statements for the six scales. The performance of individual respondents or groups of respondents can only be evaluated in terms of the mean scores on each of the scales.

Each respondent will get a score falling into one of the following three categories:

Scores from 24 to 30 are high and indicate that respondents have developed many effective life skills on this scale. The activities in Step 4 will help respondents be sure that they are doing everything possible to ensure that they are

continuing to develop and use effective life skills for success in both their personal lives and professional careers.

Scores from 17 to 23 are average and indicate that respondents have developed some effective life skills on this scale. Respondents with this score will need to complete some of the activities identified in Step 4 to ensure that they are able to develop and use effective life skills for success in both their personal lives and professional lives careers.

Scores from 10 to 16 are low and indicate that respondents have not developed effective life skills yet on this scale. Respondents with this score will need to complete most of the activities identified in Step 4 to ensure that they are able to develop and use effective life skills for success in both their personal lives and professional careers.

Respondents generally have one or two areas in which they score in the high or average categories.

The respondents should concentrate on exploring their strengths and weaknesses first. However, they should also look for ways to use their scores to enhance their chances of personal and career success. This is best accomplished by having respondents complete all of the activities in Step 4. This will help them to think about important methods for building communication skills, engaging in stress management techniques, managing their anger, dealing with financial issues, managing time, and developing career skills.

Keep in mind that it is not necessary to score high on every scale on the *LSI*. This assessment is designed to help people identify life skills deficiencies that may be keeping them from being happier in their personal lives and more successful in their professional lives.

Alternatively, some respondents may score in the average or low ranges for most or all of the six scales. If this is the case, the person may need to work very hard to develop the necessary life skills for personal and professional success. For these people, it may be beneficial to focus on strengthening one area, rather than trying to tackle all scales with a low-range score.

Scales Used on the LSI

Because the primary objective of this instrument is to help people identify the basic life skills necessary for personal and professional success. The *LSI* is organized around six scales that represent six major life skill deficiencies that keep people from being successful. These scales were chosen as representative based on a literature review related to life skills needed for career and personal success. They are as follows:

I. Communication Skills

People with effective life skills are great communicators. People scoring low on this scale often jump to conclusions about what the other person is saying, or respond stereotypically. They are not very good listeners and are not effective in developing rapport with other people. They are often unaware of what their body language is saying and do not know how to read the body language of others. They may not maintain appropriate eye contact and may struggle using techniques to enhance conversations.

II. Stress Management Skills

People with effective life skills are able to cope with and manage the daily stress they encounter. People scoring low on this scale may be having difficulties in managing the stress in their lives. They may not be getting sufficient amounts of exercise, not maintaining a balanced diet, or getting adequate amounts of sleep each night. They may not be maintaining a work/life balance, or use techniques for stress reduction when they do feel overwhelmed. They may also not know effective techniques for monitoring and altering their unrealistic thoughts and expectations about themselves.

III. Anger Management Skills

People with effective life skills are able to effectively manage their angry feelings. People scoring low on this scale have difficulty in controlling their angry feelings. They often get angry easily and then express their anger by breaking things or lashing out at other people. They often don't know when their anger becomes too intense and how to appropriately let go of their angry feelings. When the anger becomes too intense, they often become verbally or physically abusive.

IV. Money Management Skills

People with effective life skills know how to manage their money well. People scoring low on this scale tend to have trouble managing their finances, and often overspend their money or purchase items impulsively. They tend not to want to develop a realistic financial plan, make changes in their spending habits, and revise and stick to a budget. They are not focused on financial stability and freedom, and do not spend much time focusing on managing their finances.

V. Time Management Skills

People with effective life skills are great managers of their time. People scoring low on this scale lack effective time management skills. They are often late for deadlines and meetings and fail to promptly return phone calls and emails. They take on too many commitments and then are in a rush to complete them or do not get them done at all. They probably have a hard time keeping track of time and will put things off until the last minute for completion.

VI. Career Skills

People with effective life skills demonstrate great skills while in the workplace. People scoring low on this scale do not have the life skills necessary to be productive and advance in the workplace. They tend to make careless errors, are not dependable or reliable, and do not have a great work ethic. They are not effective decisions makers or communicators. They are not able to identify solutions to problems in the workplace on their own and may have difficulty in following directions effectively.

Illustrative Case Using the LSI

Profile Results for Jose: Jose is graduating with an Associate’s Degree in computer technology from a local community college. He is nervous about making the transition into the workplace. He has never lived on his own, and all of his jobs have been in fast-food restaurants and this is his “first real job.” He is not sure what the organizational culture will be like in his industry, and he is worried that he will not be able to compete with other employees, especially other new employees who have graduated from more prestigious schools. He wants to be successful, but is not sure what that entails. He completes the *LSI* to help him identify his life skill proficiencies and deficiencies.

His scores on the *LSI* included (scores range from 10 to 30):

Communication Skills = 26 (high)

Stress Management Skills = 18 (average)

Anger Management Skills = 24 (high)

Money Management Skills = 19 (average)

Time Management Skills = 15 (low)

Career Skills = 16 (Low)

As can be seen from his results on the *LSI*, Jose needs to develop some specific life skills in order to be more successful in the workplace. He scored in the Low range on the Time Management Skills and Career Skills scales. Most urgently, he needs to develop these workplace skills in order to be more successful in his college-to-career transition. Jose needs help in managing his time more effectively, and might need to develop several life skills such as learning to prioritize his work and focusing on projects that are most important or have the shortest deadlines, learning to work ahead on projects so that he does not procrastinate, and learn to use a planner and “to-do” lists to keep track of important projects and their timelines. His Career Skills score was also low and suggests that he might overcome this deficiency by finding a mentor to help him develop a career plan and stick to reaching his career goals, work to develop a great impression and reputation, and focus on being a good follower of his supervisor. Two of his scores in the average range (Stress Management Skills and Money Management Skills), suggest that

Jose will need to also be aware of the need to ultimately develop additional stress management skills and ways to manage his money to be successful in the transition. As can be seen from his scores in the High range, Jose seems to have good communication skills and anger-management skills.

Research and Development

This section outlines the stages involved in the development of the *LSI*. It includes guidelines for development, item construction, item selection, item standardization, and norm development and testing.

Guidelines for Development

The *LSI* was developed to fill the need for a quick, reliable instrument to help people identify how well they are coping with their job loss, learn new coping skills, and make the transition from unemployment to employment.

The inventory consists of six scales, each containing ten statements that represent the scales. It also provides counselors and job search specialists with information that they can use to help their clients and students be more successful in a variety of career counseling situations. The *LSI* was developed to meet the following guidelines:

- 1. The instrument should measure a wide range of life skill areas.** To help people identify their life skill proficiencies and deficiencies, six scales were developed that were representative of critical life skills reviewed in the literature. The six scales on the *LSI* included Communication Skills, Stress Management Skills, Anger Management Skills, Money Management Skills, Time Management Skills, and Career Skills.
- 2. The instrument should be easy to use.** The *LSI* uses a three-point Likert question-answer format that allows respondents to quickly determine their life skill proficiencies and deficiencies. The consumable format makes it easy to complete, score, and interpret the assessment and helps people explore their strengths and weaknesses related to the critical life skills areas.
- 3. The instrument should be easy to administer, score, and interpret.** The *LSI* utilizes a consumable format that guides the test-taker through the five steps necessary to complete the *LSI*.
- 4. The instrument should not be gender biased.** Norms for the *LSI* have been developed for both men and women.
- 5. The instrument should contain items which are applicable to people of all ages.** Norms developed for the *LSI* show an age range from 19-64.

Scale Development

Scale development for the *LSI* was based primarily on a review of the literature related to the importance of life skills and life skill development in creating a successful career. Many researchers have developed models for the integration of life skills in the career counseling process. Evers, Rush, & Berdrow (1998) completed a classic study and presented a model in which they identified the most important competencies and life skills people need for lifelong learning and employability. Table 1 shows the correlation between their model and the scales on the *LSI*.

Table 1 Comparison of skills people need for Lifelong Learning and Employability and Life Skills Inventory Scales	
Life Skill Competencies	Life Skills Inventory Scales
Interpersonal, listening, and oral communication skills	Communication Skills
Determining personal strengths and functioning in stressful situations	Stress Management Skills
Maintaining a positive attitude, resolving anger and conflicts, and responding appropriately to constructive criticism	Anger Management Skills
Managing money, resources, and budgets	Money Management Skills
Managing several tasks at once, being able to set priorities, and allocating time efficiently in order to meet deadlines	Time Management Skills
Solving problems, setting goals, and making effective decisions	Career Skills

Similarly, Liptak (2009), suggested the Confluence Counseling Model (CCM) that integrates aspects of personal counseling and career counseling to help people develop the life skills they need to be successful in life and in a career. Table 2 shows the correlation between the life skills of the CCM and the scales on the *LSI*.

Table 2 Comparison of CCM Model and Life Skills Inventory Scales	
CCM Life Skill Competencies	Life Skills Inventory Scales
Social Competence	Communication Skills
Personal Competence	Stress Management Skills
Social Competence	Anger Management Skills
Personal Competence	Money Management Skills
Personal Competence	Time Management Skills
Career and Job Search Competence	Career Skills

Zunker (2006) also developed a model, based on the work of Hackney & Cormier (2001), which provides a way for counselors to manage and oversee the integration of career and personal counseling. In this model, clients are managed from a whole person perspective that addresses client needs by teaching a wide variety of life skills grouped into four

categories: Cognitive-Behavioral Life Skills, Career Life Skills, Affective Life Skills, and Cultural Life Skills (see Table 3).

As can be seen, the scales on the *LSI* share many characteristics of other well-established career-life-skills theories and models and is based on decades of research. All three models are considered landmark studies and suggest that the six scales used for the *LSI* are the specific life skills that people need in dealing with a wide variety of career and life transitions.

Table 3 Comparison of Zunker's Nexus Model and <i>Life Skills Inventory</i> Scales	
Nexus Strategies	Life Skills Inventory Scales
Cognitive-Behavioral Life Skills	Communication Skills
Career Life Skills	Stress Management Skills
Affective Life Skills	Anger Management Skills
Cultural Life Skills	Money Management Skills
Cognitive-Behavioral Life Skills	Time Management Skills
Career Life Skills	Career Skills

Item Selection

A large pool of items which were representative of the six major scales on the *LSI* was developed and later revised. This enabled the elimination of items which did not correlate well. In developing items for the *LSI*, the author used language that is currently being used in the career and job-search literature, research, and job training and counseling programs. After the items were developed, they were reviewed and edited for clarity, style, and appropriateness for identifying deficiencies and proficiencies in life skills. Items were additionally screened to eliminate any reference to sex, race, culture, or ethnic origin.

Item Standardization

The *LSI* was designed to measure life-skill proficiencies critical in managing career transitions, successfully developing a career, being successful in the workplace, and being successful in non-work situations. The author identified adult populations to complete the *LSI*. These populations completed drafts of the *LSI* to gather data concerning the types of life skills that are most critical for career and life success. Experts in the field of career counseling were asked to sort the items into categories to ensure item standardization. From this research, a final pool of twelve for each category on the *LSI* was chosen to administer for statistical validation.

This initial research yielded information about the appropriateness of items for each of the *LSI* scales, reactions of respondents concerning the inventory format and content, and reactions of respondents concerning the ease of administration, scoring, and profiling of the *LSI*. The data collected was then subjected to Chronbach's Alpha correlation

coefficients to identify the items which best represented the scales on the *LSI*. Based on this analysis, ten items were selected for the final version of the assessment. The items accepted for the final form of the *LSI* were again reviewed for content, clarity, and style. Careful examination was conducted to eliminate any possible gender or race bias.

Reliability

Reliability is often defined as the consistency with which a test measures what it purports to measure. Evidence of the reliability of a test may be presented in terms of reliability coefficients, test-retest correlations, and interscale correlations. Tables 4, 5, and 6 present these types of information. As can be seen in Table 4, the *LSI* showed very strong internal consistency validity with Chronbach Alpha Correlations ranging from 0.87 to 0.91. All six of these correlations were significant at the 0.01 level. To establish test-retest reliability, one month after the original testing, 40 people in the sample population were re-tested using the *LSI* (see Table 5). Test-retest correlations for the *LSI* ranged from 0.895 to 0.904. All of these correlations were also significant at the 0.01 level and showed that the *LSI* demonstrates reliability over time. Table 6 shows the correlations among the *LSI* scales. As can be seen, all of the correlations were small. In fact, many of the scales had negative correlations. The largest correlation was for the Money Management scale and Stress Management Skills scale ($R = 0.239$). All of the interscale correlations were much smaller, adding to the independence of each of the scales on the *LSI*.

Table 4 <i>LSI</i> Internal Consistency (Chronbach's Alpha Correlations)*	
Scales	Correlation Coefficients
Communication Skills	0.91**
Stress Management Skills	0.89**
Anger Management Skills	0.90**
Money Management Skills	0.87**
Time Management Skills	0.91**
Career Skills	0.88**
* N = 73 Adults; ** Correlation was significant at the 0.01 level.	

Table 5 <i>LSI</i> Stability (test-retest correlation)*+	
Scales	Correlation Coefficients
Communication Skills	0.904**
Stress Management Skills	0.899**
Anger Management Skills	0.903**
Money Management Skills	0.895**
Time Management Skills	0.902**
Career Skills	0.897**

Table 5 <i>LSI</i> Stability (test-retest correlation)*+	
Scales	Correlation Coefficients
* N = 40 Adults; + 1 month after testing; ** Correlation was significant at the 0.01 level.	

Table 6 <i>LSI</i> Interscale Correlations *						
Scales	Communication Skills	Stress Management Skills	Anger Management Skills	Money Management Skills	Time Management Skills	Career Skills
Communication Skills	1					
Stress Management Skills	0.152	1				
Anger Management Skills	-0.113	0.129	1			
Money Management Skills	0.218	0.239	-0.165	1		
Time Management Skills	0.129	0.131	-0.124	0.219	1	
Career Skills	-0.176	-0.235	-0.147	-0.172	-0.163	1
* N = 54						

Validity

Validity is often defined as the extent to which a test measures what it purports to measure. Evidence of validity for the *LSI* is presented in the form of means and standard deviations. Table 7 shows the scale means and standard deviations for men and women who completed the *LSI*.

Women scored highest on the Communication Skills ($M = 23.80$) scale, followed by the Anger Management Skills ($M = 22.67$) scale. This suggests that women are good communicators in their personal lives, as well as in the workplace. They are also able to manage their anger in the workplace. Women scored lowest on the Money Management Skills ($M = 20.50$) scale and the Time Management Skills ($M = 20.86$) scale. This suggests that women may need help in managing and budgeting their money, as well as learning techniques for managing their time.

Men scored highest on the Career Skills ($M = 21.77$) scale, followed by the Stress Management Skills ($M = 21.58$) scale. This suggests that men tend to be good managers of their own careers and are good at setting and working to career goals. They also are able to manage the stress that is inherent in the workplace and in personal relationships

outside of work. Men scored lowest on the Anger Management Skills (M = 19.64) scale and the Communication Skills (M = 19.96) scales. This suggest that they may have difficulty in managing emotions in the workplace, especially anger. They may also need to work to overcome deficiencies in how they communicate with supervisors, co-workers and customers.

Overall, people completing the *LSI* scored highest on the Communication Skills (M = 22.51) scale and lowest on the Money Management Skills (M = 20.17) scale. This suggests that people seeking personal and career success are good at communicating with other people. It should be noted that this score is the average range. This suggests that people need help in developing much more effective life skills. In addition, special attention needs to be paid to developing effective money management skills.

Table 7 <i>LSI</i> Means and Standard Deviations for Adults *						
Scales	Combined Mean	Standard Deviation	Men Mean	Standard Deviation	Women Mean	Standard Deviation
Communication Skills	21.95	4.2	19.96	4.3	23.80	3.2
Stress Management Skills	21.53	3.8	21.58	3.8	21.49	3.9
Anger Management Skills	21.21	3.8	19.64	3.8	22.67	3.3
Money Management Skills	20.48	4.3	20.46	4.3	20.50	4.3
Time Management Skills	20.87	3.3	20.89	3.2	20.86	3.3
Career Skills	21.74	4.0	21.77	4.0	21.71	4.1
* N = 295; Male N = 142, Female N = 153						

References

- Amundson, N.E., & Borgen, W.A. (1982). The dynamics of unemployment: Job loss and job search. Personnel and Guidance Journal, 60, 9, 562-564.
- Bezanson, B.J. (2004). The application of solution-focused work in employment counseling. Journal of Employment Counseling, 41, 4, 183-191.
- Brewington, J.O., Nassar-McMillan, S.C., Flowers, C.P., & Furr, S.R. (2004). A preliminary investigation of factors associated with job loss grief. The Career Development Quarterly, 53, 1, 78-83.
- Evers, F.T., Rush, J.C., & Berdrow, I. (1998). The bases of competence: Skills for lifelong learning and employability. San-Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Finn, P. (1998). The Delaware Department of Correction Life Skills Program. <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles/169589.pdf>
- Hackney, H., & Cormier, L.S. (2001). The professional counselor. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Imbimbo, P.V. (1994). Integrating personal and career counseling: A challenge for counselors. Journal of Employment Counseling, 31, 2, 50=59.
- Leider, R.J. (1994). Life skills: Taking charge of your personal and professional growth. Paramus, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Leutenberg, E.A., & Liptak, J.J. (2011). Teen practical life skills workbook. Duluth, MN: Whole Person.
- Leutenberg, E.A., & Liptak, J.J. (2009). The practical life skills workbook. Duluth, MN: Whole Person.
- Liptak, J.J. (2016). Re-Employment Success Inventory. St. Paul, MN: JIST.
- Liptak, J.J. (2015). Overcoming barriers to employment success. St. Paul, MN: JIST.
- Liptak, J.J. (2012). Planning your school-to-career transition. St. Paul, MN: JIST.
- Liptak, J.J. (2009). Job Survival and Success Scale Manual. St. Paul, MN: JIST.
- Liptak, J.J. (2008). Career quizzes. Indianapolis, IN: JIST Publishing.
- Liptak, J.J. (2007). The life skills IQ Test. New York, NY: Penguin Publishing.
- Liptak, J.J. (2005). Using emotional intelligence to help college students succeed in the workplace. Journal of Employment Counseling, 42, 4, 171-178.

- Mathews, R.M., Whang, P.L., & Fawcett, S.B. (1984). Learning job finding skills.
Retrieved from
<http://www.rtcil.org/products/RTCIL%20publications/Employment/Learning%20Job%20Finding%20Skills.pdf>
- Peterson, N. & Gonzalez, R.C. (2004). The role of work in people's lives: Applied career counseling and vocational psychology. Boston, MA: Cengage Learning.
- Richardson, M.S. (1993). Work in people's lives: A location for counseling psychologists. Journal of Counseling Psychology, 40, 425-433.
- Utah Department of Corrections (2021). Life skills programs.
<https://corrections.utah.gov/index.php/family-friends/prison-facilities/utah-state-prison/34-joblinks/827-life-skills>
- Winegardner, D., Simonetti, J.L., & Nykodym, N. (1984). Unemployment: The living death? Journal of Employment Counseling, 21, 4, 149-155.
- World Health Organization (1999). Partners in life skills education.
https://www.who.int/mental_health/media/en/30.pdf
- Yost, E.B., & Corbishly, M.A. (1987). Career counseling: A psychological approach. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Zunker, V. G. (2006). Career counseling: A holistic approach. Belmont, CA: Thomson Higher Education.

About the Author

John Liptak, EdD, is one of the leading developers of quantitative and qualitative assessments in the country. He is the Associate Director of Career Services at Radford University in Radford, Virginia. He provides career assessment and career counseling services for students and administers and interprets a variety of career assessments. Dr. Liptak focuses on helping students develop their careers by becoming engaged in a variety of learning, leisure, and work experiences. In addition to the *LSI*, Dr. Liptak has created the following assessments for JIST Publishing: *Re-Employment Success Inventory (RESI)*, *Transferable Skills Scale (TSS)*, *Career Exploration Inventory (CEI)*, *Transition-to-Work Inventory (TWI)*, *Job Search Knowledge Scale (JSKS)*, *Job Survival and Success Scale (JSSS)*, *Barriers to Employment Success Inventory (BESI)*, *Job Search Attitude Inventory (JSAI)*, and *College Survival and Success Scale (CSSS)*.