



# Positive Youth Development Developing Life Skills

VRKC: Volunteer Research Knowledge Competency Taxonomy

## Intended Audience:

4-H volunteers

## Learning Outcomes:

- Volunteers will identify the essential elements of positive youth development and how life skills connect to them.
- Volunteers will discover how to enhance life skill development in project and activity meetings and events.

## Time:

20 – 30 minutes

## Supplies Needed:

- Pencils and paper
- Markers and flip chart paper
- Power Point, Computer and LCD Projector
- Handouts and Evaluations

## Do Ahead:

Prepare handouts.

## Authors:

Doug Swanson, Extension Educator University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Extension and Linda Strieter, 4-H Agent, Rutgers Cooperative Extension

## Editor:

Sue Pleskac, Professor, Volunteer Leadership Specialist, University of Wisconsin-Extension

## Volunteerism for the Next Generation:

<http://nextgeneration.4h.org/volunteerism/>

## 4-H National Headquarters:

<http://www.national4-hheadquarters.gov/>

## INTRODUCTION

A skill is a learned ability to do something well. Life skills are defined as skills that help an individual to be successful in living a productive and satisfying life (Hendricks, 1996). Life skills learned through 4-H create the foundation for the essential elements of positive youth development and lead youth to become capable, competent citizens. (Power Point Slides 1, 2)

## WHAT TO DO

4-H youth participate in activities and events that are planned with adults with the outcome of gaining the essential elements of positive youth development. (Power Point Slide 3) These elements include:

- Belonging – Youth learn life skills through a positive relationship with a caring adult in a safe, inclusive environment.
- Mastery – Youth have opportunities to try, make mistakes, and learn as they build skills, knowledge, and attitudes.
- Independence – Youth have the opportunity to see themselves as active participants in their future and become self-directed, autonomous adults.
- Generosity – Youth have opportunities to value and practice service to others.

Consider how the essential elements of positive youth development connect to the 4-H Pledge and life skill categories. (Power Point Slides 4, 5)

4-H Pledge	Essential Element	Life Skill Categories
Head	Independence	Thinking, Managing
Heart	Generosity	Relating, Caring
Hands	Mastery	Working, Giving
Health	Belonging	Being, Living

## Activity 1: Mastering Maximum Impact Events

Have participants form small groups and complete Handout 1. Reconvene the group and ask groups to share their results with the total group. Responses could be listed on flip chart paper.

When planning 4-H experiences, ask the following questions: (Power Point Slide 6)

- What are the life skills that need to or could be learned?
- How can these life skills be taught through experiences?
- How can these life skills be reinforced in future situations?
- How can these life skills be used to strengthen family situations?



Volunteerism for the Next Generation



**VRKC: Volunteer Research Knowledge Competency Taxonomy for 4-H Youth Development:**

<http://www.national4-hheadquarters.gov/comm/vrkc.pdf>

**VRKC Research and Design Team:**

*Ken Culp III, Ph.D., University of Kentucky*

*Renee K. McKee, Ph.D., Purdue University*

*Patrick Nestor, Ed.D., West Virginia University*

**References for this lesson:**

- Friedman, R. (1994) *New Jersey 4-H Leader Training Series. Life Skills in the 4-H Program* Rutgers Cooperative Extension <http://njaes.rutgers.edu/pubs/pdfs/4h/e148/107-110.pdf>
- Hendricks, P. (1996) *Targeting Life Skills Model*. Iowa State University Extension.
- Nebraska 4-H Youth Development Volunteer Information Series: *Targeting Life Skills*. <http://4h.unl.edu/volunteers/pdf/Targeting%20Life%20Skills.pdf>

- How can youth be involved in the planning of this experience and in teaching roles to support these skills?
- How can transfer of these skills be reinforced in the future?

**Activity 2: Making It Happen**

Have participants work with a partner. Ask each pair to choose a 4-H project or event they are familiar with. Identify the main life skills developed through that project and the steps of reaching that life skill. Describe how they would reinforce life skills development.

**Example: 4-H Entomology Project**

- Activity: Creating an entomology display includes identifying species, locating and catching, preserving, labeling, and displaying.
- Life Skills taught and practiced: Self motivation, goal setting, decision making, and problem solving.
- Life Skills Reinforced: Youth help plan the session, youth help teach newer project members, youth demonstrate to the club how to develop a specimen display.

Have each pair record their work on flip chart paper and share it when finished. After the last presentation, ask the group the following questions: What was the most difficult part of this activity? What ideas have you gained from listening to others? How can you apply this activity to your volunteer work?

**Conclusion:**

Life skills are learned through group and individual experiences in 4-H projects, activities, and events. The challenge for volunteers is to strengthen life skills development during these learning

experiences and provide opportunities to build the essential elements of positive youth development. Planning for the reinforcement of skill development allows youth to apply what they have learned to other situations. The result of “learning by doing” is youth that are equipped to live positive and productive lives. (Power Point Slide 7)

**TALK IT OVER**

Reflect:

- How are life skills taught and experienced within 4-H activities, projects, and events?
- How can life skills development be strengthened?

Apply:

- What are ways you plan to reinforce life skill development in youth?

**EVALUATION**

Ask each participant to complete the evaluation tool (Handout 2).

**ENHANCE or SIMPLIFY**

Have participants divide into groups based on the 4-H clubs or projects they are involved in. Complete Activity 2 based on 4-H club or project experiences.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 14th and Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice or TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.



*Volunteerism for the Next Generation*



## Handout 1

**Making Maximum Impact Happen**

In small groups, brainstorm and identify the key essential element of positive youth development and the life skills that would be learned through each of the activities and events identified.

Activity or Event	Essential Element of Positive Youth Development	Life Skills to be Learned	Ideas to Strengthen the Activity or Event
Playing a Game			
Experiments			
Planning Activities			
Giving Presentations			
Interviewing Others			
Solving a Problem			
Making Models or Products			
Serving as an officer			
Trying a New Project			
Identifying a Community Service Project			
Completing the Community Service Project			
Serving on a Board of Directors			
Teaching Others			
Evaluating the Outcome of a Project or Event			



## Handout 2

## Evaluation

Please complete the following evaluation. The results of the evaluation will be shared with those who work with the program. Your participation in this evaluation is voluntary. Your responses will be combined with the responses of all other participants and you will not be individually identified on any report prepared.

Please answer the questions by circling the number that indicates your level of understanding of the topics listed before and after the training.

1 = Very little understanding

2 = Understand somewhat

3 = Clear understanding

	NOW – After the training	THEN – Before the training
1. I can describe the essential elements of positive youth development and how life skills connect to them.	1      2      3	1      2      3
2. I can identify how life skills are taught through projects, activities, and events.	1      2      3	1      2      3
3. I can identify ways to strengthen activity and project experiences for youth and reinforce life skills development.	1      2      3	1      2      3

- Please list at least two ideas or skills that you learned as a result of this presentation.
- How will you use what you learned in this presentation?



*Volunteerism for the Next Generation*

