

Responsibility -- Webster's definition -- 1) the quality or state of being responsible, such as moral, legal or mental accountability, reliability and trustworthiness. Being responsible involves being in charge of your own actions and choices, carrying out what needs to be done and being a good role model.

It is important that parents show good character by being responsible and portraying good role models. Perhaps they could become an assistant 4-H volunteer in a project area or study to become knowledgeable about a subject matter area. Another aspect of responsibility is being available when needed, showing proper work habits and modeling for members that the value of experiences is much more significant than being the top winner and receiving prizes and awards.

There are many activities that help youth understand the role of responsibility in project areas. For example, divide club members into groups so that each addresses a different step in a project activity. Have the groups brainstorm and identify a member's responsibility related to the step they are assigned. Take turns having each group present their list. After each presentation, encourage members to further discuss the importance of responsibility in the step.

The 4-H program provides 4-H club leaders with many opportunities to teach character education and life skill development. There are many opportunities for 4-H members to practice and demonstrate good personal character.

Responsible behaviors in the 4-H program include conducting timely and appropriate decisions about each enrolled project and meeting deadlines with those project areas. Maintaining an accurate project record book is another important component of the 4-H program. Members should responsibly record activities, events and educational experiences for their projects and take pictures to document growth.

Fair season will be approaching in a couple of months with youth members currently working with livestock projects, researching recipes to find the best and tastiest version, attempting new techniques in visual arts projects, and the list goes on. The most valuable element of project areas is 'learning', not the color of ribbon received at a county fair! Many times youth learn more from receiving a red ribbon and completing the project on their own than receiving a champion ribbon and not knowing how the work was completed because of too much assistance from parents, guardians or project leaders. We all want our youth to be successful, but remember to take into consideration the cost of that success and who's responsibility it is that will provide the best experience for the youth.

Learning life skills that can be implemented later is key in experiential learning. The ability to adapt skills learned to other project areas and life situations demonstrates responsibility in making the most of experiences. Youth take a great deal of pride in their accomplishments if they have been responsible for their end product.

Encourage your youth to participate in the nation's largest youth organization and America's foremost youth development initiative. Contact Patsy Maddy at the Twin Creeks District Extension office by calling 785-877-5755 or send an email to pmaddy@ksu.edu

Kansas State University is committed to making its services, activities and programs accessible to all participants. If you have special requirements due to a physical, vision, or hearing disability, contact Twin Creeks Extension District, Norton office, 785-877-5755.

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Article Header

“Responsibility”

“Chasing Clovers”

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