

The five Kansas 4-H Life Skills of a positive self-concept, an inquiring mind, a concern for the community, healthy interpersonal relationships and sound decision making represent the building blocks of the Kansas 4-H program. These life skills represent those enduring qualities that help young people to become confident, capable, caring, and responsible citizens. These skills are abilities, which once developed, can be used in many ways throughout a lifetime.

A life skill can be defined as “an ability that is necessary and useful throughout life.” These skills include “thinking,” “doing,” and “feeling” abilities used in many situations. The life skills learned through our 4-H program are those which contribute positively to productive, healthy and competent lives.

**Positive Self-Concept:** Youth develop a positive self-concept by seeking their fullest unique potential as a person. What is a positive self-concept? It is a growing belief about yourself that helps a person to successfully meet challenges and cope with issues of life, and then to make a positive impact on the lives of others. How you think and feel about yourself, your self-image is learned. Developing self-concept involves building self-esteem and self-confidence, as well as learning to accept success and failure, criticism and praise. This began at birth, with your parents and other care givers when giving verbal and non-verbal feedback on behavior. Other persons in your environment, and the nature of the community itself, also contribute to self-concept. 4-H volunteers have many opportunities to make a positive impact on each 4-H member’s self-concept. Experts recommend that all feedback include at least 75 percent positive comments when making a correction to keep things in balance when helping 4-H members. Expressing a person’s true self and being genuine and accepting are the keys to helping 4-H members increase positive self-concept.

Examples of activities which help 4-H’ers to develop a positive self-concept include completion of a project, doing something successfully for the first time (i.e., public presentations), participating in project evaluation and serving in leadership roles.

**An Inquiring Mind:** Asking why! Youth develop an inquiring mind when he/she knows how to obtain information when it is needed and expects to live in a changing world. They learn how to acquire, analyze and use knowledge. This is accomplished through hands-on learning, and includes capitalizing on curiosity and use of competitive and cooperative learning methods. 4-H’ers increase their abilities to identify needs and sources of knowledge. Some examples of activities which enhance learning skills are working on 4-H projects, preparing for a public presentation or foods demonstration, or participating in a quiz bowl or animal clinic.

**A Concern for the Community:** Youth develop a concern for the community by becoming aware of his/her social responsibility, and are willing to be involved in improving the community, both local and global. They become aware of the concerns of the people who live in the community and take action to meet the needs. Activities which teach 4-H’ers to respond to the needs of others and the community include community service projects, attending Citizenship Washington Focus, participating as youth members of advisory groups, environmental education projects, global education programs or inter-state/international exchanges.

**Healthy Interpersonal Relationships:** Youth learn healthy interpersonal relationships when they get along with others, work and interact with people of all ages. They develop communication skills that enhance the ability to understand and respect another’s point of view. 4-H’ers also develop the ability to be objective, deal constructively with conflict and recognize and respect others’ worth.

Activities that teach youth to communicate with and relate to other people include being in a club, public presentations, community service activities, participating in county-wide events, receiving newsletters, record-keeping, serving as camp counselors or in other leadership roles, participating in cooperative and competitive events.

**Sound Decision Making:** Youth learn to make sound decisions when they make choices and can apply what is known in a productive way both individually and collectively. Decision-making is the process of selecting one course of action from several alternative actions. This involves assessing needs and interests, identifying resources, setting goals and priorities and accepting the risk of taking action. 4-H’ers use their knowledge, skills and values in practicing this life skill. It involves using what they know (or can learn) to get what they want. To improve decision-making skills, they need to know themselves, their values and their abilities. Values are opinions about what is “right” or “good” or “valuable.” Values reflect what they think is important in life. They are developed through experiences within the family, with friends, through church, school, and community organizations and with the society at large. Values give meaning to life by providing a basis for setting priorities—for deciding which goals or actions are more worthwhile and which ones are less important.

Examples of activities which strengthen and use decision-making skills include planning a fund-raiser or other special club event, deciding what 4-H project to undertake for the year, or deciding which animal to exhibit at the fair.

4-H grows confident, capable, and caring kids with the life skills to thrive in today’s world and succeed in their boldest dreams for tomorrow. Working in partnership with 110 universities, 4-H programs are research-backed and offer life-changing experiences to youth around the world.

All youth should have the opportunity to participate in the 4-H program. Contact a Twin Creeks Extension District office in Norton, Decatur or Sheridan counties or go to <https://ks.4honline.com> to enroll in a 4-H Club in your county. We are excited to kick off the 2015-16 4-H year in Twin Creeks District!

**Article Header**

**“4-H Teaches Life Skills”**

**“Chasing Clovers”**

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