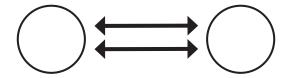
New Jersey 4-H Head + Heart + Hands + Health Leader Training Series



Communication and the 4-H Volunteer

Communication is a key element in the success of any organization. As a 4-H volunteer, it's important to understand that communication builds relationships. This means that your relationship with your 4-H members will be built on the communication which takes place among all of you as a group.

Communication: A Two-way Process



Communication is a two-way process. It involves a sender and a receiver, both sending and receiving messages. To communicate effectively, individuals involved in a communication exchange must be responsible speakers and listeners.

Communicating as a 4-H Leader

How often does a 4-H leader communicate? The following are some examples of times you'll need to use your communication skills.

Communicating with 4-H'ers/Parents

- Teaching your 4-H'ers a skill, helping with projects
- Reminding your 4-H'ers/parents of the next meeting date, supplies needed, etc.
- Informing 4-H'ers/parents of the next county-wide event
- Assisting 4-H'ers in preparing for the 4-H fair (filling out exhibit tags, etc.)
- Helping 4-H'ers and parents complete 4-H member registration forms
- Training club officers
- Recruiting parents to assist with your club

Communication with the County 4-H Office

- · Receiving training from the 4-H staff
- Reading 4-H newsletters, e-mails



Section V: Volunteers in 4-H

- Accessing available 4-H website
- Completing paperwork
- Requesting educational materials and information about the 4-H program
- Volunteering to assist with county events

Communicating with Other 4-H Volunteers

- Participating in 4-H Leaders' Association meetings
- · Serving on association committees
- Training a co-leader/teen leader
- Asking for/lending moral support
- · Sharing ideas informally
- Attending volunteer forums/conferences

Other Opportunities for Communication

- Informing local press of club activities
- Organizing a club fund raiser and/or soliciting donations from local businesses
- Serving on your county-wide 4-H advisory council or NJ State 4-H Association

Types of Communication

It's important to know that there are many ways to communicate. The two main types of communication are *verbal* and *non-verbal*.

Verbal communication entails one person speaking and the other listening.

Nonverbal communication comes in a variety of forms. It entails one person observing another person who is engaging in one of the activities listed below:

- Facial expressions (i.e., smile, frown, rolling the eyes)
- Gestures (i.e., handshake, nod, making a fist)
- Other forms of body language (i.e., turning away from someone, dozing off)
- Sounds that are not words (i.e., laughter, snort, groan)

Keep in mind when working with 4-H'ers that there are many ways to communicate. Be aware of facial expressions or other forms of nonverbal communication. Nonverbal communication often sends the strongest message and can cancel a verbal message. Listen by observing and you'll be able to build better 4-H club relationships.

4-H Leader Communication Tips

- 1. Listen! This means working to understand what the speaker is saying.
- 2. Maintain eye contact with children and adults—it lets them know they are communicating with you.
- 3. If you don't understand what your 4-H'er, parent, or 4-H staff member is saying, ask!
- 4. Be honest and straightforward—set a good example for your 4-H'ers.
- 5. Be aware of the nonverbal communication going on among your 4-H'ers.
- 6. When necessary, set aside an appropriate time and place for communication (conference with a parent, etc.)
- 7. Encourage your 4-H'ers to communicate. Ask them, "What questions do you have?" and let them do the talking as often as possible.
- 8. Respond to the requests made by the 4-H staff; that way, they know you're still out there and surviving!

Revised by Betty Jean Webersinn. Written by Rita Natale Saathoff.

References

Peer Plus II. 4-H Youth Programs, Cooperative Extension Service, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI. 1984.





The New Jersey Association of Extension 4-H Agents works to support the mission of the National Association of Extension 4-H Agents and provide professional development opportunities for 4-H staff.

For more information on New Jersey 4-H, please visit www.nj4h.rutgers.edu.

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