

## Views from VanDeWalle

Brandy VanDeWalle, Extension Educator in Fillmore/Clay Counties  
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### Resiliency Through 4-H

As I write this column, I am home working with my youngest daughter on a 4-H sewing project. I am humbled and reminded how 4-H teaches resiliency and perseverance. I was blessed with a mom who was very talented at sewing, while I had to think through a pattern multiple times. Meredith and I had to rip way more times than intended. To continue sewing, we had to walk away, take deep breaths, and return to the project when ready.

Resiliency and patience! These are important skills for anyone to remember – even adults! Whether it is a sewing, livestock, or robotics project, youth need to start at a level appropriate to their age and build as they continue in their 4-H career. For example, a child would likely need to start sewing a pin cushion or pillow before attempting to sew a fancy dress and the bucket calf project is a great way for youth to start out and build confidence to show a larger animal.

After working in 4-H for nearly 19 years and being a parent, I fully understand and appreciate how much patience and resilience my mom, dad, and grandma had with me. With county fairs approaching, I researched the science behind childhood resiliency.

I found research from Harvard University from the Center on the Developing Child that said “Science tells us that some children develop resilience, or the ability to overcome serious hardship, while others do not.” 4-H has always supported that the more caring adults in a youth’s life, the more successful they will be. Harvard’s research shows that:

- The single most common factor for children who develop resilience is at least one stable and committed relationship with a supportive parent, caregiver, or other adult.
- Children who do well in the face of serious hardship typically have a biological resistance to adversity and strong relationships with the important adults in their family and community.



- Research has identified a common set of factors that predispose children to positive outcomes in the face of significant adversity.
- Learning to cope with manageable threats is critical for the development of resilience.
- The capabilities that underlie resilience can be strengthened at any age.

In conclusion, one of the skills essential to youth success is the capability of resiliency and not giving up on a project. Unfortunately, it seems we have become such an “instantaneous” society that when youth don’t get instantaneous results, they tend to give up. As we approach this fair season, let’s appreciate the work youth do on their projects and the resiliency youth endured to overcome their obstacles.