

Views from VanDeWalle

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4-H Builds Friendships

As we approach this county fair season, it is important to remember how important it is to focus on the important on the life skills being taught. As adults we need to be role models to youth and help them have a positive experience. It's not the ribbon placing or the trophy that matters but rather the experience one has from participation in activities such as county fair.

When I ask 4-H members the question, "What do you like most about 4-H?" they often respond with "the friendships!" 4-H'ers have the unique opportunity to meet and interact with youth from all across the county, the state and even the country. 4-H brings together youth with similar interests and you never forget the people you meet through the program.

Friends are vital to school-age youth's healthy development. Friendships provide youth with more than just fun playmates. Friendships help them develop emotionally and morally. In interacting with friends, youth learn many social skills, such as how to communicate, cooperate, and solve problems. They practice controlling their emotions and responding to the emotions of others. They develop the ability to think through and negotiate different situations that arise in their relationships. Having friends even affects school performance. Youth tend to have better attitudes about school and learning when they have friends there.

Friendships help youth develop emotionally and morally, and help them to learn critical life skills such as social skills, communication, cooperation, problem solving, and many more. Part of being a good friend is learning how to deal with conflict. There are a number of strategies to teach youth to resolve problems they have with other youth.

Strategies for Conflict Resolution

- When angry, separate yourself from the situation and take time to cool off.
- Attack the problem, not the person. Start with a compliment.
- Communicate your feelings assertively, NOT aggressively. Express them without blaming.
- Focus on the issue, NOT your position about the issue.
- Accept and respect that individual opinions may differ. Don't try to force compliance; work to develop common agreement.
- Do not view the situation as a competition in which one person has to win and one has to lose. Work toward a solution that will enable both parties to have some of their needs met.
- Focus on areas of common interest and agreement, instead of areas of disagreement and opposition.
- NEVER jump to conclusions or make assumptions about what another person is feeling or thinking.
- Listen without interrupting. Ask for feedback, if needed, to assure a clear understanding of the issue.
- Remember, when only one person's needs are satisfied in a conflict, it is NOT resolved and will continue.
- Forget the past and stay in the present.
- Build "power with" NOT "power over" others.



- Thank the person for listening.

Find out more about this topic by visiting the Nebraska Extension child and youth development web site at <http://child.unl.edu/child-care-professionals> and click on Expanded Learning Opportunities. To request additional information or programs contact Leanne Manning, Extension Educator at leanne.manning@unl.edu or 402-821-2151.

Wishing you and yours a very Happy Independence Day!