



OVERVIEW OF EIGHT ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

Concept: Belonging

1. **Essential Element: A Positive Relationship with a Caring Adult**
A caring adult acts as an advisor, guide and mentor. The adult helps set boundaries and expectations for young people. The adult could be called supporter, friend, or advocate.
2. **Essential Element: An Inclusive Environment**
An inclusive environment is one that creates a sense of belonging, and encourages and supports its members with positive and specific feedback. Healthy groups celebrate the success of all members, taking pride in the collective efforts of all participants.
3. **Essential Element: A Safe Emotional and Physical Environment**
Youth should not fear physical or emotional harm while participating in a 4-H experience, whether from the learning environment itself or from adults, other participants or spectators.

Concept: Mastery

4. **Essential Element: Opportunity for Mastery**
Mastery is the building of knowledge, skills, and attitudes and the demonstration of the competent use of this knowledge and skill by a proficient practitioner. The level of mastery is dependent on the developmental ability of the individual or youth. The development of mastery is a process over time.

5. Essential Element: Engagement in Learning

An engaged youth is one who is mindful of the subject area, building relationships and connections in order to develop understanding. Through self-reflection, youth have the ability to self-correct and learn from experience. The engaged learner has a higher degree of self-motivation and an inexhaustible capacity for creativity.

Concept: Independence

6. **Essential Element: Opportunity to See Oneself as an Active Participant in the Future**
The ability to see oneself in the future is to have hope and optimism to shape life choices, which facilitates the transition into participating in the future.
7. **Essential Element: Opportunity for Self-Determination**
Believing that you have impact on life's events rather than passively submitting to the will and whims of others is self-determination. Youth must develop a sense of influence over their lives, exercising their potential to become self-directing, autonomous adults.

Concept: Generosity

8. **Essential Element: Opportunity to Value and Practice Service to Others**
Finding yourself begins with losing yourself in the service of others. Service is a way for members to gain exposure to the larger community and, indeed the world itself.