



DEVELOPMENTAL NEEDS OF YOUTH



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What are the developmental needs of youth?

- Positive youth development research emphasizes the importance of meeting the four basic human needs of Belonging, Mastery, Independence, and Generosity.
- When these needs are met, youth are prepared to be successful, contributing members of society.
- Iowa 4-H ensures every youth has the opportunity to participate in experiences that strengthen their sense of Belonging, Mastery, Independence, and Generosity.
- To ensure each need is met, the *Eight Essential Elements* are utilized to guide 4-H programming.



YOUTH NEED...

BELONGING

- To know they are cared about and feel connected to others in group settings.
- Opportunities to create trusting connections which can lead to feelings of acceptance, appreciation, and attachment.
- Connections to develop a sense of safety, social competence, and healthy boundaries in interpersonal relationships.

INDEPENDENCE

- To know they have influence and autonomy in decision-making.
- A sense of control and responsibility for their own actions.
- Leadership opportunities to develop self-reliance and confidence.

MASTERY

- To believe they are capable and successful in solving problems and meeting challenges.
- Experience in achieving goals aligned with their own interests.
- Opportunities to practice and demonstrate skills, followed by time to reflect and receive feedback.

GENEROSITY

- To feel their lives have meaning and purpose by connecting with their communities and learning to give back.
- Opportunities to develop empathy and sense of purpose.
- Experience addressing a need in their communities to enhance values such as altruism, equity, and social justice.

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WHAT ADULTS CAN DO



BELONGING

- Establish youth–adult partnerships where youth have an active voice in decision-making and problem-solving.
- Engage in positive interactions with youth.
- Work with youth to develop ground rules and expectations for activities.

MASTERY

- Offer different ways for youth to learn (e.g., audio, visual, physical, etc.).
- Provide youth opportunities to learn from and teach each other through mentorship.
- Give youth time to receive feedback, reflect, and celebrate successes.

INDEPENDENCE

- Ensure youth participate in leadership positions.
- Encourage youth to set measurable goals and track progress.
- Create an environment where youth can challenge themselves and try new things without fear of judgment.

GENEROSITY

- Encourage youth to identify community needs and develop a service-learning project.
- Establish partnerships in the community for youth to volunteer for service organizations.
- Provide opportunities for youth to learn about issues impacting their communities.

OUTCOMES WHEN YOUTH NEEDS ARE MET SUCCESSFULLY

- Youth and adults engage in positive and appropriate interactions.
- Youth take progressively more responsibility and complex roles in activities and projects.
- Leadership and ownership are balanced between youth and adults.
- Youth and adults experience mutual respect and commitment to each other’s well-being.

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