



The Essential Elements of Positive Youth Development are four key elements that work together to ensure that youth are able to grow and learn to better themselves for their futures. The four Essential Elements are: Belonging, Mastery, Independence, and Generosity. Each of these elements are a key part of the work of 4-H professionals across the world. Each element is outlined below with more information and examples of how they work.

Belonging

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.

An Inclusive Environment

An inclusive environment is one that creates a sense of belonging, encourages, and supports its members with positive and specific feedback.

A Safe Environment

Youth should not fear physical or emotional harm while participating in a 4-H experience whether from the learning environment itself, adults, other participants, or spectators.

Mastery

Opportunity for Mastery

Mastery is the building of knowledge, skills, and attitudes and then demonstrating the competent use of these knowledge and skills. The development of mastery is a process over time.

Engagement in Learning

An engaged youth is one who is mindful of the subject area, building relationships and connections in order to develop understanding. The engaged learner has a higher degree of self-motivation and an inexhaustible capacity to create.

Independence

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 to facilitate the transition into participating in the future.

Opportunity for Self-Determination

Youth must exercise a sense of influence over their lives, exercising their potential to become self-directing, autonomous adults.

Generosity

Opportunity to Value and Practice Service to Others

Finding one's self begins with losing yourself in the service of others. Service is a way for members to gain exposure to the larger community, indeed the world itself.

Using the four Essential Elements together, 4-H professionals and volunteers are able to help youth develop into adults who will have positive impacts on their club, community, country and world.