



UW-MADISON EXTENSION

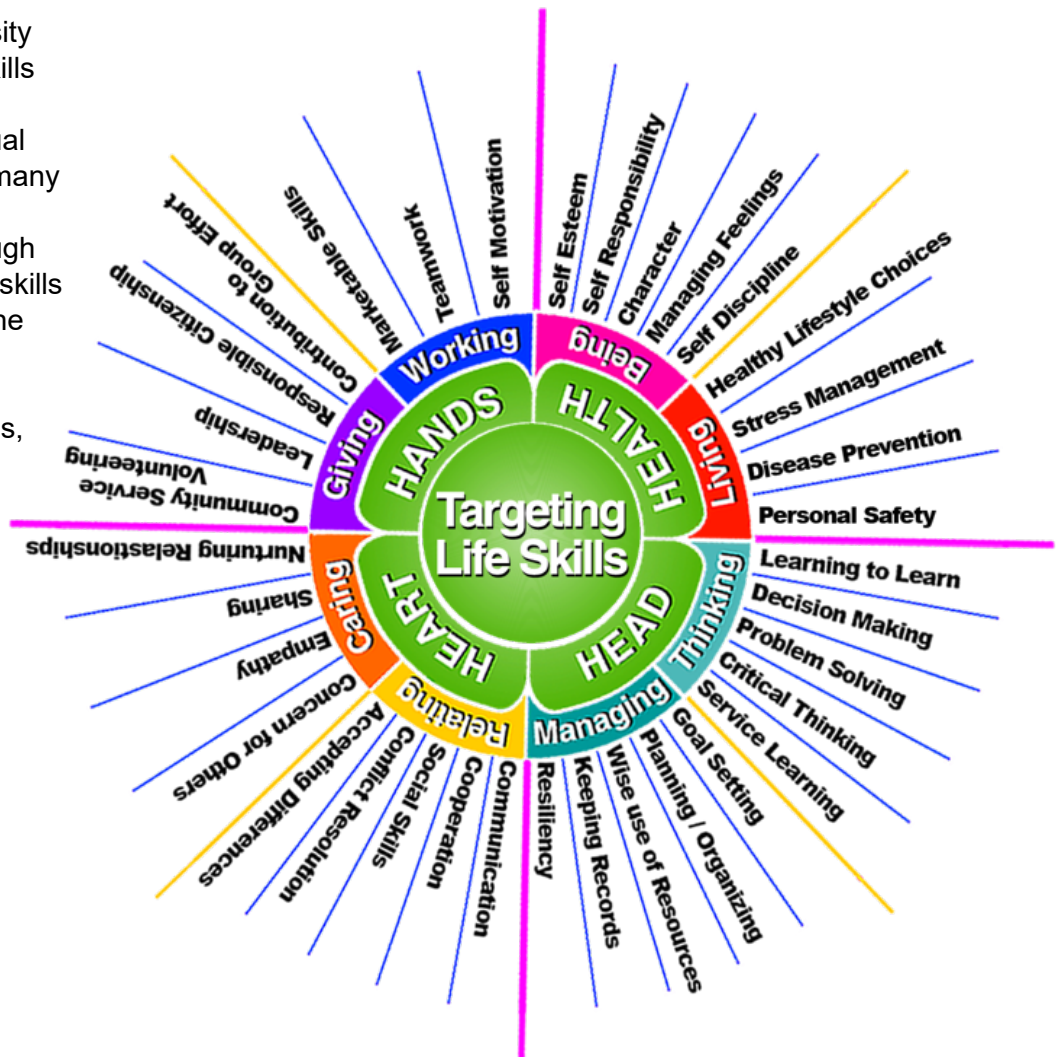
# Life Skills Resource

Updated August 2020

## What are life skills?

Life skills are tools people use to deal with daily situations, make important decisions, and enhance their quality of life. Youth gain life skills by doing activities that help them practice these life skills in order to use them later on in other activities. Gaining “concrete skills”, also known as regular skills, is a little different, as youth simply increase their ability to do one specific task that may not apply to other activities. For example, learning how to cut meat and vegetables is a concrete skill, but learning how to cut them in a way that creates the least amount of waste improves the life skill of “wise use of resources” which may be used in other, future situations. Another concrete skill might be learning how corn crops are planted and raised, and through that concrete skill, youth may grow the life skill of self-discipline as they work and care for the crop throughout the season.

Iowa State University created the Life Skills Model, based on research, as a visual way to show how many life skills can be strengthened through 4-H activities. The skills are organized by the four H’s of the 4-H Clover, which are Head, Heart, Hands, and Health.



Used with permission from Iowa State University Extension and Outreach

## Why are life skills important?

Strengthening life skills in youth creates a better chance that they will be successful and healthier later in life. Although concrete skills are important to build, life skills are able to be used in many parts of life and in many different situations that youth will encounter.

## How can you as a Volunteer use the Life Skills Model with youth?

Volunteers are encouraged to include opportunities for building life skills through all youth development activities. The list below gives a short look at how life skills can be brought into activities already happening across the state in youth programs, and gives examples for what the life skill could look like in different age groups. It is important for youth to do an activity, but also to reflect about the activity afterward, asking “What did I learn today while doing this activity?” and “How can I apply what I learned in this activity to other parts of my life?”

## Targeting Life Skills

### HEAD

Life Skill	Definition	Examples for Youth in Grades K-2	Examples for Youth in Grades 3-8	Examples for Youth in Grades 9+
<b>Resiliency</b>	<i>Being able to recover from setbacks</i>	Encourage trying a new activity to promote healthy risk taking	Learn about ways to cope with stresses of raising an animal	Reflect on one’s mistakes during a competition to improve in the future
<b>Keeping Records</b>	<i>To document important information in a neat, organized way.</i>	Have youth write about or draw a picture of summer camp at the end of each day	Encourage collection of information for a record book throughout the year	Hold a workshop on how to keep lists of activities and experiences to create resumés
<b>Wise Use of Resources</b>	<i>Protect materials and resources by setting priorities and practicing responsibility.</i>	Gather and use food scraps for composting	Learn how to cut meat and veggies to create the least amount of waste	Involve older youth in the club budget planning
<b>Planning/ Organizing</b>	<i>The act of arranging resources and ideas to create a successful product.</i>	Have youth recite steps they would use to do an activity	Instruct youth to sketch a painting with pencil before using paint	Provide leadership positions for older youth in a county planning committee for an important event
<b>Goal Setting</b>	<i>Deciding on a desired result and planning steps to get to desired result.</i>	Daily chore goals: brushing teeth, bedtime, etc.	Introduce SMART goals concept and use to write a goal	Set realistic goals for the future with college or careers

<b>Service Learning</b>	<i>Gaining skills and experience by engaging in service activities</i>	Sing holiday carols at local long-term care facilities	Plant new flowers barrels for the town	Volunteer time at local food pantries/non-profits
<b>Critical Thinking</b>	<i>Using strategies to analyze and evaluate, assisting in the decision of what to believe.</i>	Inspire creativity and have youth write or draw their own story based on a prompt	Conduct a science experiment and have youth go through the scientific method	Engage in conversations about social justice issues at the state youth conference
<b>Problem Solving</b>	<i>Finding solutions to complex or difficult issues in an efficient, effective way</i>	Learn to identify and accept emotions	Strategize and solve an issue with a Fair animal, such as training roadblocks	Go through summer camp scenarios and brainstorm solutions together
<b>Decision Making</b>	<i>Being able to come to a decision easily and quickly</i>	Make salsa and decide which 2-3 spices and herbs they would like to add to their salsa	Take part in club elections, choosing who one wants for each officer role	Practice setting priorities and how to exhibit those in everyday life
<b>Learning to Learn</b>	<i>Gain skills to increase effectiveness and interest in learning new things.</i>	Learn a new game or activity and how to follow its rules	Make rhymes or acronyms to help remember facts about your Fair animal for judging	Be a mentor for a younger 4-Her who is learning a new concrete skill

## HEART

Life Skill	Definition	Examples for Youth in Grades K-2	Examples for Youth in Grades 3-8	Examples for Youth in Grades 9+
<b>Communication</b>	<i>Exchanging thoughts and ideas between individuals</i>	Perform a song or dance a youth created or learned	Perform in a demonstration contest	Write a press release about how 4-H youth pledge “their health to better living”
<b>Cooperation</b>	<i>Use compromise and teamwork to reach an ultimate goal</i>	Set a timer to clean up lesson supplies to encourage teamwork	Help to clean up after a fundraiser, event, or activity	Be on a committee in a topic that is of interest to the youth
<b>Social Skills</b>	<i>Personal tools used to interact and communicate with each other</i>	Give opportunities for youth to talk before and after a meeting	Teach empathy by talking about situations and asking how youth might feel	Practice active listening strategies in preparation for a community event

<b>Conflict Resolution</b>	<i>Finding and applying creative, non-destructive ways to resolve differences between two or more persons.</i>	Encourage youth to identify conflict and learn how active listening is beneficial for resolution	Teach and practice active listening strategies.	Apply active listening strategies to help resolve conflicts in both school and home settings
<b>Accepting Differences</b>	<i>Understanding that everyone is unique and accepting that different views or appearances do not affect the value of anyone.</i>	Invite someone who doesn't normally get involved at recess to play a game of kickball	Learn that many people have different opinions on topics, and be able to respect those viewpoints	Use active listening to understand different beliefs and political views of other peers and adults in the community
<b>Concern for Others</b>	<i>Being able to engage with others to help resolve conflict or show kindness</i>	Make homemade cards for nursing home residents	Encourage youth to stand up for peers experiencing bullying	Help organize a fundraiser for members of the community who are currently facing struggles
<b>Empathy</b>	<i>Learning to respect and appreciate the lifestyles of others.</i>	Actively listen to grandparents talk about how they grew up and what struggles they had to face	Help a friend who is struggling in school by offering to help tutor them after school	Use active listening to put yourself in the shoes of a peer and understand why someone acted as they did
<b>Sharing</b>	<i>Divide, distribute, and receive something equally among others</i>	Let others use the markers and crayons that you brought to the poster decorating activity	Make brownies for a fundraiser to support others taking part in a youth travel experience	Present about an educational travel trip and help other youth apply for the same experience
<b>Nurturing Relationships</b>	<i>Using communication and listening skills to create new relationships and solidify old ones</i>	Help parents around the house with chores and cleaning so there's more time later for family	Set aside time to play with younger siblings who want to spend time more time with you	Be a camp counselor and create relationships with younger members

## HANDS

Life Skill	Definition	Examples for Youth in Grades K-2	Examples for Youth in Grades 3-8	Examples for Youth in Grades 9+
<b>Community Service and Volunteering</b>	<i>Spending time giving back to the community and those who live there</i>	Volunteer to make tie-blankets for a club fundraiser	Help out on weekends at the local food pantry	Volunteer to be a tutor for peers in school

<b>Leadership</b>	<i>Being able to motivate and support others to achieve a goal</i>	Volunteer to take the lead on a project at school or for your 4-H Club	Mentor another youth who is new to showing dairy on how to properly care for their animal	Use a leadership role in the 4-H club to serve as a positive role model for younger youth
<b>Responsible Citizenship</b>	<i>Knowing or learning about the role in communities, country, and world; active in making the world a better place</i>	Ask important questions that you are interested in even if you might think they don't fit or are out of place	Engage with people who come from different backgrounds to understand others' perspectives	Identify problems in a youth's community and bring these issues up at a 4-H meeting to think about ways 4-H can help
<b>Contributions to Group Effort</b>	<i>Being a responsible team player and contributing equal amounts to group efforts</i>	Help with clean-up after an activity	Volunteer at the 4-H archery club's annual brat fry fundraiser to raise money so 4-H youth can participate	Hang posters around school, informing peers about the benefits of 4-H
<b>Marketable Skills</b>	<i>Having abilities and confidence that are desirable to future employers and that help youth to maintain a job.</i>	Start thinking about what their interests are and how to continue to grow them in the future	Build up skills and practices that can be put on future resumés for jobs and opportunities	Have youth create and prepare a one-minute elevator speech on something they care about
<b>Teamwork</b>	<i>Collaborative group effort to achieve a common goal or complete a task together</i>	Play a game on a team with other youth, cheering each other on	Work together with peers to make a gardening bed for a local food pantry	Use leadership skills to organize a volunteer group for your club
<b>Self-motivation</b>	<i>Initiative to undertake or continue a task or activity without another's prompting or supervision.</i>	Find an activity of interest and practice it without being told to	Finish homework right after school every day to stay on top of grades.	Create a calendar or journal to help them better remember future plans and expectations of themselves

## HEALTH

Life Skill	Definition	Examples for Youth in Grades K-2	Examples for Youth in Grades 3-8	Examples for Youth in Grades 9+
<b>Self-esteem</b>	<i>Having confidence in one's own abilities and worth</i>	Offer to share a speech first at a club meeting	Create a memory book with photos the youth took	Create positive relationships with 4-H peers to build strong and lasting friendships

<b>Self-responsibility</b>	<i>Being responsible, answerable, or accountable for something within one's power or control.</i>	Learn daily hygiene practices: brush their teeth and wash their face everyday	Provide daily care for animals to be shown at the county fair	Prepare an agenda each month for 4-H meetings
<b>Character</b>	<i>The attributes and mentality that a person is made of that are shown through words and actions</i>	Practice kindness and treat others with respect	Provide help to others, even when no one is watching	Express opinions and feelings respectfully, because they are wanted and valid
<b>Managing Feelings</b>	<i>Being able to experience emotions and be able to process them positively</i>	Talk to trusted adults or older youth about feelings	Learn about healthy ways to cope with strong emotions	Gain an understanding and acceptance of emotions that are experienced
<b>Self-discipline</b>	<i>The ability to do things you know you should do even when you do not want to</i>	Talk about rules and boundaries, what they mean, and why they're important	Teach youth about the consequences of their actions	Have youth write down a habit they want to change and encourage practicing it for a month
<b>Healthy Lifestyle Choices</b>	<i>Making positive and healthy choices every day that impact your body and those around you</i>	Complete fun activities outside to encourage youth to spend time outdoors	Learn about serving sizes and how to use measuring tools	Learn how to cook a healthy meal
<b>Stress Management</b>	<i>Understanding the causes of stress and learning how to cope with stress in a healthy way.</i>	Introduce and practice mindfulness exercises with youth	Help youth identify someone they trust to share about their emotions from stress	Learn healthy methods to cope with strong levels of stress from school and careers
<b>Disease Prevention</b>	<i>Learning best hygienic practices to avoid getting yourself and others around you sick</i>	Practice cleanliness by learning how to wash hands	Learn about the dangers of drugs, alcohol, and tobacco	Talk about healthy habits to build to prepare for a healthy post-high school experience
<b>Personal Safety</b>	<i>The ability to protect yourself and others from any ailment or issue</i>	Practice looking both ways, several times, before crossing a busy street	Talk about bullying and learn how to see and confront it	Motivate youth to teach about the importance of wearing a seatbelt and practicing safe driving