

Effective Discipline at 4-H Club Meetings

The word discipline comes from the word Disciple — a person who learns from a leader. The 4-H program brings youth together with adults to learn important life skills. The adult advisor should view discipline as a means of helping young people learn. Remember, that we cannot help young people grow and become good citizens, if we kick them out of our club or ban them from participation. Discipline is not punishing, controlling, or making members obedient.

A 4-H advisor that uses discipline effectively will:

- Look for good things in all 4-H members.
- Clearly communicate rules and expectations to their members.
- Serve as a positive role model at 4-H club meetings and in their daily lives.
- Be consistent, kind, and fair to all members.
- Teach young people how to live and work with others; how to develop self-control; and assist 4-H'ers in becoming productive citizens.

It is important that you have a clear understanding of the goals and objectives of the 4-H program and be able to share your vision with your club. If you are leading a club with a set of values different from those of your members and their parents, then you are bound to deal with conflicts. Clear communication of 4-H values, expectations, and rules is critical to gaining cooperation from members.

Consider the thoughts of the unknown author as it relates to having a positive philosophy towards the development of youth and communicating your expectations to members and parents.

This I Believe...It's not only what we know, but what we believe, that determines what we do.

- The 4-H members are more important than the 4-H project.
- 4-H'ers should be their best exhibit.
- No 4-H award is worth sacrificing the reputation of the 4-H member or volunteer.
- Competition is only one aspect of 4-H and should not be given greater emphasis than other fundamentals.
- 4-H is not trying to replace the home, the church, or the school - - only supplement them.
- Learn how to do the project is more important than the project.
- Blue ribbon members with red ribbon pigs are a more desirable outcome than the opposite.
- Learn by Doing is fundamental in any sound educational program and characteristic of the 4-H program.
- Generally, there is more than one good way of doing something.
- Recognize and praise the achievements and accomplishment of every 4-H member.
- Our job is to teach 4-H members how to think, not what to think. (*Author Unknown*)

Over 20,000 educators identified the basic principals for effective discipline with students in their classrooms. Their answers reflect the thoughts of most modern authors of books and magazine articles on effective parenting. Think about ways that you can adopt these principals as a club advisor.

Stand Firm

Young people want someone to be in charge and to establish boundaries, structure, and to know that someone is looking out for their best interest. As an advisor, you empower young people to make club decisions, but you remain in charge and set limits. Communicate your expectations in writing and verbally share them often. Discuss the positive behaviors that are desired, don't lecture about what they shouldn't do.

Be Fair and Impartial

Young people know when they are not getting a fair deal. If they understand the rules, they are more likely to follow them. Explain why rules exist. Identify the consequences if rules are broken. Remember that we use discipline to teach and not to punish.

Be Consistent with Words and Actions

Consistency means that the rules apply to all members. Avoid making threats of taking action unless you plan to deliver - - otherwise the 4-H'er will ignore you or test you. Members will be quick to observe inconsistency when and for whom the rules apply. Consistently enforce the rules to all members, including the members that you especially like and the few that you may be growing impatient.

Tools of the Trade

4-H is a place that young people come to have fun, to do things, and to be with friends. This creates a challenge for the 4-H club advisor who has the responsibility to fulfill their agenda and maintain some system of order. As an advisor, you have probably had the experience of creating excitement through an activity only to find a few kids who take things a step too far and pandemonium broke out. The fun of few may disrupt the opportunity for others. You may even find yourself embarrassed by the actions of rudeness of your members. These are the challenges that parents and advisors face at meetings and 4-H events. Do not get depressed or disillusioned, there are some things that you can do to manage their excitement and energy.

Provide Positive Guidance

Immediately address unacceptable behaviors and be consistent and firm. Point out to members what behaviors you want to observe versus the undesirable. Focus on the positive to avoid nagging to reach a positive outcome. Young people often will follow rules when they understand the reason they exist.

POSITIVE GUIDANCE	NEGATIVE STATEMENT
Please walk while in the house. Someone may get hurt or something may get broken.	Stop running in the house.
An expectation for members of this club is that you attend as many meetings as possible and if you are unable to attend that you call in advance and let us know that you won't be at the meeting. This will help us for planning of refreshments and activities.	Three absences and you are kicked out of the club!
Please listen to the speaker. If we are all quiet, we can learn something interesting.	Shhh. Be Quiet! Shut Up.
An important part of being a 4-H member is learning to be responsible. Please feed, water and clean the stall of your animal by 9 AM each morning.	If you don't feed your animal and clean the stall you won't get your fair premium.

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