

HONESTY, ETHICS, MORALITY

Interpersonal Characteristics Domain

The ability to be respectful, make good decisions in life, act ethically in their actions and words, and exhibit honesty are traits we strive to grow in 4-H youth. We look to our volunteers as good character models to build these positive character traits.

Honesty is truthfulness. You can tell the truth and display integrity in your words and actions.

Ethics are the moral principles that drive your behavior. At their core, ethics are the guidelines that define your sense of honesty. The importance you place on particular principles is your values.

Morality is the system of values you use to determine right from wrong, good behavior from bad behavior, and ethical or unethical actions.

Volunteers of good moral standing, who display ethical behavior and are honest in their activities, are essential to developing positive environments for youth development.

Whether in the classroom or an afterschool non-traditional educational environment, educators who model good disposition and solid moral character impact the youth they serve. Osguthorpe¹ suggests three primary reasons for having educators with a good personality and moral character, including:

1. Youth to “pick up” character traits from the adults with whom they associate,
2. Educators convey good disposition and moral character and
3. Educators to teach morality directly to youth.

Volunteers who exhibit honesty, ethics, and morality while working directly with youth and in the community are vital to keeping youth actively engaged in their clubs and community service.

In a 2020 study looking at why youth remain in 4-H, a sense of belonging by youth was highly correlated with retention in programs². Belonging is considered a key to positive youth development and is an element of the developmental context of the 4-H Thriving Model of Positive Youth Development³. Creating a sense of belonging for youth is credited to:

- Providing a safe environment
- Creating an inclusive environment
- Providing opportunity for a positive relationship with a caring adult

When a volunteer models good ethics, morals, and honesty, 4-H youth will experience these attributes of the essential element of belonging, creating an environment conducive to learning and growing skills that will make 4-H youth successful in their lives.

References

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