

PATIENCE

Interpersonal Characteristics Domain

“Patience and perseverance have a magical effect before which difficulties disappear and obstacles vanish.” - John Quincy Adams

Whether working with a 4-H youth on a project or simply waiting in line at the Department of Motor Vehicles, patience is an attribute of our personalities that defines how we relate to those around us. Defined by Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary as the ability to “bear pains and trials calmly or without complaint,” a patient 4-H volunteer who models the strength of handling opposition, adversity, and difficulties with 4-H youth will provide life skills that will last a lifetime with the youth they serve.

As demonstrated through a volunteer leader’s ability to cope with mundane activities or frustrating circumstances, patience has positively correlated with a sense of well-being, managing, and thriving¹. This research focused on the impact of patience on personal growth, Schnitker¹ found that patient people reported higher goal achievement satisfaction, could cope with challenging goals and obstacles better, and could meet their goals more proficiently with time. These are lessons that, as 4-H volunteers, you focus on through project work. Practicing patience can create a welcoming and safe environment for youth.

When volunteers model positive character, including patience, the youth in their programs have a heightened sense of belonging, as they feel respected by the 4-H volunteer. It is this interaction with caring adults that encourages participation in youth programs².

Work conducted in 2011 with 4-H volunteers in Pennsylvania indicates a significant relationship between volunteer character and the life skills that youth learn through their involvement in 4-H³. The volunteers who made youth feel welcome and essential in activities were likelier to have youth who could build relationships, set goals, and communicate with others.

It is through the building of positive relationships with our youth that volunteers can have the most significant impact on their lives. By providing a safe and welcoming environment, youth feel important and are more likely to participate and gain the life skills critical to 4-H programs. By practicing patience, you, as volunteers, can create inclusive and welcoming 4-H experiences. Always remember the words of Arnold H. Glasgow, “The key to everything is patience. You get the chicken by hatching the egg, not smashing it.”

References

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