Beyond Ready

4-H Practice Tip Sheets

ENCOURAGING A GROWTH MINDSET

4-H Youth are Ready for Life

The Beyond Ready Framework outlines six personal attributes that help a young person be ready for life. One of those attributes is a growth mindset. Imagine a young person who doesn't succeed at something that is important to them. Maybe it is successfully coding a project on the computer, or teaching their horse to stand perfectly for showmanship, or any of the many other things that a young person works to accomplish in 4-H. Reality is that there are lots of times in life where we don't succeed at something right away, and these moments are perfect for helping youth develop a growth mindset.

Many skills and abilities can be developed over time through effort, practice, and persistence. When young people understand that learning is a process, they are more likely to keep trying, even when something feels difficult at first. One simple way to support this way of thinking is to introduce the idea of **"not yet."** Encourage youth to use it in sentences such as, ***"I haven't figured out how to code my computer — not yet!"*** This small shift in language helps youth see challenges as temporary and solvable, rather than as signs that they cannot succeed.

When youth adopt this approach, they begin to believe that improvement is possible and that effort matters. This way of thinking helps them face challenges with confidence and a willingness to learn. The opposite approach can hold youth back. When young people believe their abilities are set and cannot change, they may avoid challenges or give up quickly when things get hard. Over time, this can limit their growth and confidence.

4-H can help youth develop this positive approach by focusing feedback on effort, persistence, and the strategies youth use, rather than on natural talent alone. Encourage youth to see mistakes and setbacks as part of the learning process — opportunities to reflect, adjust, and try again. When youth learn to approach challenges with curiosity and determination, they build skills that support learning, problem-solving, and resilience in school, work, and everyday life.



When working with 4-H youth:

- Look for opportunities to share the "not yet" phrase with youth who are challenged by something they are trying to accomplish.
- Teach youth that their abilities are not fixed but can get better with effort. Sometimes that effort means hard work, but that doesn't mean it is impossible to do.
- Refrain from statements that can inadvertently promote a fixed mindset, such as "you are really good at that." Instead, focus on statements that encourage effort, such as "I see how hard you are working on that."
- Check in with your own mindset to be sure you are looking through a growth mindset lens when working with youth.
- Be aware of statements that imply something is too difficult, such as "I know you're disappointed, but coding a computer is really hard." While your intention may be to provide support, such statements can lower motivation and confidence in youth.

TRY IT OUT!

"Not Yet" Statements:

Invite youth to rewrite common "I can't" statements using the phrase "not yet." For example, "I can't speak in front of the group" becomes "I can't speak in front of the group—not yet." Discuss how this small language change shifts how we think about challenges.

Effort Shout-Outs:

During or after an activity, ask youth to recognize a peer for effort, persistence, or trying a new strategy. This reinforces the idea that how we work matters just as much as the final result.

Mistake of the Day:

Model that mistakes are part of learning by having leaders or youth share a mistake they made and what they learned from it. Emphasize problem-solving and adjustment rather than perfection.

Challenge Choice:

Offer youth a choice between an "easy," "medium," and "stretch" version of an activity. Encourage them to try the stretch option and reflect afterward on what they learned from the challenge.

Strategy Swap:

After completing a task, have youth share what strategies worked for them and what they would try differently next time. This helps youth see learning as an ongoing process and highlights multiple paths to success.

Try, Reflect, Try Again:

Build in time for youth to attempt a task, reflect on what worked and what didn't, and then try again using new ideas. This reinforces learning through experience and persistence.

Connection to Beyond Ready

ENCOURAGING A GROWTH MINDSET

Encouraging a growth mindset helps youth develop the confidence and habits they need to navigate learning, work, and everyday challenges. When young people believe they can improve through effort and practice, they are more willing to try new things, take on challenges, and keep going when tasks are difficult. This mindset supports problem-solving, goal setting, and persistence — all skills that help youth adapt as expectations change and new demands arise in school, careers, and life. A growth mindset also helps youth respond to setbacks in healthy and productive ways. Rather than seeing mistakes as failures, youth learn to view them as opportunities to learn and adjust. This builds resilience, curiosity, and a willingness to learn from others, all qualities that are valuable in the workplace.

NATIONAL 4-H COUNCIL

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