

Radio/Column 6.15.2020

Communication Skills

Communication skills are more important today than ever! Many of the challenges in our world could be minimized if we just stopped to listen, checked our attitudes, and shared our thoughts in a respectful and fair manner.

Each of us has a different level and style of communication. As someone who earned a journalism degree, communicating both verbally and in writing in an impactful way is important to me. My youngest child thinks quickly on her feet and is extremely articulate. Our oldest is much more contemplative and has had to work much harder at communicating his thoughts effectively.

4-H teaches communication skills starting with Show & Tell and Project Talks as well as talking to a consultative judge at many events. As the 4-H member grows and develops, their opportunities for practicing good communication skills also expand to include illustrated talks, extemporaneous speaking, and leadership opportunities.

Communications is both a 4-H project area and a part of every project! Learning to present to others, looking someone in the eye while speaking, practicing active listening, organizing your thoughts, and knowing when and how to address tough topics are all life skills that impact a person's education, job opportunities, and family dynamics.

This year has challenged our 4-H skills of communication! We have moved club meetings to an online format and have much less opportunity to interact. We think of the presentations that happen at 4-H Club Days as an obvious practice of communication skills. Events such as regional camps, day camps, club meetings, Discovery Days, and 4-H camp also incredible times for 4-H members to meet new people and test their communication skills. All of these events had to be canceled or held in a different format that definitely challenged communication skills!

As youth prepare for the county fair, they are working hard on communication skills. Exhibits such as Woodworking, Photography, and Foods are all being held in a virtual format so youth will be working on the video side of communication skills.

How will you improve your communication skills this week?

Keep learning. Keep showing grace and kindness.

Michelle Beran is the 4-H Youth Development Agent in the Cottonwood Extension District. For more information on this article or other 4-H Youth Development resources, email Michelle at mberan@ksu.edu or call 620-793-1910.

Kansas State University is committed to making its services, activities and programs accessible to all participants. If you have special requirements due to a physical, vision, or hearing disability.