

## Spring Forward!

Sunday was the beginning of Daylight Savings time for this year and I help myself remember that by the phrase “Spring Forward”. Spring reminds me of fresh starts and growth. I have been doing some work recently for professional and personal growth and have used a graphic from Mindset Therapy of The Comfort Zone and how that translates to learning and growth.

In the graphic, the Comfort Zone is where we feel safe and in control. As we stretch our boundaries, we enter a Fear Zone and can have a lack of self-confidence and really take other’s criticism to heart. As we continue to push ourselves, we enter the Learning Zone where we can acquire new skills, deal with challenges and problems, and actually extend our comfort zone. The final stage is the Growth Zone where we find purpose, set new goals, and conquer our objectives.

This past year has pushed me out of my own Comfort Zone – learning new names, faces, and processes; learning new curriculum to teach, especially STEM-related, and new tools and techniques.

What does all of this have to do with 4-H Youth Development? I’m so glad you asked!

Youth need learning opportunities that allow them to explore job and career ideas, new skills and interests, and to challenge their thought processes. We want to help them move out of their comfort zone, navigate the fear zone, and successfully leap into learning and growth.

Project work allows a youth to start with the basics of their project whether that is making a no-bake cookie or assembling a rocket from a kit. As their skills and confidence grow, they take on more complicated tasks to have a deeper understanding of their project area such as developing their own nutrition and breeding program for a livestock project. My favorite part of this process is when they find their purpose to share and teach others and explore career options related to that project!

During the fair, many 4-H projects are on display but the community only sees a small portion of the learning and growth that has happened during the year. You may see a kid walking around with a steer on a halter or a piece of art. What you don't see is the many hours of work, trial and error, and learning that have happened to get them there. I will continue to challenge parents and club leaders just as much as our 4-H members to think of new ways to approach their projects and I'll continue to ask "What did you learn?"

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