

The Learning Curve

A learning curve is defined as the rate of a person's progress in gaining experience or new skills. 4-H is all about Experiential Learning or Learning by Doing. An important aspect of a learning curve or experiential learning is to Do, Reflect, and Apply.

These two pieces of learning are intertwined. Do, Reflect, and Apply are parts of a learning curve as we are introduced to new information and try it for the first time – the DO; we should evaluate how successful or not that first attempt was – the Reflect; and then make adjustments for another attempt – the Apply! In all stages of this process, we are learning. Learning about ourselves; learning about the circumstances related to a new skill; learning about a new skill or experience.

The last few weeks have thrown a pretty steep learning curve at all of us. Educators learned how to connect with their students in new ways. Students learned how to connect with teachers and classmates in new ways. Businesses learned how to adjust their plans for new ways to be engaged with their communities and customers. Parents learned new ways to juggle work, school, families, and worry in new ways.

Too often learning is hard and pushes us out of our comfort zones. Learning can also open our hearts and minds to whole new ways of doing things!

I have learned more about Zoom, Flip Grid, and online platforms for sharing documents and information than I ever imagined. I have stepped back to evaluate how I engage 4-H members in their project work, their clubs, their communities. It is hard and it challenges my way of thinking and doing!

I have learned that I miss people. I'm probably one of the few who looks forward to a Zoom meeting – I miss the interaction and cues that email and text messaging just don't provide. A group of my college friends met up via video conferencing last week; laughing and checking in with them was truly good for my soul.

I have learned that eight cups of coffee is enough!

I have learned how important it is to show grace and kindness – to others who are struggling to keep up in this unsettled time; to those who have different opinions than mine; to myself because sometimes learning means failing.

I talk to 4-H members about life lessons and the importance of learning even when we aren't as successful as we'd like to be or we are overwhelmed by all that needs to be done. I'm right there with you! My days feel a little overwhelmed also but working together, reaching out to others, and applying the learning lessons will help us all.

We'll be different after this period of isolation and worry. Hopefully, our learning curve will have honed skills of creativity, of connectedness, of resilience. It isn't easy; sometimes it's downright hard but **that** is when the best learning happens.

Keep learning, keep showing grace and kindness.

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