



## Fostering Developmental Relationships

Developmental relationships between youth and adults are an important aspect of the 4-H program. Developmental relationships begin by creating a secure attachment between the 4-H member and adult volunteer, reflected in mutual warmth, respect and trust. Developmental relationships also increase in complexity over time. As youth develop, their needs within the relationship will likewise change to reflect their increasing maturity and abilities. As such, healthy developmental relationships shift power over time. Developmental relationships with younger youth are typically highly adult driven and determined. Youth-adult relationships across the adolescent years, however, reflect the young person's increasing competence, personal autonomy, decision making, and identity formation. As youth grow, an effective 4-H program reflects these developmental changes through developmentally-appropriate activities and relationships with adults.

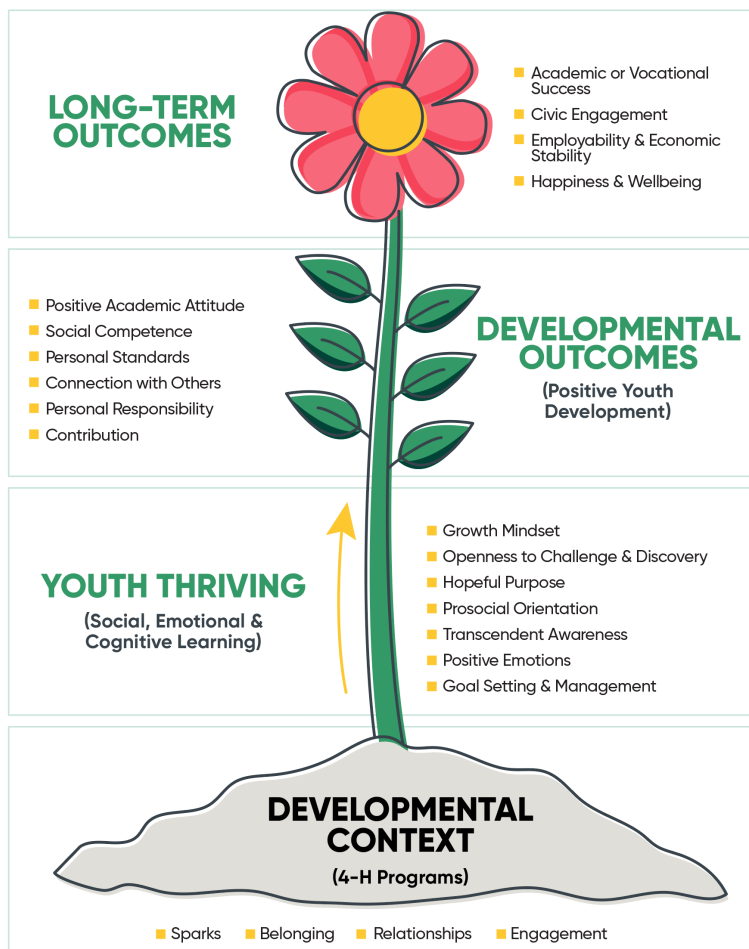
*Research shows that the positive relationship between a 4-H leader and member is an essential part of positive youth development.*

### Research has revealed five dimensions of developmental relationships:

1. **Expressing care**, through listening, warmth, and dependability;
2. **Challenging growth** by holding youth accountable, expecting them to do their best, and helping them reflect on failures;
3. **Providing support** by empowering and advocating for youth as well as helping them navigate situations and systems, and setting appropriate boundaries;
4. **Sharing power** through inclusion, respect, collaboration, and youth-adult partnerships;
5. **Expanding possibilities** by exposing youth to new ideas and opportunities and connecting them to others who can help them reach their goals

## 4-H is Positive Youth Development

4-H is based on a positive youth development (PYD) approach that recognizes all youth have interests, abilities, and strengths that can be enhanced by participation in 4-H programs. Research shows that participation in high quality 4-H programs increases thriving in youth, and thriving youth achieve important developmental outcomes, such as academic motivation and achievement.



Learn more about the 4-H Thriving Model at:  
<https://helping-youth-thrive.extension.org/>

## References

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