



Oklahoma 4-H Youth Development

Teen Action and Growth

Developing 4-H Teen Leaders for our club, community, country and world

Developing a Healthy Youth-Adult Partnerships

Dos and Don'ts for Working with Adults

- ✓ **Do** check your expectations before initiating a project or program—what do you expect from it?
- ✓ **Do** ask for information about the organization or project: How would you fit into the process? What would your responsibilities be?
- ✓ **Do** address “youthism”: What are your stereotypes about working with adults? What will you have to do to communicate effectively?
- ✓ **Do** develop your skills so that you feel comfortable participating. Open yourself to learning!
- ✓ **Do** make an effort to really listen.
- ✓ **Do** respect the views and experiences of others.
- × **Don't** hesitate to ask questions.
- × **Don't** hesitate to be creative, energetic, and enthusiastic.
- × **Don't** assume all adults will treat you like your parents treat you.
- × **Don't** over commit yourself!

Advice to Young People from Adults

Be on time.

Come prepared to participate – read any notes or minutes before meetings, note any questions about your role, learn more about the organization or project.

Focus on the purpose during meetings and activities.

Take your role and commitments seriously.

Listen a lot at first to get a sense of how the group/organization functions and explore ways that you can best contribute.

Don't expect to understand all that you hear—but make sure to ask questions!

Tips and Tricks for Working with Adults as Partners

Criticism from adults does not necessarily equate to scorn. Sometimes when adults offer criticism of a youth, they are just treating the youth the same way they would a colleague. Try to remember that adults are used to critiquing each other's ideas. Just because they don't agree with you, doesn't mean that they are dismissing you.

Adults may not be aware of how capable youth are. Maybe they don't know any youth your age, so they just don't know what to expect. You can enlighten them by showing them that you are capable of handling mature situations. You can tell them a hundred times that you are mature, but showing them is the best way to make your case.

Adults will feel responsible for the success or failure of the project, so it is sometimes hard for them to share authority over it. This is what makes it hard for them to share authority over it. They need your reassurance that you are willing to share in both the successes and the failures too.

Adults are just as uncertain as young people, they have just learned to disguise it more. “I have positive interactions with youth on a regular basis,” insisted one survey respondent. “Or maybe I delude myself.”

Taken from Loring Leifer and Michael McLarney, *Younger Voices, Stronger Choices*. 1997