

# Positive Youth Development



University of California

Agriculture and Natural Resources | 4-H Youth Development Program

## 4-H Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Initiative

### *Positive Youth Development Practices*

Positive youth development builds on young peoples' strengths and assets. PYD occurs from an intentional process that promotes positive outcomes for young people by providing opportunities, choices, caring relationships, and the support necessary for youth to fully participate in families and communities. Youth development occurs in families, peer groups, schools, neighborhoods and communities. Providing STEM learning experiences within a positive youth development framework is critical in helping youth learn, grow, and contribute to their communities.

**In 4-H STEM activities and projects, adults and teens facilitate learning experiences by mentoring and partnering with youth.** Learning experiences are led by trained, caring adult staff and volunteers acting as mentors, coaches, facilitators and co-learners who operate from a perspective that youth as partners and resources in their own development.

High-quality 4-H STEM programming doesn't only provide valuable benefits in SET content knowledge and process understanding, but also in the form of leadership development, life skills development, and civic development. Studies confirm that these skill areas can have numerous long-lasting positive benefits for youth and their communities. These findings support the high educational priority assigned to these goals for 4-H YD Program activities.

#### **Practices to support positive youth development**

- **Establishing a safe environment and building relationships**  
All youth need a caring, supportive relationship in their lives. Adult 4-H volunteers and members provide this by showing interest in, actively listening to, and fostering the gifts of 4-H youth.
- **Offer skill building activities for youth to develop mastery**  
4-H offers opportunities to take on new challenges and learn new skills. The presence of self-confidence and positive self-esteem are today considered to be two of the most important indicators of personal wellness and success in an individual.
- **Provide youth leadership opportunities.**  
Creating opportunities for youth to develop skills and confidence for leadership and self-discipline is a cornerstone of 4-H. 4-H helps young people recognize the connection between independence and responsibility.
- **Provide community involvement experiences.**  
4-H helps youth focus on developing concern for others and taking action to demonstrate that concern. Service forges bonds between youth and the community, and doing something valued by others raises feelings of self-worth and competence.