4 Essential Elements of Positive Youth Development & How They Are Presented

1. *Belonging*: Key Details of Belonging Include…

A Positive Relationship with a Caring Adult – this is present when:

- Volunteers give clear guidance & support while allowing youth to learn, grow, & lead.
- Youth take on new age-level appropriate challenges, knowing that adults are available to answer questions & guide them.

An Inclusive Environment – this is present when:

- Adults are flexible to changing how things are done to include each young person.
- Youth have opportunities to understand & share their own identity in a safe space.
- Adults model acceptance & humility.
- Youth feel safe expressing themselves & learning about others.

A Safe Environment – this is present when:

- Adults are aware of the risks & have taken steps to prevent or minimize those risks.
- Adults communicate expectations that will keep all youth participants safe.
- Youth & adults commit to building an environment of respect & inclusion.

2. *Mastery*: Key Details of Mastery Include…

Opportunity for Mastery – this is present when:

- Members grow in projects that capture their interest.
- Youth eventually assist or mentor others in the same interest area or skill.
- Youth demonstrate what they have learned & the skill they have developed.

Engagement in Learning – this is present when:

- Members of various ages, backgrounds, & abilities do community service projects.
- Members work together, plan activities, & enjoy participating in learning activities.
- Members grow & mature as they plan & lead organizational activities & events.
- Members choose to become leaders of the group.

3. *Independence*: Key Details of Independence Include…

Opportunity to See Oneself as an Active Participant in the Future – this is present when:

- Youth follow their interests to help choose possible hobbies & career paths.
- Members look forward to being leaders in the organization or group.
- Youth make plans for the coming year.
- The club shares excitement about a future activity or opportunity.

Opportunity for Self-Determination – this is present when:

- Youth choose to participate in (or not participate in) projects, activities, or hobbies.
- Youth consider for themselves, "What went well? What would I do differently the next time?"
- Youth take on leadership & partnership roles to choose & plan activities, team events, & projects.

4. *Generosity*: Key Details of Generosity Include…

Opportunity to Value and Practice Service to Others – this is present when:

- Youth joyfully serve others through community improvement projects.
- Youth show mutual support for others within the organization.
- Youth can identify community needs & design solutions to meet those needs.

For more information and stories about these 4 Elements, visit the UW-Madison Extension link here!