

**4-H Volunteer Leaders' Series**

# The 4-H Project Home Helper

Darlene Z. Baker, Ph.D.  
State Leader -  
4-H Youth Development

## Who Is a 4-H Project Home Helper?

Congratulations! You have just become a 4-H project home helper. You may be a father or mother, an older brother or sister, a relative, a friend, a neighbor or a teen leader. You have been invited because:

- It is more fun to do things together than alone.
- The 4-H member would like to spend time with you.
- You have skills and understanding to share.

Saying "yes" to being a project home helper will give you opportunities to:

- Spend time with the 4-H member. Planning to spend time together in a one-to-one learning relationship guarantees that you will get to know each other better.
- Use day-to-day activities as occasions for learning. A 4-H member who wants a home helper is asking for a friendly apprenticeship. Things you do each day can become natural learning experiences. You will spend time together learning, doing and sharing around common interests. Using these natural learning experiences can enrich your relationship, enhance the member's skills and contribute to the member's career awareness.

- Enjoy learning together in your own space. Your home can become a center for learning or your yard or barn, a laboratory for discovery. 4-H encourages doing things with the family; 4-H parents and others as home helpers are partners in the business of youth development.

The idea of getting kids and parents involved together is one of the earliest roots of 4-H. The earliest boys and girls clubs developed around:

- The home as a natural setting for learning,
- Naturally occurring daily activities and work, and
- The family and neighborhood as the natural human groupings.

## What Will the 4-H Project Member Do?

The 4-H member who invited you to be a helper wants to learn and to have fun. The member will:

- Ask questions, read the member's manual, search for information which is needed,
- Explore the project area to discover and learn,
- Try out some of the suggested activities,
- Practice new skills,
- Do the work on any item which is to be exhibited in competition,



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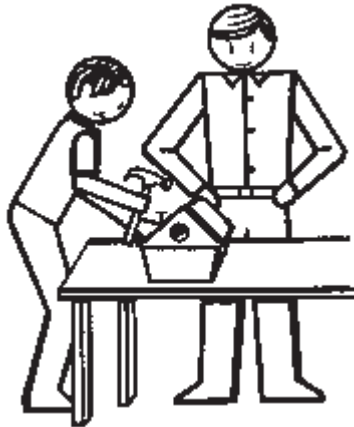
- Keep a record of project activities and learning,
- Enjoy the activities and products of the project work, and
- Enjoy the relationship with the project home helper.

## What Will the 4-H Project Home Helper Do?

When you say “yes” to being a 4-H project home helper, you will do so because you want the 4-H member to learn and to have fun. In order to help, you will:

- Talk with the member, share ideas and become better friends.
- Help the member to identify project-related interests.
- Help the member plan for project-related activities.
- Help the member choose learning experiences appropriate to abilities.
- Work together, side by side, at project activities.
- Encourage the member to do it. Step back. Watch! Provide support! Let the member do it alone if possible! Refrain from working on any article which is for competition.
- Be present; provide abundant encouragement.
- Help with problem solving. Why is the plan not working? Are there other ways to do it?
- Recognize all accomplishments. Let the member know when it is a good job!
- Encourage the member to broaden interests in the project area.

The home helper seeks to maintain a good relationship, to provide an environment of support and to encourage responsibility appropriate to the age of the member.



## The Art of Helping

To help is to provide support and guidance which enables another person to develop skills and achieve self-reliance. Helpership is a blend of human caring and shared experience. Caring is expressed through support. Shared experience provides the content for guidance.

## About Support

A helper supports by being a good listener. To be understood is one of the most encouraging experiences a person can have. Careful listening reflects that the helper is taking the member seriously. When the helper listens well and shares with the member what has been heard, the member gains confidence and courage. A helper listens by:

- Paying attention to the member,
- Hearing each idea,
- Hearing the feelings which accompany the idea, and
- Hearing the full meaning – checking with the member to be sure that what was heard was what the member intended to say.

A helper supports by providing encouragement. The helper believes in the member and helps the member to believe in himself or herself. This deep trust in the other person lays a foundation for mutual respect.

A helper supports by keeping decisions about the project in the hands of the member. The member is in charge of the learning. The member is responsible for the project. The member lives with the results of the decisions and the effort put into the project. The member learns by making the project decisions.

## About Guidance

A helper guides by sharing skills, experiences and attitudes in a way that the member can make use of them. The helper does this by:

- Being the kind of person he or she hopes the member will become.
- Doing project-related activities so that the member can watch and learn new skills – one step at a time – with simple, short explanations – with many opportunities for questions to be asked.

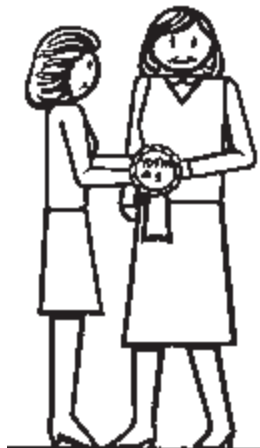
- Sharing bits of information related to project skills.
- Providing opportunities for the learner to try skills, to rehearse possible actions, to remember and think about new information – in a safe setting.
- Helping the learner understand and accept the results of the project efforts – including the satisfactions of success and the natural consequences of errors.
- Working with the learner to solve problems which develop:
  - Clearly stating the problem and its causes
  - Fixing the item (not the person!)
  - Thinking together of “other ways” to do it
  - Considering results expected of each “other way”
  - Choosing a course of action
  - Carrying out the action
  - Evaluating the action
- Helping the learner think about and say out loud (or write down) what has been learned.
- Helping the learner to have other opportunities for observation:
  - Field trips or 4-H events
  - Visits to the homes of other 4-H project members
  - Observation of a business or professional in the field
- Recognizing the strengths and successes of the member and acknowledging the qualities of excellence in the items produced.

## The Pay-Off

To be chosen as a helper is a privilege. Helpership provides an opportunity to share learning and to grow together. Each person benefits from a member-home helper approach to 4-H project learning.

The *member*:

- Develops project skills
- Develops life skills
- Gains confidence in self
- Has an older friend to become like



The *helper*:

- Has the satisfaction of helping
- Enjoys being wanted and needed
- Continues to develop and deepen personal skills

*Both*:

- Get to know each other better
- Have fun together
- Learn new and interesting things
- Grow together

## Do You Sit on Your Hands Enough?

Some 4-H leaders I know sit on their hands. They are helpful, capable, enthusiastic and love kids, but they sit on their hands. They tell me it's a habit that works very well.

*One of the most difficult things a 4-H leader must do is to allow other people to use and develop their abilities.* Whether it's a nine-year-old, a first-year leader, the first meeting for the club president or a “committee” planning the club booth, the 4-H leader is often tempted to “help.” Sometimes the leader should sit on his or her hands.

*We all know it's simpler and faster for the person who already knows how to do something to do it again.* Sitting on your hands may cause the muffins to be gently rounded instead of peaked, the meeting to be a little unorganized and the booth to get a red ribbon instead of a blue ribbon. *But what happens to the people in the process?* Johnny learns he must stop stirring sooner. The club president begins to learn to conduct a meeting. The members of the club booth committee have had the experience of planning and carrying out an idea as a group.

It is not easy to decide when help is needed and when help would stifle developing abilities in another person. Think about the last time you worked with youth. *Was there a time when you reached in to do something yourself, when a few directions to a member would have been enough?* Did you hurry to clean up because the members take too long? Didn't let Johnny try to do something he really wanted to do because you thought it was too difficult? *There are no “right” answers. But consider it. Do you sit on your hands enough?*

I hear – I forget  
 I see – I remember  
 I do – I understand

– **Karen Stamm**, Milwaukee County Youth Agent, Agricultural Extension Service, University of Minnesota

## You Can Help By: (Guidelines for the 4-H Project Home Helper)

- \_\_\_\_\_ Saying “yes” when a 4-H member invites you to be a project home helper, especially if the project area is of interest to you.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Talking with the member about the project book to be sure the information has been understood.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Encouraging the selection of project activities which are within the interest and abilities of the member to complete.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Encouraging the member to write goals for the project.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Helping obtain materials and tools needed for project work by conducting a home search or planning to shop together.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Demonstrating project activities so that the member can learn skills.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Being available if needed while the 4-H member works on the project item.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Giving bits of assistance if asked; DO NOT DO IT FOR THE MEMBER.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Being a problem solver.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Being sure that any item for competition is the work of the member.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Helping the member master the skills described in the project book.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Helping the member consider the quality of the work.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Helping the member feel good about the work accomplished.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Inviting the member to assist you in doing a similar activity.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Helping the 4-H member contact the 4-H project leader or other resource people for additional information or ideas.

The following resources were used in developing this fact sheet:

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Van Horn, James E., and John M. Williams, “Helping—The 5th H,” Pennsylvania State University, Cooperative Extension Service, University Park, PA.

Lewis, Robert B., “You Two,” Pennsylvania State University, Cooperative Extension Service, University Park, PA.

Carkhuff, Robert R., Richard Pierce and John Cameron, *The Art of Helping*, 1977, Human Resource Development Press, Amherst, MA 01002.

Brammer, Lawrence M., *The Helping Relationship, Process and Skills*, 1973, Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ.

Reprinted for use in Arkansas from materials developed by Faye Caskey, Agricultural Extension Service, University of Minnesota. Updated by Beverly Hines, former 4-H specialist, Cooperative Extension Service, University of Arkansas.

**DR. DARLENE Z. BAKER** is state leader - 4-H youth development, Cooperative Extension Service, University of Arkansas, Little Rock.

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