

## 4-H Volunteer Leaders' Series

# Handling Group Problems

Mike Klumpp  
4-H Youth  
Development  
Specialist

### Lack of Participation

When members do not participate in group activities, leaders need to determine why this is happening. This frequently occurs with younger members who may hesitate to participate in meetings and discussions.

#### Possible Causes

1. Members may not understand goals.
2. Members may feel insecure.
3. More aggressive members may not give others an opportunity to participate.
4. Members may not know how to participate.
5. Members may not be interested in program or activity.
6. Meeting time may not fit members' other responsibilities.

#### Suggested Solutions

1. Make sure members have a part in setting goals.
2. Make sure members have a part in planning programs and activities.
3. Try to let each individual serve in a role that will be a challenge and in which he/she can succeed.
4. Be sure to teach members how to perform the role or assignment if they don't know how.

5. Provide opportunity for younger, inexperienced members to serve on a committee where they can gain experience before giving them a big assignment.
6. Promote a friendly, helpful group spirit where no one laughs at or ridicules a person who "goofs."
7. Keep lines of communication open.
8. Develop a group goal of "everyone participates."
9. Change meeting time to suit needs of the group.

### Lack of Interest in Program

When members lack interest perhaps the programs are uninteresting. Another indication of lack of interest occurs when there is good attendance only at social functions. It's also possible that members joined for the wrong reason.

#### Possible Causes

1. Members do not identify their personal goals with those of the program.
2. Members may have had little part in planning the program.
3. Members may not find a satisfying role in carrying out the program.



\*18 U.S.C. 707

Visit our web site at:  
<http://www.uaex.edu>

## **Suggested Solutions**

1. Involve members in setting group goals.
2. Involve members in planning programs they want.
3. Involve members in carrying out the program. They need challenging responsibilities that they can carry out successfully.
4. Give members recognition for their contributions.
5. Refer to the fact sheet "4-H Club Program Planning."

## **Lack of Qualified Leaders**

Most 4-H clubs have some difficulty securing adult leaders. However, it's also a problem when leaders lack interest, are too demanding, fail to share enough responsibility or aren't qualified.

### **Possible Causes**

1. Parents and other people may not know that the club is carrying on a worthwhile program.
2. The community may not be aware of the needs of the group.
3. The group may make leaders feel unwanted.
4. Poor judgment may have been used in selecting leaders.
5. A full explanation of what is expected of the leader or what is expected of the parent may not have been given during the recruitment process.
6. Leaders may not know how to fulfill their responsibilities.
7. Leaders may be insecure and are seeking prestige.

### **Suggested Solutions**

1. Improve group public relations by carrying out programs, projects and activities that will be recognized as worthwhile in the community.
2. Discuss the roles of adult leaders and what is expected of them before contacting prospects.
3. Point out the importance of selecting mature, well-adjusted adults who understand the problems of young people.
4. Let the adults know what is expected of them and that the group pledges its cooperation and support.
5. Arrange leader training if leaders need specific training or orientation to carry out their responsibilities.

6. Encourage members to express their thanks and appreciation to the adult leader frequently.
7. Encourage members and officers to talk over problems with the adult leaders as soon as they develop, before they grow too big.
8. Have programs for parents and others to acquaint them with the accomplishments of the group. Make use of newspapers, radio, television or other media to publicize activities.
9. Refer to the fact sheet "Recruiting Volunteers for Your Club."

## **Membership**

Membership needs attention either when members are dropping out or when attracting new members is difficult.

### **Possible Causes**

1. Some people may not know about the group, what it does, who may belong or how to join.
2. Present members may be cliquish and fail to welcome prospective or new members.
3. The program may not be of interest to current or prospective members.
4. Some members may not have a way to get to meetings.

### **Suggested Solutions**

1. Strive to improve atmosphere – make it warmer, more friendly.
2. Make a list of prospective members and extend friendly, personal invitations.
3. Invite prospects to go to a meeting with you.
4. Make sure that present and prospective members understand the purposes of the group.
5. Involve members in planning a program attractive to them.
6. Give members responsibilities so they will have a role in the organization and feel important to the group.
7. Give members recognition for what they do.
8. Make members feel liked and wanted.
9. Publicize the program and activities.
10. Arrange car pools if transportation is a problem.

## Disorderly Meetings

Meetings are disrupted when members come late, don't attend regularly or are disorderly.

### Possible Causes

1. Group has fallen into bad habits.
2. Some members do not feel a part of the group.
3. Some members feel insecure and strive for attention.
4. The group has cliques.
5. Members may lack interest in the group or program.
6. Members may not know what is expected.

### Suggested Solutions

1. Discuss problems with members. What standards do they want? What kind of group do they want to be?
2. Encourage members to state their expectations.
3. Hold training school for members, leaders and officers if increased knowledge or skill is needed in such areas as conducting meetings and decision-making.
4. Change meeting time if it doesn't fit the group.
5. Involve group in planning a more interesting program if that seems to be the problem.
6. Perhaps, open with the most attractive parts of the program to encourage promptness. This might mean starting with some recreational activities as members arrive.
7. Refer to the fact sheet "Successful 4-H Meetings."

## Poor Group Relationships

When there is bickering and jealousy among members or the group has cliques, poor group relationships occur. This problem also arises when young people want to run the show and feel that

adult leaders are too dominating. Often members not knowing how to discuss these problems with leaders adds to the problem.

### Possible Causes

1. Individuals may not understand their own motivation or that of others.
2. Individuals have not learned to distinguish between differences in ideas and differences between personalities.
3. Individuals may feel insecure and, therefore, are excessively shy or aggressive.

### Suggested Solutions

1. Build self-confidence and feelings of worth by focusing on each member's assets and strengths.  
"I like the way you handled that."  
"I appreciate what you did."
2. Let the members know their worth. Recognize improvement and effort, not just accomplishment. Encourage cooperation rather than competition.  
"You're improving."  
"It looks as if you worked very hard on that."
3. Focus on the member's ability to manage his/her life and make decisions. Do not anticipate failure.  
"I trust you to become responsible and independent."
4. Focus on contributions and appreciation.  
"Your contribution counts."  
"We appreciate what you have done."
5. Accept members as they are. Don't make your approval and acceptance dependent on their behavior.
6. Work to develop mutual understanding and trust between members and leaders.

Adapted from Farmland Industries' Leadership Series, "Problems of Groups." Reprinted from materials developed by the University of Missouri - Columbia, 4-H Youth Program.

**MIKE KLUMPP** is 4-H youth development specialist, Cooperative Extension Service, University of Arkansas, Little Rock.

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director, Cooperative Extension Service, University of Arkansas. The Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service offers its programs to all eligible persons regardless of race, color, national origin, religion, gender, age, disability, marital or veteran status, or any other legally protected status, and is an Equal Opportunity Employer.