



Troubleshooting 4-H Club Problems

Problem: Lack of Participation – Members do not participate in group activities.	
Factors	Suggestions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members may not be interested in the activity or program. They may not understand the goals or the goals are inappropriate for members' age, needs or interests. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involve members in setting goals and in planning the program and activities. • Keep lines of communication open
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members may feel insecure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let younger, inexperienced members serve on a committee where they can gain experience before giving a big assignment. • Give each member responsibility for at least one important task. • Promote a friendly, helpful group spirit – no one laughs or ridicules a person who “goofs.”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More aggressive members may not give others a chance to participate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a group goal that “everyone participates.”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members may not know how to participate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach members how to perform the role or assignment if they don't know how.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting schedule may be in conflict with other activities/commitments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change meeting time to meet needs of group.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members may be forgetful. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribute club calendars to all members. • Use reminder phone calls (can be assigned to a member or parent).

Problem: Declining Membership – Members are dropping out; the group does not attract new members.	
Factors	Suggestions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present members may be cliquish and fail to welcome prospective or new members. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strive to improve atmosphere – make it warmer, more friendly. • Help cliquish members to recognize the result of their behavior and to work at making all members feel liked and wanted. • Give newer members responsibilities so they will have a role in the organization and feel important to the group. • Recognize members for what they do. • Make a list of prospective members and extend friendly, personal invitations. • Invite prospects to go to a meeting with you.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The program may not be of interest to current or prospective members or they may not know enough about it. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure present and prospective members understand the purposes of the group. • Publicize the program and activities.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some members or prospective members may not have a way to get to meetings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrange car pools.

Problem: Lack of Interest in the Educational Program – Members attend only the social functions.	
Factors	Suggestions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members do not identify their personal goals with those of the program. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involve members in setting group goals.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members may not have had a large enough role in planning the program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work in close partnership with members to plan the programs they want.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members may not find a satisfying role in carrying out the programs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that all members have challenging responsibilities that they can carry out successfully. • Recognize members for their contributions.

Problem: Disorderly Meetings – Meetings are disorganized or plagued by interruptions when members come late or change the topic of discussion.	
Factors	Suggestions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The group has fallen into bad habits. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss problems openly with members, but without placing blame. What standards do they want? • See the problems described above; any of these could cause disorderly meetings. • Review responsibilities of club officers and reinforce procedures.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members are coming late. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change the meeting time. • Open with the most attractive parts of the program. • Run recreational activities as members arrive.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members may not know what is expected. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage members to state their expectations.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meetings are not appropriately structured or are not well planned. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refer to “Tips for Conducting Club Meetings”.

Problem: Poor Group Relationships – There is bickering and jealousy among members; members want to run the show and feel that the adults dominate.	
Factors	Suggestions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals may not understand their own motivation or that of others. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss basic motivations – why people act as they do. • Work to develop mutual understanding and trust among members and between members and leaders; when a statement or behavior is inappropriate, ask, don’t assume you know the reason behind it.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals cannot distinguish between differences in ideas and differences in personalities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accept members as they are; don’t make your approval and acceptance dependent upon their behavior. • Help members to focus on what is being said, rather than who is saying it. • Focus on contribution and appreciation. “Your contribution counts.” “We appreciate what you have done.”

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals may feel insecure and therefore are excessively shy or aggressive. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.” • Let the members know their worth. Recognize improvement and effort, not just accomplishment. • Encourage cooperation rather than competition. • Focus on the member’s ability to manage his or her life and make decisions. Do not anticipate failure. “I trust you to become responsible and independent.”
---	---

Problem: Lack of Parental Support - Parents don’t attend meetings, parents don’t encourage their children, and/or parents don’t accept their own responsibilities.

Factors	Suggestions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents don’t know what 4-H is all about and/or don’t get timely information about club activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a club newsletter. • Hold parents meetings. • Involve the entire family in the program planning process.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents don’t have a role in the club meeting; they have not been asked to participate or have been left out of everything except the chores. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use “Parents Can Help In Our 4-H Program” to find ways to involve parents. • Use “4-H Parent Participation Survey” to discover what parents are willing to contribute and then ask them. • Create parent committees that meet at the same time the club meets. • Create job descriptions and ask directly for specific leadership roles.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents don’t understand the developmental needs of their children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk with parents about how specific 4-H projects and activities contribute to their children’s development. • Inform parents about ways they can contribute to their child’s success.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents have not been recognized or given credit for the work they’ve done. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thank parents when you see them; call them when they’ve done a bit extra. • Hold a parent’s appreciation and recognition night.

Reference: *Material adapted from Minnesota 4-H Club Management Guide and used with permission University of Minnesota Extension Center for 4-H and Community Youth Development and Iowa State University Extension.*

5/2009

The University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension is an equal opportunity educator and employer. University of New Hampshire, U.S Department of Agriculture and N.H. counties cooperating.