



# 4-H VOLUNTEER INFORMATION SERIES

Nebraska 4-H Youth Development

## Keeping Yourself Energized

At some point, being a 4-H volunteer is likely to be frustrating. Some volunteers experience “burnout.” Understanding how to keep yourself energized may help you overcome those burnout feelings.

The ENERGIZE! Exercise below will help you stay energized and enthusiastic about your role in 4-H and life.

**E- Establish goals based on your values.** For example, your goals may include a list of qualities you want your 4-H’ers to gain through 4-H. Your goal might be to develop a particular skill. It’s important you make **SMART goals**: **S**-specific, **M**-measurable, **A**-attainable, **R**-realistic and **T**-tangible. Establishing priorities is easier after you establish your goals. As a 4-H volunteer, you could stay busy every day of the week with 4-H related activities. Decide what’s important to you and your 4-H’ers. Do that first. Your priorities should reflect the goals you have set for yourself.

**N- Notice the positive things, even when small.** Appreciate the good things that are happening with your 4-H club. Don’t focus only on what’s lacking.

**E- Enjoy being around positive people.** Often, attitude is more important than aptitude in achieving success. People who have positive attitudes expect great things, work hard for those things and are likely to achieve them. Your positive attitude will be contagious to your 4-H’ers, parents and other volunteers.

**R- Relax and enjoy yourself.** Take time to reward yourself. Make opportunities to let others know how important they are to the success of your 4-H club. This can come in the form of social times during 4-H events or meetings. Socialization offers you and your 4-H club members the opportunity to get to know each other and build relationships.

**G-Give yourself time.** Allow yourself enough time to plan and prepare a 4-H club meeting or activity. Plan “time-outs” following an event or meeting, to help you regenerate. After an activity, think about all the positive things that were accomplished.

**I- *Involve others.*** Delegate to other 4-H volunteers, parents, or 4-H members, when appropriate. Trust and control are key elements in delegating tasks. Do you trust someone to do the job? Can you let go of the control and let the other person do the job their way? When you delegate, you might have to modify your expectations. A benefit: the companionship of other volunteers is a positive way to help people develop their own personal skills, as well as an opportunity for people to gain help, comfort and insight from their peers. You can begin to develop social support by attending informal get-togethers with other volunteers and staff. These gatherings are great for developing networks, idea sharing and problem solving. You can build your social support networks through regular contact, telephone calls, personal visits or e-mail messages.

**Z- *Zap out unrealistic expectations.*** The road to burnout is often paved with unrealistic expectations of ourselves and others. Accept the things you can not change or have no control over. While it is frustrating to see a problem that needs fixing, sometimes it is either inappropriate or simply impossible for you to help. Plan for the future, instead of worrying about the past.

**E- *Explore professional development opportunities.*** 4-H offers many learning opportunities.

**ENERGIZE!** And you will manage your time more efficiently, change unrealistic expectations, learn new ways of doing things and set yourself up for support. These things make 4-H worthwhile and life worth living.