



## Targeting Life Skills In 4-H<sup>i</sup>

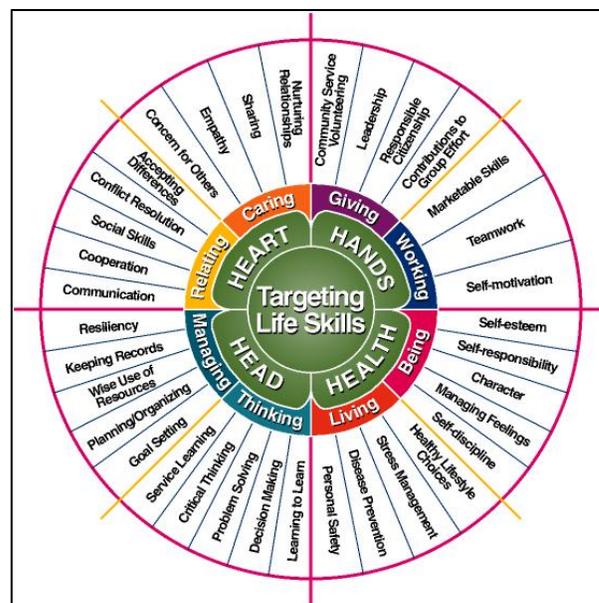
Marilyn N. Norman and Joy C. Jordan<sup>ii</sup>

### Life Skills

A skill is a learned ability. Life Skills are those competencies that assist people in functioning well in the environments in which they live. Youth development professionals are concerned with helping youth become competent in the life skills that will prepare them for transition to adulthood. Helping youth meet their basic needs and develop the competencies important to their immediate and future success is the role of the youth development professional. 4-H focuses on developing skills that are healthy and productive for both youth and their communities.

Positive youth development programs identify the skills within the five targeted competency areas that are appropriate to the age of the youth in the program and offer experiences to teach these skills. Because skills are best learned through practice, many experiences that teach or reinforce skills must be provided. Mastery of any skill requires opportunities to try, make mistakes, and try again.

Skills are learned in sequential steps related to the age and stage of development of the young person. Consequently, it is important to understand the developmental tasks and characteristics common to the ages of the youth with whom you work.



Youth development professionals, are expected to have and apply this knowledge.

### The 4-H Framework

4-H uses a framework based upon the 4-H Pledge to organize the delivery of experiences that support the growth and development of youth. 4-H refers to this framework as a “Targeting Life Skills Model” (Hendricks, 1998). This model addresses the skills within the five competency areas that youth development traditionally addresses. These are noted in the following description of the model.

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In this framework, two of the competencies have been combined in order to fit the four-category structure of the pledge. The important point, however, is that the skills needed for positive growth and development are addressed through 4-H delivery format. Because these skills are inter-related, the categories in which they are placed could vary with organizational structures.

**4-H Focus of Youth Competencies**

**HEAD: Knowledge, Reasoning and Creativity Competencies**

*Thinking:* using one’s mind to form ideas and make decisions; to imagine, to examine carefully in the mind, to consider.

*Managing:* using resources to accomplish a purpose.

**HEART: Personal/Social Competencies**

*Relating:* establishing a mutual or reciprocal connection between two people that is wholesome and meaningful to both.

*Caring:* showing understanding, kindness, concern and affection for others.

**HAND: Vocational/Citizenship Competencies**

*Giving:* providing, supplying, or causing to happen (social responsibility).

*Working:* accomplishing something or earning pay to support oneself through physical or mental effort.

**HEALTH: Health/Physical Competencies**

*Living:* Acting or behaving; the manner or style of daily life.

*Being:* living ones life; pursuing ones basic nature; involved in personal development.

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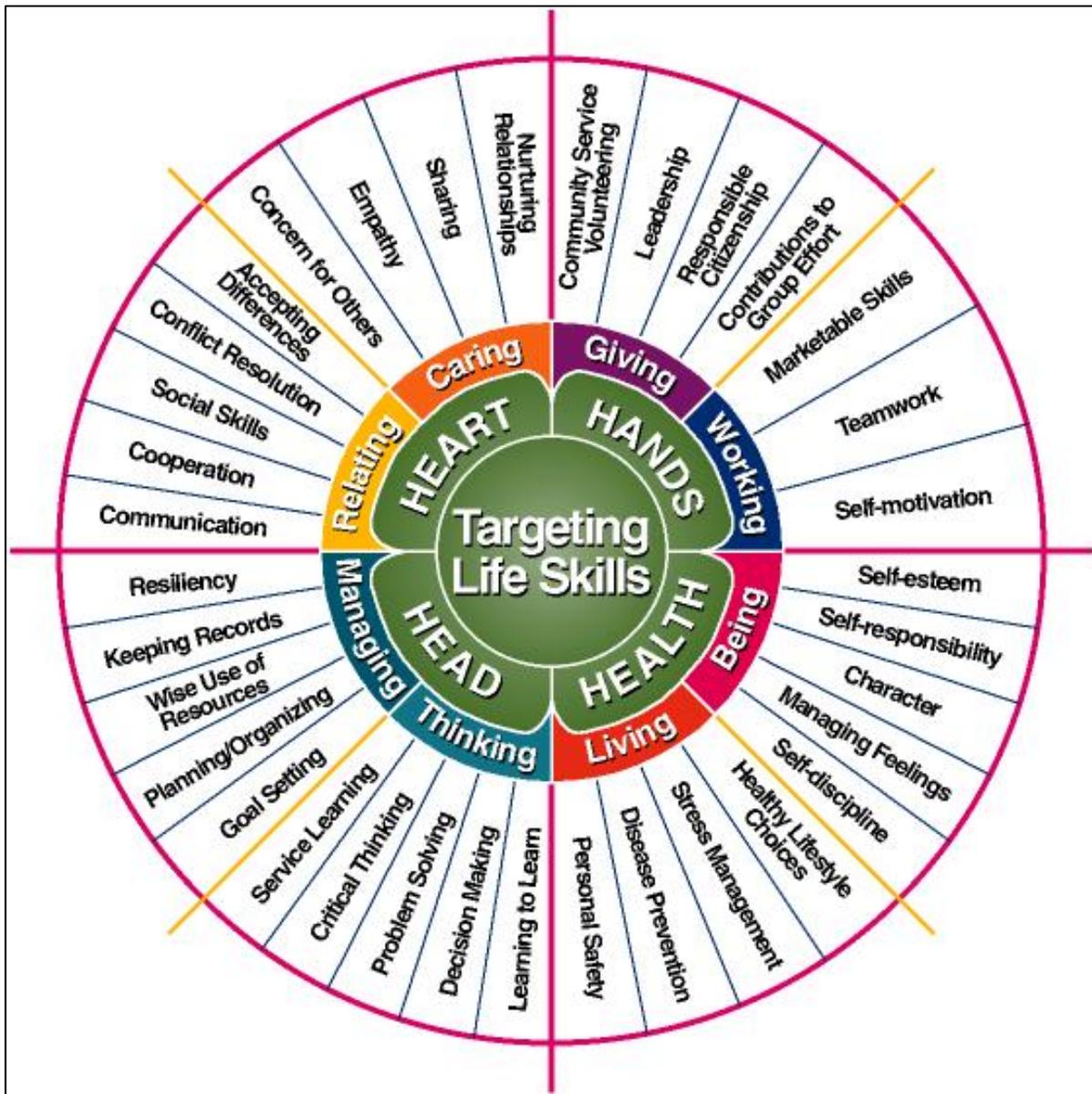
**Life Skills Developed Through 4-H**

The following chart lists the specific skills that lead to mastery in the four categories and eight subcategories of the 4-H Targeting Life Skills Model.

<p><b>HEAD</b> <i>Thinking</i> Learning to learn Decision-making Problem solving Critical thinking Service learning</p> <p><i>Managing</i> Goal setting Planning/organizing Wise use of resources Keeping Records Resiliency</p>	<p><b>HEART</b> <i>Relating</i> Communications Cooperation Social Skills Conflict Resolution Accepting Differences</p> <p><i>Caring</i> Concern for others Empathy Sharing Nurturing relationships</p>	<p><b>HANDS</b> <i>Giving</i> Community Service-volunteering Leadership Responsible Contribution to group</p> <p><i>Working</i> Marketable/useful skills Teamwork Self-motivation</p>	<p><b>HEALTH</b> <i>Living</i> Healthy life-style choices Stress Management Disease Prevention Personal Safety</p> <p><i>Being</i> Self Esteem Self responsibility Character Managing feelings Self Discipline</p>
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The following graphic represents a system for targeting skills that lead to mastery of targeted competencies. These are life skills and it is these skills that 4-H addresses. It is important to know this 4-H framework as well as the structure as a youth program uses to organize the competencies it targets. By understanding both structures, professionals, volunteers, and parents will know the expectations each organization has for staff and participants and will be able to partner more effectively.

# Targeting Life Skills Model for 4-H



Hendricks, P. (1998) *“Developing Youth Curriculum Using the Targeting Life Skills Model”*  
<http://www.extension.iastate.edu/4H/skls.eval.htm>

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