

Fast Facts: The 40 Developmental Assets

Research from the Search Institute identifies 40 Developmental Assets that have a powerful, positive impact on young people. Children who have high levels of these assets get involved in fewer risky behaviors and are much more likely to exhibit the positive values, such as leadership, good health, diversity and success in school. We all have the power to build assets in our young people.

The eight asset categories Search Institute has found are crucial in helping young people grow up healthy include:

Support: Young People need to be surrounded by people who love, care for, appreciate and accept them.

Empowerment: Young people need to feel valued and valuable. This happens when youth feel safe and respected.

Boundaries & Expectations: Young people need clear rules, consistent consequences for breaking rules and encouragement to do their best.

Constructive Use of Time: Young people need opportunities- outside of school- to learn and develop new skills and interests with other youth and adults.

Commitment to Learning: Young people need a sense of the lasting importance of learning and a belief in their own abilities.

Positive Values: Young people need to develop strong guiding values to help them make healthy life choices.

Social Competencies: Young people need to skills to interact effectively with others, to make difficult decisions and to cope with new situations.

Positive Identity: Young people need to believe in their own self-worth and to feel they have control over the things that happen to them.

What can I do?

The Search Institute offers practical tips for how to build each asset category in children. Here are some examples:

Building the Support Assets

- Have a regularly scheduled fun time. Engage your child in play and let him or her choose the activity.

Building the Empowerment Assets

- Allow children to make simple choices, like wearing a black shirt or a red shirt. Don't do things for them that they can do for themselves.
- Break new tasks and skills into small, manageable steps that children can master without becoming frustrated

Building the Boundaries & Expectations Assets

- Stay calm when children act out in highly emotional ways
- Model how you want children to act; don't just tell them what to do and what not to do

Building the Constructive Use of Time Assets

- Take children to museums, theaters, and other cultural events or activities to expose them to new things. Ask children what activities interest them.

Building the Commitment to Learning Assets

- Talk about what you see when you are with children and ask them to talk about what they see. Visit libraries, zoos, museums, any place that gives children new experiences.

Building the Positive Values Assets

- Teach children how to care for special things, such as toys, outfits or plants, by themselves
- Interact with children in loving, respectful and caring ways

Building the Social Competencies Assets

- Continue to cheer on children's new skills, such as drawing, walking backward and learning to cut with scissors

Building the Positive Identity Assets

- Practice being positive. When children assume bad things will happen, talk about different ways the situation could work out favorably.
- When children act inappropriately, focus on the behavior, not the child. Instead of "You're so irresponsible!" try, "That wasn't a responsible thing to do. Let's talk about it."