

Subject: The Empowerment Category of Developmental Assets

Give young people a chance to show you what they can do

Feeling valued and appreciated is important to all of us. For young people, this means feeling safe and believing they're liked and respected. These feelings can go a long way toward empowering children and youth. Providing opportunities and recognizing accomplishments helps young people build self-esteem. This in turn, gives them the confidence to share their ideas, knowledge, and creativity by volunteering and working in paid jobs. By paying attention to young people, you show that you value them. **Empowerment** is one of the eight asset categories that make up Search Institute's 40 Developmental Assets, the qualities, experiences, and relationships that help young people grow up healthy, caring, and responsible.

Here are the facts

Research shows the more young people are valued and feel valuable, the more likely they are to grow up healthy and avoid risky behaviors, such as alcohol and other drug use, violence, and early sexual activity. Search Institute has identified four assets in the Empowerment category crucial for helping young people grow up healthy: Community Values Youth, Youth as Resources, Service to Others, and Safety.

Tips for building these assets

It's not always easy to know what it takes for young people to feel empowered. Sometimes young people doubt themselves or don't feel valued despite the good intentions of and recognition from caring adults. Communicate with young people openly and honestly about relationships, politics, religion, and other serious issues. Young people need to know that their questions and concerns are valid and important.

Also try this

In your home and family: Empower your child by providing choices. Have regular family meetings to plan, solve problems, and encourage one another. Rotate who leads the meetings.

In your neighborhood and community: Get involved in the community and advocate for developing meaningful opportunities for young people, such as volunteer projects and civic activities.

In your school or youth program: Take a field trip to a nursing home or senior housing complex. Have students and group members perform a concert, and afterwards talk to residents and learn about their present situations, as well as their pasts. Ask participants to send thank you notes to the residents they met. Also encourage the young people to discuss what they learned from their visit and what they contributed to the lives of the residents.

Want to know more about Search Institute's other seven asset categories or the 40 Developmental Assets and ideas for helping young people build them? Visit www.search-institute.org/assets.

Developmental Assets® are positive factors within young people, families, communities, schools, and other settings that research has found to be important in promoting the healthy development of young people. From *Instant Assets: 52 Short and Simple E-Mails for Sharing the Asset Message*. Copyright © 2007 by Search Institute®, 877-240-7251; www.search-institute.org. This message may be reproduced for educational, noncommercial uses only (with this copyright line). All rights reserved.