



External Developmental Assets

We're all in this together

As young people grow and learn, they depend a great deal on the adults in their world to guide them. A strong community of caring adults—providing support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations, and opportunities for enriching activities—helps young people develop the internal qualities of commitment to learning, positive values, social skills, and positive identity. In short, young people depend on caring adults to provide the external assets that lead to a positive environment.

Here are the facts

Research shows that young people need certain external structures, relationships, and activities in place in their lives to grow up healthy. Search Institute has identified the following ingredients, known as the external assets, as keys to creating a positive environment for young people: Support, Empowerment, Boundaries and Expectations, and Constructive Use of Time.

Tips for building these assets

Creating a strong foundation in a young person's life doesn't have to be difficult or overwhelming. Taking time, remaining patient, and giving a whole lot of love and caring will take you far. For most young people, their family is the center of their lives. Show your children you love them, and also value each one of them as individuals. Clearly communicate to one another your family's values, boundaries, and expectations (as well as those of the community). Give young people the appropriate amount of freedom to make their own decisions depending on their ages, but also offer options along the way.

Also try this:

In your home and family: Ask your children to name a few people who support them. If they don't name at least three adults, invite some of the adults you know and trust to get involved in your children's lives.

In your neighborhood and community: Advocate that your community develop meaningful opportunities for young people, such as creative youth programs or service projects.

In your school or youth program: Make a point to know every young person's name (no matter how many kids are involved). Smile when you see them and let them know you expect them to always do their best. Acknowledge their achievements and help them when they're struggling.

Want to know more about 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.

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