

The 40 Developmental Assets



Parent Fact Sheet #7

The Search Institute's 40 Development Assets framework (www.search-institute.org/developmental-assets), a popular youth development perspective, identifies 40 assets to help young people grow into responsible, caring adults (Search Institute, 2010). Search Institute research suggests the more assets a youth receives, the more likely he or she will stay away from alcohol, violence, drugs, and sexual activity (Benson, 2006). Communities and parents who provide more assets will help develop young people who are more likely to immerse themselves in positive characteristics such as good health, less risky sexual acts, and delayed gratification (Search Institute, 2010).

Key Facts

The first 20 assets are external factors from people and institutions that surround young people's lives. These assets are divided into four categories:

- A. Support:** This category includes a supportive and caring family. If parents are not available, other caring adults such as teachers or neighbors should guide youth in everyday life. In return, youth are more likely to keep the communication lines open with these supportive adults.
- B. Empowerment:** This area allows youth to take responsibility for their actions. In addition, adults will listen to youth in areas that require decision making. This does not guarantee a young person will get his or her way, but it does mean an adult at least listened to the youth.
- C. Boundaries and Expectations:** Youth are provided with clear consequences and expectations for their actions in the home, school, and neighborhood. Adult role models, positive peer influences, and high expectations are essential in this category.
- D. Constructive Use of Time:** This category means creating outlets for youth and not allowing them the time to fall into deviant behavior. These outlets are activities and supervised programs. However, down time is equally important, and sometimes a young person just needs to be kept at home.

The next 20 assets focus on young people's internal mechanisms. These assets are broken down into four categories:

- A. Commitment to Learning:** With the right equipment, youth will discover the importance of education and will discipline themselves in ways that benefit their academic careers. In this category, teens report motivating achievement, participating in and bonding to school, completing homework, and reading for pleasure.
- B. Positive Values:** In this part of the assets, a youth will formulate his or her own opinions and not fall victim to peer pressure toward deviant behavior. In this section, young people show integrity, honesty, responsibility, and restraint.
- C. Social Competencies:** Planning and decision making, interpersonal competence, cultural competence, resistance skills, and peaceful conflict resolution make up the social competencies. Helping youth achieve these

assets will allow them to learn from others and sort out their differences positively.

- D. Positive Identity:** Positive identity entails that a youth has personal power, self-esteem, sense of purpose, and a positive view of personal future. In fact, a positive view of the future has been linked to decreased levels of emotional and behavior problems and positive self-esteem (Bainbridge Georgia, 2009). In all, this section can help the youth set long-term goals worth achieving.

Implication for Parents

The 40 Development Assets model applies to all young people regardless of gender, socioeconomic status, or race and ethnicity (Search Institute, 2010). Even though the internal assets come from within each youth, adults can help cultivate these assets through a variety of activities. For instance, to teach responsibility, parents can give teenagers different chores around the house. Most important, the provision of external assets represents a collaborative effort among parents, schools, neighbors, and other important community sources. Although securing all 40 assets for every youth is probably not feasible, the more assets a child possesses, the more successful he or she will be. To determine which assets a child has, parents can go through the 40 Asset checklist and mark off which assets are in place (see Additional Resources). The next step is then to work toward the assets that are lacking.

Additional Resources

Search Institute has created separate Developmental Models to address adolescents, middle childhood, grades K-3, early childhood, and infants (Got 40, 2010; Search Institute, 2010). To access the lists for adolescents to early childhood go to: <http://www.search-institute.org/developmental-assets/lists>. For the list applicable to infants go to <http://got40.org/documents/40AssetsInf.pdf>

References

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