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Building Assets

What Are *Developmental Assets*?

Search Institute has identified 40 building blocks of healthy development that all of us have the power to bring into the lives of children and teenagers. These *40 developmental assets* have grown out of extensive research on positive relationships, experiences, opportunities, and personal qualities that help young people grow up healthy, caring, and responsible. They are organized into eight categories:

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

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

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

Constructive Use of Time Young people need opportunities – outside of school – to enjoy themselves, develop new skills, and build positive relationships 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 or principles to help them make healthy life choices.

Social Competencies Young people need the skills to interact effectively with others and cope with new situations.

Positive Identity Young people need a sense of their self-worth, power, purpose, and promise.

For more information on assets, visit <http://www.search-institute.org/assets>.

Why Build Assets? Why should congregations focus attention on building assets *with* and *for* children and youth? Here are six reasons:

- 1. Asset building is consistent with the tenets and beliefs of faith communities** – People from many faith traditions see the assets as consistent with and connected to their beliefs, sacred writings, and practices.
- 2. Asset building helps young people grow in faith** – Research shows that young people who experience more assets are more likely to place a high importance on being religious or spiritual.
- 3. Asset building helps young people make healthy choices** – The more assets young people have, the more likely they are to avoid negative behaviors and engage in positive behaviors.
- 4. Asset building fosters a congregation-wide commitment to young people** – People of all backgrounds and all generations tend to see asset building as a motivating, hopeful approach for working with children, youth, and families – both within the congregation and in the community.
- 5. Asset building gives congregations a concrete, fresh way to use their gifts** – Congregations are in a great position to nurture intergenerational relationships; encourage young people to contribute; provide constructive, enriching activities; support families; and advocate for children, youth, and families in the community.
- 6. Asset building opens opportunities to link with others in the community** – Because building assets takes a whole community, an asset-building approach can open doors to new relationships and opportunities for congregations and the broader community.



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40 Developmental Assets® for Middle Childhood

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External Assets

- 1. Family support** Family life provides high levels of love and support.
- 2. Positive family communication** Parent(s) and child communicate positively. Child feels comfortable seeking advice and counsel from parent(s).
- 3. Other adult relationships** Child receives support from adults other than her or his parent(s).
- 4. Caring neighborhood** Child experiences caring neighbors.
- 5. Caring school climate** Relationships with teachers and peers provide a caring, encouraging environment.
- 6. Parent involvement in schooling** Parent(s) are actively involved in helping the child succeed in school.
- 7. Community values youth** Child feels valued and appreciated by adults in the community.
- 8. Children as resources** Child is included in decisions at home and in the community.
- 9. Service to others** Child has opportunities to help others in the community.
- 10. Safety** Child feels safe at home, at school, and in his or her neighborhood.
- 11. Family boundaries** Family has clear and consistent rules and consequences and monitors the child's whereabouts.
- 12. School Boundaries** School provides clear rules and consequences.
- 13. Neighborhood boundaries** Neighbors take responsibility for monitoring the child's behavior.
- 14. Adult role models** Parent(s) and other adults in the child's family, as well as nonfamily adults, model positive, responsible behavior.
- 15. Positive peer influence** Child's closest friends model positive, responsible behavior.
- 16. High expectations** Parent(s) and teachers expect the child to do her or his best at school and in other activities.
- 17. Creative activities** Child participates in music, art, drama, or creative writing two or more times per week.
- 18. Child programs** Child participates two or more times per week in co-curricular school activities or structured community programs for children.
- 19. Religious community** Child attends religious programs or services one or more times per week.
- 20. Time at home** Child spends some time most days both in high-quality interaction with parents and doing things at home other than watching TV or playing video games.

Internal Assets (Middle Childhood)

- 21. Achievement Motivation** Child is motivated and strives to do well in school.
- 22. Learning Engagement** Child is responsive, attentive, and actively engaged in learning at school and enjoys participating in learning activities outside of school.
- 23. Homework** Child usually hands in homework on time.
- 24. Bonding to school** Child cares about teachers and other adults at school.
- 25. Reading for Pleasure** Child enjoys and engages in reading for fun most days of the week.
- 26. Caring** Parent(s) tell the child it is important to help other people.
- 27. Equality and social justice** Parent(s) tell the child it is important to speak up for equal rights for all people.
- 28. Integrity** Parent(s) tell the child it is important to stand up for one's beliefs.
- 29. Honesty** Parent(s) tell the child it is important to tell the truth.
- 30. Responsibility** Parent(s) tell the child it is important to accept personal responsibility for behavior.
- 31. Healthy Lifestyle** Parent(s) tell the child it is important to have good health habits and an understanding of healthy sexuality.
- 32. Planning and decision making** Child thinks about decisions and is usually happy with results of her or his decisions.
- 33. Interpersonal Competence** Child cares about and is affected by other people's feelings, enjoys making friends, and, when frustrated or angry, tries to calm her- or himself.
- 34. Cultural Competence** Child knows and is comfortable with people of different racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds and with her or his own cultural identity.
- 35. Resistance skills** Child can stay away from people who are likely to get her or him in trouble and is able to say no to doing wrong or dangerous things.
- 36. Peaceful conflict resolution** Child seeks to resolve conflict nonviolently.
- 37. Personal power** Child feels he or she has some influence over things that happen in her or his life.
- 38. Self-esteem** Child likes and is proud to be the person that he or she is.
- 39. Sense of purpose** Child sometimes thinks about what life means and whether there is a purpose for her or his life.
- 40. Positive view of personal future** Child is optimistic about her or his personal future.



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40 Developmental Assets® for Adolescents (ages 12-18)

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External Assets

- 1. Family support** Family life provides high levels of love and support.
- 2. Positive family communication** Young person and her or his parent(s) communicate positively, and young person is willing to seek advice and counsel from parents.
- 3. Other adult relationships** Young person receives support from three or more nonparent adults.
- 4. Caring neighborhood** Young person experiences caring neighbors.
- 5. Caring school climate** School provides a caring, encouraging environment.
- 6. Parent involvement in schooling** Parent(s) are actively involved in helping young person succeed in school.
- 7. Community values youth** Young person perceives that adults in the community value youth.
- 8. Youth as resources** Young people are given useful roles in the community.
- 9. Service to others** Young person serves in the community one hour or more per week.
- 10. Safety** Young person feels safe at home, school, and in the neighborhood.
- 11. Family boundaries** Family has clear rules and consequences and monitors the young person's whereabouts.
- 12. School Boundaries** School provides clear rules and consequences.
- 13. Neighborhood boundaries** Neighbors take responsibility for monitoring young people's behavior.
- 14. Adult role models** Parent(s) and other adults model positive, responsible behavior.
- 15. Positive peer influence** Young person's best friends model responsible behavior.
- 16. High expectations** Both parent(s) and teachers encourage the young person to do well.
- 17. Creative activities** Young person spends three or more hours per week in lessons or practice in music, theater, or other arts.
- 18. Youth programs** Young person spends three or more hours per week in sports, clubs, or organizations at school and/or in the community.
- 19. Religious community** Young person spends one or more hours per week in activities in a religious institution.
- 20. Time at home** Young person is out with friends "with nothing special to do" two or fewer nights per week

Internal Assets

- 21. Achievement Motivation** Young person is motivated to do well in school.
- 22. School Engagement** Young person is actively engaged in learning.
- 23. Homework** Young person reports doing at least one hour of homework every school day.
- 24. Bonding to school** Young person cares about her or his school.
- 25. Reading for Pleasure** Young person reads for pleasure three or more hours per week.
- 26. Caring** Young person places high value on helping other people.
- 27. Equality and social justice** Young person places high value on promoting equality and reducing hunger and poverty.
- 28. Integrity** Young person acts on convictions and stands up for her or his beliefs.
- 29. Honesty** Young person "tells the truth even when it is not easy."
- 30. Responsibility** Young person accepts and takes personal responsibility.
- 31. Restraint** Young person believes it is important not to be sexually active or to use alcohol or other drugs.
- 32. Planning and decision making** Young person knows how to plan ahead and make choices.
- 33. Interpersonal Competence** Young person has empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills.
- 34. Cultural Competence** Young person has knowledge of and comfort with people of different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds.
- 35. Resistance skills** Young person can resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations.
- 36. Peaceful conflict resolution** Young person seeks to resolve conflict nonviolently.
- 37. Personal power** Young person feels he or she has control over "things that happen to me."
- 38. Self-esteem** Young person reports having a high self-esteem.
- 39. Sense of purpose** Young person reports that "my life has a purpose."
- 40. Positive view of personal future** Young person is optimistic about her or his personal future.



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Applying Your Knowledge of Developmental Assets

Look over the previous pages:

- Circle all the assets you believe we build at camp.
- Circle the five assets you want to devote your energy to this year.
- Make a list of the ways you will employ to build those assets this year.

Case Studies for Discussion

The One and the 99

It becomes very clear to the staff on Sunday afternoon that one of the campers is going to have problems during the week. Everyone suspects autism (the health officer has kept appropriate confidentiality). The camper is having numerous problems fitting in, following the schedule and talking with counselors. The staff rallies, helps the cabin counselors think about it and offers suggestions for how to deal with the camper. On Monday morning the camper takes off – refusing to participate – and can't be found for 15 minutes. The rest of the campers become agitated and are talking about the situation.

That's My Friend

During a late night discussion in the cabin, one of the campers breaks down and cries about her situation at home. She becomes almost hysterical and the cabin counselors decide to take her to the Health Officer. The dean is notified. Three of the cabin mates insist on accompanying her to help their friend through this time. All are crying.

Trouble at Home

During the past year two of the counselors from this camp experienced very difficult times. They are looking forward to a healing time at camp and need the care and support of their camp community. It is given, gladly, beginning on the Saturday before camp as the group gathers. A two hour stretch of time is used to support the counselors and help them heal from the past year's events. The counselors testify to the support they have received in a moving service on Friday night.

Mom Calls From Home

One of the campers is extremely homesick. He has a phone that he keeps under his pillow throughout the night. It is not until Tuesday night that the cabin counselor realizes that the camper's mother is calling him every night – checking in. This is how he finds out. The camper complains to his mother that he is feeling sick. The mother becomes very concerned and calls the dean. The dean goes to the cabin to check on the situation. Oops.

Facebook friend?

Several counselors from summer camp have friended campers on their Facebook. They post inappropriate pictures of themselves at a college party. Their former campers "like" the pictures and parents become aware of the situation. The camp receives a call from angry parents who think this behavior was happening at camp as well.

Swim Test

It's Monday afternoon and time for the swim test. The weather is beautiful and the campers are very enthusiastic about swim time. A huge number of campers line up for the swim test. One camper asks his counselor, "What do I have to do?" The counselor tells him about the test. The camper asks, "What does tread water mean?"