

the asset approach

40

ELEMENTS OF HEALTHY DEVELOPMENT

Minnesota high school students spend hundreds of volunteer hours working on a youth center that won't even be built until most of them have graduated; a mayor successfully campaigns for teenagers to become voting members on all city commissions and boards in Idaho; a New York school bus driver knows every one of her riders by name; a fast-food restaurant manager in Michigan includes training on peer leadership as part of new-employee orientation.

These are real examples of real people making a positive difference in the lives of youth. Whether they know it or not, they are demonstrating what Search Institute's president, Peter Benson, calls the "power of one"—the potential for one individual to help, to heal, to support, to challenge, and to change, for the better, the life of a young person.

→ **Search Institute® has identified 40 positive experiences and qualities that all of us have the power to bring into the lives of children and youth, which are called *Developmental Assets*®. For many people, the assets have become a source of ideas and inspiration in the face of frustration and even despair.**

Assets helped change one Seattle mother's self-image as the parent of a child with special needs. "What a revelation!" she says. "I'd been walking around feeling handicapped as a parent because my own childhood was no picnic. I realized that I can still build assets for my son even though I hadn't received enough assets myself."





Caring adults used assets as a way to encourage an 18-year-old in Georgetown, Texas, to get involved in the community as a leader. "I used to get in a lot of fights," he says. "I'm still a fighter, but in a different way now."

So what are these Developmental Assets? The assets are spread across eight broad areas of human development. These categories paint a picture of the positive things all young people need to grow up healthy and responsible. *Please see the sidebar for a full description.*





On the next page, you'll find a chart of the Developmental Assets.

ASSET CATEGORIES

The first four asset categories focus on external structures, relationships, and activities that create a positive environment for young people:

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 AND 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.

The next four categories reflect internal values, skills, and beliefs that young people also need to fully engage with and function in the world around them:

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, 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 that they have control over the things that happen to them.