

Asset-Building Ideas for Parents and Guardians

Being a parent or guardian can be very hard work—no surprise there, right? Most parents and guardians have things they love about their role as well as problems with their kids that they have to deal with. What might be surprising, though, is that one of the best ways to deal with problems is to focus on positives. Research shows that a more effect approach to raising healthy, competent kids is to concentrate on building developmental assets. These assets form the foundation young people need to make healthy choices and to succeed in life. The more assets your kids have, the stronger this foundation will be.

There are probably lots of asset-building things you already do for your children—even if you don't call them that. Here are some ways to be intentional about asset building:

- **Post the list of 40 developmental assets on your refrigerator door.** Each day, do at least one asset-building thing for each family member.
- **Connect with other parents who are interested in asset building.** Form relationships in your neighborhood, on the job, through congregation, or through a parent-education organization.
- **Regularly do things with your child,** including projects around the house, recreational activities, and service projects. Take turns planning activities to do together as a family,
- **Eat at least one meal together** as a family every day.
- **Negotiate family rules and consequences** for breaking those rules.
- **Develop a family mission statement** that focuses on building assets. Then use it to help make family decisions and set up priorities.
- **Talk about your values and priorities,** and live in a way that is consistent with them.
- **Give your children lots of support and approval** while also challenging them to take responsibility and gain independence.
- **If you are parenting alone, look for other adult role models** of both genders who can be mentors for your children.
- **Nurture your own assets** by spending time with people who care about you and are supportive. Also, take opportunities to learn new things, contribute to your community, and have fun. You'll take better care of your children if you take care of yourself.
- **Think about the way you were parented** and how that affects your relationships with your children. If there are parts of your relationship with your parents that are very difficult or that get in the way of your parenting, consider talking with someone about these issues.
- **Don't let anyone in your family (including you) watch too much television.** Find other interesting and meaningful activities for your children to do—some with you, some with their friends, some by themselves.
- **Learn as much as you can about what your kids need at their current ages.**

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- **Recognize that children need more than just financial support.** They also need emotional and intellectual support. Balance family time with other priorities like work, recreation and hobbies.
- **Don't wait for problems to arise before talking with you children's teachers.** Keep in regular contact with them about how your children are doing and what you can do to help your children learn.
- **Think of teenagers as adults in training.** Teach them something practical, such as how to change a tire on the car, prepare a meal, or create a monthly budget.
- **Be aware of the difference in how you relate to your children.** Are you more comfortable with one gender? If so, why? What impact does that have in your family?
- **Talk to your children about the 40 developmental assets.** Ask them for suggestions of ways to strengthen their assets.
- **Do intergenerational activities** with extended family and with other neighborhood adults and families.
- **Be an asset builder** for other young people in your life.
- **Remember that you are not alone.** Other asset builders in your children's lives include coaches, child-care providers, religious education teachers, club leaders, and neighbors. Work with these people to give kids consistent messages about boundaries and values.