

ideas for parents

Easy Ways to Build Assets for and with Your Child

EAST FACTS

ASSET #8: Youth as Resources

Youth are more likely to grow up healthy when they are given useful roles in the community.

28%
of youth surveyed by Search Institute have this asset in their lives.*

What Are Assets?

Assets are 40 values, experiences, and qualities that help kids succeed. "Youth as resources" is one of four empowerment assets.

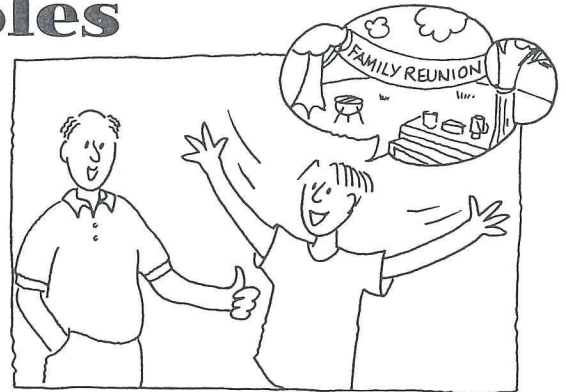
* Based on Search Institute surveys of 217,277 6th- to 12th-grade youth throughout the United States during the 1999-2000 school year.

Giving Young People Meaningful Roles

Think about a time when you did a project that allowed you to make decisions, have input that others took seriously, and capitalize on your talents and knowledge. How did you feel?

Not only did you probably feel excited and energized, but you felt empowered. Even when the project encountered difficult obstacles, you were more likely to complete the project when you had an important and meaningful role in it.

That's what this asset is all about: giving young people useful roles. These roles start for children at home. As children grow, they have roles in their cultural groups, their schools, their congregations, their clubs, and their community. And children and youth know when those roles are useful and meaningful, and when they are not.



Building this asset entails valuing young people's talents, skills, interests, and opinions. It also means setting aside the old hierarchy that adults know best, youth know some, and children are too young to know or contribute anything. When we start seeing children and youth as valuable resources, our young people will start feeling empowered and contribute to our communities, our schools, and our families in meaningful, thoughtful ways.

Tapping an Important Resource

Tips for empowering young people through useful roles:

- Ask your child to teach you something new, such as current slang, a song, or how to surf the Internet.
- Use some of your home projects as learning projects. Build a birdhouse with an interested child. Fix a bike with a mechanically oriented child.
- Ask an artistic youth to draw or paint a portrait of your family or place where you live.
- Ask your child to help plan family outings or reunions.

time together

Three ways to help your child feel like a resource:

- 1 Ask for her or his opinion on a decision you're trying to make.
- 2 Have a family meeting and get everyone's ideas on accomplishing household tasks. Share the decisions and share the work.
- 3 Let your child be responsible for certain family needs, such as checking out summer camps, leading a family meeting, or planting a garden.

Important Roles through the Years

Find out what your child's talents, interests, and opinions are, and give her or him important roles in your family, starting on day one.

Infants, particularly, need to be at the center of family life and have their needs met immediately. As they become more mobile, children need to be listened to, given opportunities to explore, develop their interests, and express their thoughts and feelings. Preschool-age children can have an active role and vote in family meetings. Throughout elementary and high school, families should gradually include children more regularly in family decision making; ask for their ideas about family activities and vacations; and encourage their interests, talents, and opinions.

The Word from Webster
Re-source (rē-sōrs) n. 1. Something that can be turned to for support or help. 2. An available supply that can be drawn upon when needed.

Quick Tip:
Create useful roles for your child at home.

talk together

More Help for Parents

Kidstories: Biographies of 20 Young People You'd Like to Know by Jim Delisle, Ph.D. This book profiles 20 kids who are doing things to improve their communities, their schools, and their world. (Published by Free Spirit.)

Questions to discuss with your child:

- What are some of the things you like about yourself?
- What have you enjoyed doing that has made your home, family, school, or community better? What about it did you enjoy?
- How could youth and children be a resource in our community?

Final Word

"Leisure is the time for doing something useful."

—Benjamin Franklin

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