

ideas for parents

Easy Ways to Build Assets for and with Your Child

FAST FACTS

ASSET CATEGORY

Empowerment

The more a young person is valued and feels valuable, the more likely he or she is to grow up healthy.

Youth Speak

- "Applaud my efforts and successes."
- "Help me solve problems and change things for the better."
- "Let me take care of things when I think I can."

The Value of Appreciation

Everyone wants to feel valued and be valuable, but it's easy for children and teenagers to feel as if they have little to contribute. In our fast-paced society, it's often easier to do things for young people instead of doing things with young people so that they gradually learn and master their own skills.

Young people need meaningful, valuable roles at home, at school, in the community, and in all the places where they spend time. They also need to feel safe. When children and youth feel safe and valued, they're more apt to bond with their families, their schools, and their communities. They then become even more valuable because they want to contribute.

Empowerment—the sense that you can make a difference and that you have a valued place or role—starts at home and starts slowly. What makes your child feel valued? What unique skills and talents does your child have to offer? What meaningful, age-appropriate roles does your child have in your family?

And what about you? How do you as a parent feel empowered? What made you feel valuable when you were a child? A teenager?



How can you translate your experience into creating a home that empowers your children?

Even if you don't know the answers to all of these questions, begin today with one thing you do know about empowerment.

Start small. You can help your child feel more valued and valuable today.

Quick Tip:
Empower your child by providing choices.

4 Key Areas of Empowerment

Search Institute researchers have identified four empowerment assets that are crucial for helping young people grow up healthy. Check the areas of strength in your child's life:

- Community values youth—Your child perceives that adults in the community value children and youth.
- Youth as resources—Your child is given useful roles in the community.
- Service to others—Your child serves in the community one hour or more per week.
- Safety—Your child feels safe at home, at school, and in the neighborhood.

Helpful Hints

Tips that make empowering your child easier:

- Have regular family meetings to plan, solve problems, and encourage each other. Rotate who leads the meetings.
- Get involved with your child's school and in the community.
- Think of yourself as your child's empowerment coach.
- Advocate that your community develop meaningful opportunities for young people.

Empowerment through the Years

Age Ways to Empower Your Child

- 0-1
 - Prop up babies and hold young children so that they can see what is around them.
 - Arrange family life around children's needs.
 - Watch over children to keep them safe.
- 2-3
 - Find simple ways for children to serve others. For example, they may be able to place donated toys in a box.
 - Keep track of children at all times.
- 4-5
 - Take children along when visiting elderly people and those who are sick.
 - Give children simple chores, such as sorting laundry by color, matching socks, or feeding pets.
 - Teach children their first and last name, address, and phone number.
- 6-10
 - Ask children how they would like to help others, and figure out simple ways for them to carry through on their wishes.
 - Use the buddy system. When children go out to play, have them do so in pairs.
 - Ask children what they do and do not like in their daily routines. Make some changes based on their comments.
 - Display or use things your child makes.
- 11-15
 - Discuss with your child her or his fears and feelings of not being safe. Work together on these. Be ready for concerns to range from safety at school to safety on dates.
 - Ask your child for ideas on family community service projects. Act on your child's ideas.
 - Laugh at your child's jokes.
- 16-18
 - Continue allowing your teen gradual independence while teaching safety skills (including making good decisions about physical and mental health) so that he or she is ready to live independently (and safely and successfully) by age 18.
 - If your teen wants to work, encourage a job that empowers your teen and balances with other time commitments.
 - If he or she feels ready, encourage your teenager to take a leadership role in addressing issues that concern her or him (such as homelessness, racism, hunger).

More Help for Parents

Empowering Your Child: How to Help Your Child Succeed in School and Life by C. Fred Bateman. This book suggests how to create an empowering home environment and be an empowering parent. (Published by Hampton Roads Publishing Company.)

The Empowerment Equation

C. Fred Bateman, author of Empowering Your Child, defines empowerment with this equation: Interacting with life's challenges + influencing those challenges in valuable ways for all = empowerment.

Final Word "Each child deserves to be acknowledged and cherished for the qualities that make her [or him] unique." -Lee Salk, Ph.D., author of *Familyhood*

This newsletter and other asset resources are produced by Search Institute, www.search-institute.org; 800-888-7828.
Copyright © 1997, 2003 by Search Institute. Major support for Search Institute's *Healthy Communities* • *Healthy Youth* initiative is provided by Thrivent Financial for Lutherans Foundation.