



KNOW! HOW TO HELP KIDS LIVE THEIR VALUES

JULY 2026

The tips below can help you guide young people as they develop their values, build confidence, and learn to stand up for what they believe in.

Young people begin developing their values and beliefs early in life, shaping how they see themselves, build relationships, and make decisions. A strong sense of values provides purpose, guides healthy choices, and helps young people navigate challenges and peer pressure. When they act on what they believe in—whether standing up to bullying, supporting a cause they care about, or speaking up for themselves—they build confidence, resilience, and leadership skills while learning that their voice can make a positive difference.

As a caregiver, you play an important role in helping young people explore their values, encouraging self-advocacy, and empowering them to take meaningful action. Read below for practical tips to help youth align their actions with their values and stand up for what they believe in.

KNOW! HOW TO COMMUNICATE ABOUT VALUES

Everyone has their own set of values. As a caring adult, you play an important role in helping young people develop a strong moral foundation while encouraging them to discover their own beliefs. Here are a few ways to communicate your values:



BE A ROLE MODEL

Children learn by watching adults. Model kindness, respect, and responsibility every day. Remember, you don't have to be perfect—sharing your struggles and successes shows that growth and effort matter.

CELEBRATE POSITIVE ACTIONS

Celebrate positive choices. Recognize and praise moments when your child shows kindness, honesty, responsibility, or respect. Positive reinforcement builds confidence and encourages them to live out their values.

START A CONVERSATION

Start conversations about values. Use a movie, news story, or everyday experience to spark discussions. Ask open-ended questions about fairness, honesty, and respect to help children explore what matters to them and why.

KNOW! HOW TO BUILD SELF ADVOCACY SKILLS



When young people know their values, they can then learn how to stand up for what they believe. You can help kids practice self-advocacy with the following tips:

PRACTICE COMMUNICATION

Help children practice expressing their beliefs calmly and confidently. Simple statements like "That's not okay" or "I don't agree with that" can help them stand up for themselves and others.

BUILD CONFIDENCE

Build confidence through practice. Role-play different situations, model self-advocacy, and praise your child's efforts. Practicing these skills helps build confidence over time.

EMPHASIZE DECISION-MAKING SKILLS

Help your child make choices that reflect their values by talking through options together. Encourage questions like, "Is this fair?" or "Does this reflect my values?" Safe decision-making builds confidence and lifelong skills.

KNOW! HOW TO EMPOWER YOUTH

As young people grow, they often discover causes and issues that reflect their values and passions. Encouraging their involvement in community action helps them put those values into practice. You can support and empower them in this journey with these tips:



LET THEM LEAD

Ask young people about the causes they care about and encourage them to take the lead. Supporting their ideas builds confidence, leadership skills, and community connections.

CONNECT THEM TO RESOURCES

Help young people overcome barriers by connecting them with mentors, community organizations, volunteer opportunities, and leadership programs that match their interests.

ENCOURAGE CONTINUED LEARNING

Encourage young people to explore issues they care about, ask questions, and consider different perspectives. Lifelong learning strengthens values and informed decision-making.

RESOURCES

- [Take-Home Skill: Talk with Teens about Equity and Justice | Greater Good in Education](#)
- [8 Ways to Engage Youth in Community Action: Empowering the Next Generation of Philanthropy | YouthREX](#)
- [Decision Making/Problem Solving With Teens | Ohioline](#)
- [Helping Teens Discover Values to Live By | University of Wisconsin-Madison](#)
- [Civic Learning Activities | University of Michigan](#)

SOURCES

- [Communicating Values to Tweens and Teens | Center for Parent and Teen Communication](#)
- [How to support young people in making change – without taking over | Mental Health America](#)
- [How to Get Youth Engaged in the Community | Nationwide Children's](#)
- [Self-advocacy: how to help teenagers speak up for themselves | Raising Children Network](#)
- [Building the Confidence Muscle: How To Help Kids Learn To Stand Up for Themselves | Children's Wisconsin](#)
- [Developmental Assets Framework | Search Institute](#)

Scan for additional Know!
Prevention Tips for Everyone:

