

# ideas for parents

Easy Ways to Build Assets for and with Your Child

## FAST FACTS

### EXTERNAL ASSETS

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

### How to Start

- Support and love your child.
- Empower your child.
  - Set clear, realistic boundaries and expectations.
- Help your child use her or his time in meaningful, constructive ways.

## You Are Your Child's Compass

Any hiker knows the most important tool to take on a journey is a compass. It's a guide when you know where you're going. It's also a guide when you don't.

As children journey through life, they must step into unfamiliar territory. Sometimes they'll try paths we'd rather they not take, while ignoring others that we think they should follow.

No matter where they go, we as parents are their compasses. As compasses, we don't tell them which path to take (even though it's tempting at times), but we serve as a resource—a guide. We can help, suggest, question, encourage. We can also point out other useful guides when our children wish to take a path we're not equipped to navigate.

The 40 assets help us be good compasses. The first 20 assets, known as external assets, come from the people and institutions that surround our children. We as parents play a critical role in the development of these first 20 assets.

Many of the things we do as parents build these external assets. We give our children the support needed to feel secure, whether it's spending time together, wiping away tears after a breakup, or accepting them regardless of their personal style and appearance.

We set clear expectations as well as boundaries that have specific consequences when they are not followed. We help them spend their time wisely, tell them we value



them and that they are valuable not only to us but also to the community.

As parents we can have a tremendous impact on building assets in our children and teenagers. Building assets truly is a journey, a journey that reaps great rewards and brings out the best in our children—and in ourselves.

## Asset-Building Ideas for Parents

**Try some of these positive parenting tips:**

- **Talk with your children about the 40 developmental assets. Ask them for suggestions of ways to strengthen their assets.**
- **Keep in regular contact with your children's teachers. Don't wait for problems to arise before talking with them.**
- **Recognize that children need more than just financial support.**
- **As a family, talk about your values and priorities.**
- **Remember that you are not alone.**

**Quick Tip:**  
Building assets is easier than you think.

## External Assets

### Support

1. Family support  
Family life provides high levels of love and support.
2. Positive family communication  
Young person and her or his parent(s) communicate positively, and young person is willing to seek advice and counsel from parents.
3. Other adult relationships  
Young person receives support from three or more nonparent adults.
4. Caring neighborhood  
Young person experiences caring neighbors.
5. Caring school climate  
School provides a caring, encouraging environment.
6. Parent involvement in schooling  
Parent(s) are actively involved in helping young person succeed in school.

### Empowerment

7. Community values youth  
Young person perceives that adults in the community value youth.
8. Youth as resources  
Young people are given useful roles in the community.
9. Service to others  
Young person serves in the community one hour or more per week.
10. Safety  
Young person feels safe at home, at school, and in the neighborhood.

### Boundaries and Expectations

11. Family boundaries  
Family has clear rules and consequences and monitors the young person's whereabouts.
12. School boundaries  
School provides clear rules and consequences.
13. Neighborhood boundaries  
Neighbors take responsibility for monitoring young people's behavior.
14. Adult role models  
Parent(s) and other adults model positive, responsible behavior.
15. Positive peer influence  
Young person's best friends model responsible behavior.
16. High expectations  
Both parent(s) and teachers encourage the young person to do well.

### Constructive Use of Time

17. Creative activities  
Young person spends three or more hours per week in lessons or practice in music, theater, or other arts.
18. Youth programs  
Young person spends three or more hours per week in sports, clubs, or organizations at school and/or in the community.
19. Religious community  
Young person spends one or more hours per week in activities in a religious institution.
20. Time at home  
Young person is out with friends "with nothing special to do" two or fewer nights per week.