

ideas for parents

Easy Ways to Build Assets for and with Your Child

FAST FACTS

ASSETS:

The Power of Parenting

Most parents meet their children's basic needs and contribute significantly—more than anyone else—to their children's healthy growth and development.

Parent Quote

"My children are always my priority. I make sure I am always there for my children...I had my first child at age 15. None of my children who are over 15 are parents. The fact that they don't have children means I'm successful."

Others Can Share in What You Do Already

Building strong families—it's what most parents want to do.

In their report *Building Strong Families*, Search Institute and the YMCA surveyed 1,005 parents in the United States. The majority of those surveyed said they felt successful as parents most of the time.

Unfortunately, the parents of many families are scrutinized by the public for what they're not doing and what they're doing wrong. This image is so common that in *The Possible Dream*, another Search Institute study, many lower-income families didn't even know how much they were already doing for their children.

That's why parents appreciate the strength-based approach of asset building. It can provide new motivation and be a helpful tool in identifying and building on the strengths of their children and their families.

But even though parents are doing a good job, that doesn't mean they should do it alone. Parenting provides a lot of challenges, and not every parent can answer every question that comes along the way. The *Building Strong Families* report also found that most parents are going it alone. Only 36% said it was very true that they turned to

immediate or extended family for support. And only 20% said it was very true that they turned to friends for support.

Just think of all the opportunities for help in your parenting: mothers, sisters, dads, uncles, friends. There are also trusted individuals within supportive institutions such as schools and places of worship. Parents shouldn't

feel afraid to ask for help. It's not a sign of weakness. It's merely acknowledging that a variety of supportive relationships can help your child grow to be a well-rounded individual who feels a great deal of love and support from her or his world.



Quick Tip:
Tell yourself what you do right as a parent.

The Meaning of Success

Parents set high standards for themselves. Parents were asked in the Building Strong Families poll how they would define successful parents. Here's what they said:

- **Their children are respectful, exhibit good behavior, and have good values.**
- **They give love to their children.**
- **They are involved and make the time to be there for their children.**
- **They help their children lead healthy, productive, successful lives.**

What Family Strength Means to Others

The Minnesota Family Strength Project summarized findings from focus group sessions of parents from various cultures. Here's what parents had to say about what family strength means to them:



talk together

Questions to discuss with your child:

- Who helps provide our family with support?
- What are my strengths as a parent?
- What are our strengths as a family? What do we do best?

- "The main uniting factor is listening among family members." —Somali parent
- "Couples support each other, and uncles, aunts through effective communication." —Chicano/Latino parent
- "There's a hierarchy in some families, but in our family it depends on the situation. We take turns. Whoever feels strong at the time is the leader." —American Indian parent
- "Working together for a common goal." —African American parent
- "Parents must consider children's ideas, give them a chance to talk, a voice in the family." —Vietnamese parent
- "Tolerance. As a parent, the first thing you learn is you don't have to agree, but you've got to be tolerant." —African American parent

More Help for Parents

The Possible Dream: What Families in Distressed Communities Need to Help Youth Thrive by Rebecca N. Saito, Theresa K. Sullivan, and Nicole R. Hintz presents information about opportunities and challenges for encouraging and supporting asset building in families in distressed neighborhoods. (Published by Search Institute, www.search-institute.org; 800-888-7828.)

Final Word

"All systems run on energy. In the case of families, energy comes from family members, personalities, heritage, skills, and interests. But it also comes from outside the family system, from other systems and individuals in their interactions with the family." —James Garbarino

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