

## **Asset-Building Ideas for Parents and Guardians**

Being a parent or guardian is hard work—no surprise there, right? Most parents and guardians have things they love about their role as well as challenges that confound them. What might be surprising, though, is that one of the best ways to deal with problems is to focus on positives. Research shows that a more effective approach to raising healthy, competent kids is to concentrate on building Developmental Assets™. These assets form the foundation young people need to make healthy choices and to succeed in life. The more of these 40 Developmental Assets that your kids have, the stronger this foundation will be. There are many asset-building things you already do for your children—even if you don't call them that. Here are some ways to be intentional about building even more assets.

- Post the list of 40 Developmental Assets on your refrigerator door. Each day, do at least one asset-building thing for each family member.
- Connect with other parents who are interested in asset building. Form relationships in your neighborhood, on the job, at church, or through a parent education organization.
- Regularly do things with your child, including projects around the house, recreational activities, and service projects. Take turns planning activities to do together as a family.
- Eat at least one meal together as a family every day,
- Discuss and set family rules and consequences for breaking those rules.
- Develop a family mission statement that focuses on positive growth and development. Then use it to help you make family decisions and set priorities.
- Talk about your faith and your values, and live in a way that is consistent with them. Each day take time to pray together. Read Bible stories together each week. Worship as a family.
- Give your children lots of support and approval, while also challenging them to take responsibility and gain independence.
- If you are parenting alone, look for other adult role models of both genders who can be mentors for your children.
- Nurture your own assets by spending time with people who care about you and are supportive. Also, take opportunities to learn new things, contribute to your community; and have fun. You'll take better care of your children if you take care of yourself.
- Think about the way you were parented and how that affects your relationships with your children. If there are parts of your relationship with your parents that were very difficult or that get in the way of your parenting, consider talking with a minister or counselor about these issues.

- Don't let anyone in your family (including you) watch too much television. Find other interesting and meaningful activities for your children to do—some with you, some with their friends, some by themselves.
- Learn as much as you can about what your kids need at their current ages.
- Recognize that children need more than just financial support. They also need emotional and intellectual support. Balance family time with other priorities like work, recreation, and hobbies.
- Don't wait for problems to arise before talking with your children's teachers. Keep in regular contact with them about how your children are doing and what you can do to help your children learn.
- Think of teenagers as adults in training. Teach them practical skills, such as how to change a tire on the car, do the laundry, prepare a nutritious meal, and create a monthly budget.
- Be aware of differences in how you relate to your children. Are you more comfortable with one gender? If so, why? What impact does that have in your family?
- Talk to your children about the 40 Developmental Assets. Ask them for suggestions of ways to strengthen their assets.
- Do intergenerational activities with extended family and with other neighborhood adults and families.
- Be an asset builder for other young people in your life.
- Remember that you are not alone. Other asset builders in your children's lives include coaches, childcare providers, Sunday School teachers, club leaders, and neighbors. Work with these people to give kids consistent messages about boundaries and values.

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