

ideas for parents

Easy Ways to Build Assets for and with Your Child

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FAST FACTS

ASSET #14: Adult Role Models

Youth are more likely to grow up healthy when parent(s) and other adults model positive, responsible behavior.

30%

*of youth surveyed by Search Institute have this asset in their lives.**

What Are Assets?

Assets are 40 values, experiences, and qualities that help kids succeed. "Adult role models" is one of six boundaries-and-expectations assets.

* Based on Search Institute surveys of 217,277 6th- to 12th-grade youth throughout the United States during the 1999-2000 school year.

What a Difference a Friend Makes

As a single parent, Eileen felt strongly that her 10-year-old son, John, needed a male role model in his life. Her father and two brothers enjoyed being with her son, but all three lived out of state.

One day, Carlos, a neighbor, mentioned how much he and his wife missed being around children. Their two children had recently left for college, and Carlos was wishing he could find another child to spend some time with.

That was the beginning of an important relationship that developed between Carlos and John. The two would attend special events together or just hang out to talk. For one of John's birthdays, Carlos wrote and taped a story called "John's Fictitious Adventure."

"The more time they spent together, the more John's self-esteem grew," Eileen says. "Grandparents, uncles, aunts, and cousins are important, but an adult who singles out a child and chooses to spend time with that child makes a unique difference."



time together

Three ways to be an adult role model for your child:

- 1.** *Treat your child with love and respect.*
- 2.** *Model appropriate behavior. When you make mistakes, admit them. Apologize for failures.*
- 3.** *Spend time together. Often. Be involved in your child's life on a daily basis.*

Kids' #1 NEED

What 10- to 15-year-olds need most is positive social interaction with adults, says Dr. Peter C. Scales, a Search Institute author and researcher. These interactions expose young people to real-life heroes.

Finding Friends

Help your child find other responsible adults to be part of her or his life. Having other caring adults involved in your child's life provides more role models.

What Teens Want to Know from Adults

Sometimes adults can feel awkward around children and teenagers and not know what to talk about. They may not see themselves as role models. Yet when adults take time to be themselves with young people, children and youth learn a lot. Psychologist Tore Hayden asked several hundred young people what they would like to talk about with adults:

1. Family matters and decisions
2. Controversial issues
3. Emotional issues
4. Big questions and the “whys” of the world
5. The future
6. Current affairs
7. Personal interests
8. What their parents were like at their age

Quick Tip:
You are your child's most important role model.

talk together

Questions to discuss with your child:

- Are people in movies and television good role models? Why or why not?
- Which adults (whom you know) do you admire? Why?
- What have you learned from adults that has helped or inspired you?

More Help for Parents

Heroes: Shaping Lives through Family and Culture by Steffen T. Kraehmer. This resource is a practical handbook that guides parents in helping their children find appropriate, positive “heroes.” (Published by Fairview Press)

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“Without heroes, we are all plain people and don't know how far we can go.”
—Bernard Malamud, novelist

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