

Subject: The Social Competencies Category of Developmental Assets

Making personal choices and building interpersonal skills

Learning social skills is a lot like learning to play the piano in that you need to learn some basic competencies and you need someone to teach you those skills. You need time to practice, guidance as you gain experience, and feedback along the way. Social competencies are the skills and life perspectives young people need to develop into healthy, competent adults. These skills are important daily, but they're even more crucial when young people encounter the tough times in life. **Social Competencies** is one of eight asset categories that make up Search Institute's 40 Developmental Assets, the qualities, experiences, and relationships that help young people grow up healthy, caring, and responsible.

Here are the facts

Research shows the more personal skills young people have to interact with others and make decisions, the more likely they are to grow up healthy. Search Institute has identified five assets in the Social Competencies category crucial for helping young people: Planning and Decision Making, Interpersonal Competence, Cultural Competence, Resistance Skills, and Peaceful Conflict Resolution. Two of these assets—Planning and Decision Making, and Resistance Skills—focus on personal choice. The other three focus on healthy interpersonal relationships.

Tips for building these assets

Tolerance, negotiation and compromise, sensitivity to others' feelings and needs, and appreciation of your own and others' cultures are critical skills to teach and model. Help young people learn these skills by role-playing various social situations, following these steps: 1. Demonstrate the skill while the young person watches; 2. Do the skill together; 3. Let the young person do the skill alone while you watch; and 4. Provide feedback.

Also try this

In your home and family: Let your child do things by himself or herself, even if it's not the way you would do it. Allow your child to make mistakes and learn from them.

In your neighborhood and community: If there is a neighborhood disagreement, model the skills of negotiation and compromise to work toward a peaceful resolution.

In your school or youth program: Encourage young people to plan with the use of agendas and calendars. Help them to learn and practice their planning and decision-making skills by engaging them in long-term projects. Teach them how to set short-term goals to keep their project on track and meet the final deadline.

Want to know more about Search Institute's other seven asset categories or the 40 Developmental Assets and ideas for helping young people build them? Visit www.search-institute.org/assets.

Developmental Assets® are positive factors within young people, families, communities, schools, and other settings that research has found to be important in promoting the healthy development of young people. From *Instant Assets: 52 Short and Simple E-Mails for Sharing the Asset Message*. Copyright © 2007 by Search Institute®, 877-240-7251; www.search-institute.org. This message may be reproduced for educational, noncommercial uses only (with this copyright line). All rights reserved.