Building the **Social-Competencies Assets**

Young people—no matter what their age—need to develop social competencies. Here are ideas on how to build the five Social-Competencies assets for children and youth at different ages:

| Ages Birth to 1 | • Give babies new toys and safe objects to touch and explore. Infants learn a lot about how to deal with people by first interacting with objects.  
• Encourage children to experiment with sounds. It will help them develop language later on. |
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| Ages 1 to 2 | • Give children at least two equally appealing choices whenever possible.  
• Encourage children to express their feelings, but give them guidelines on appropriate and inappropriate ways to act on their feelings. |
| Ages 3 to 5 | • Continue to cheer on children’s new skills, such as drawing, walking backward, and learning how to cut with scissors.  
• Encourage families to start having periodic family meetings in which children have input in decision making.  
• Let children make simple choices on their own, such as whether to play with blocks or to color. |
| Ages 6 to 11 | • Encourage children to use words—rather than just actions—to communicate.  
• Encourage children to develop more skills in areas that interest them.  
• Find ways for children to spend time with people who look, act, think, and talk in different ways. |
| Ages 12 to 15 | • Help young people use healthy coping skills when difficult situations arise.  
• Be gentle and supportive in how you respond to young people’s fluctuating emotions.  
• Help young teenagers find ways to deal with conflict without fighting. |
| Ages 16 to 18 | • Slowly begin to allow teenagers more freedom to make their own decisions.  
• Ask teenagers about their dreams for the future and help them plan how to achieve them.  
• Encourage teenagers to practice healthy responses to situations where they might feel pressured or uncomfortable, such as being offered drugs by a friend or being challenged to fight. |

**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 *Pass It On! Ready-to-Use Handouts for Asset Builders, Second Edition*. Copyright © 2006 by Search Institute®. 612/376-8055; 800-888-7828; www.search-institute.org. This handout may be reproduced for educational, noncommercial uses only (with this copyright line). All rights reserved.