

## Building the SocialCompetencies 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 I | <ul> <li>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.</li> <li>Encourage children to experiment with sounds. It will help them develop language later on.</li> </ul> |
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| Ages I to 2     | <ul> <li>Give children at least two equally appealing choices whenever possible.</li> <li>Encourage children to express their feelings, but give them guidelines on appropriate and inappropriate ways to act on their feelings.</li> </ul>                              |
| Ages 3 to 5     | <ul> <li>Continue to cheer on children's new skills, such as drawing, walking<br/>backward, and learning how to cut with scissors.</li> </ul>  |
|                 | <ul> <li>Encourage families to start having periodic family meetings in which<br/>children have input in decision making.</li> </ul>   |
|                 | <ul> <li>Let children make simple choices on their own, such as whether to<br/>play with blocks or to color.</li> </ul>  |
| 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.   |
|                 | <ul> <li>Find ways for children to spend time with people who look, act, think,<br/>and talk in different ways.</li> </ul>   |
| Ages 12 to 15   | Help young people use healthy coping skills when difficult situations arise.   |
|                 | <ul> <li>Be gentle and supportive in how you respond to young people's<br/>fluctuating emotions.</li> </ul>  |
|                 | <ul> <li>Help young teenagers find ways to deal with conflict without fighting.</li> </ul>   |
| Ages 16 to 18   | Slowly begin to allow teenagers more freedom to make their own decisions.  |
|                 | <ul> <li>Ask teenagers about their dreams for the future and help them plan<br/>how to achieve them.</li> </ul>  |
|                 | • 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®; 612-376-8955; 800-888-7828; www.search-institute.org. This handout may be reproduced for educational, noncommercial uses only (with this copyright line). All rights reserved.