



## Helping Adults and Kids

# Build Relationships

Most of the 40 Developmental Assets are built through positive relationships. While family and peers are key, there's a third type of relationship—friendships between adults and kids who aren't related to each other—that is often overlooked as critical to development. These cross-age friendships (some people use the term “intergenerational”) are key to asset building whether or not people have strong family and peer ties. They can provide both youth and adults with support, new perspectives, and sensitivity to the needs of people of different ages. Here are some suggestions for how to nurture these relationships for yourself and others:



### **Building Your Own Intergenerational Relationships**

- ✦ **Make a commitment to connect and spend time with at least one person who is significantly older or younger than you are.** One resource for ideas on things to do together is Search Institute's book *Tag, You're It! 50 Easy Ways to Connect with Young People*.

### **Encouraging Others to Build Intergenerational Relationships**

- ✦ **Encourage people of all ages to offer spontaneous gestures of support to one another.** These are simple, easy things to do, such as calling people by name, smiling at them, asking them about their day, and spending a few moments talking with them.
- ✦ **Support and encourage mentoring programs** in your community. Mentoring programs carefully match caring adults with young people and encourage them to build relationships.
- ✦ **Take advantage of congregations' natural intergenerational community.** Encourage congregations to plan events that include people of all ages.
- ✦ **Encourage and train older people in the community to view themselves and act as “elders.”** Discuss the important role that older people have in the lives of young people.
- ✦ **Identify and celebrate people, places, and programs that connect old and young,** adults and youth, teenagers and children. Encourage others to emulate these successful intergenerational connections.
- ✦ **Organize intergenerational community service projects,** such as cleaning up a local park or helping at a shelter.
- ✦ **Find mutually beneficial ways to bring together people of many different ages** for growth and learning, such as intergenerational music or theater groups, support groups, community education classes, or walking clubs.