

14. Adult Role Models

Young eyes are watching you

Sometimes adults do things they aren't proud of—swear, watch too much television, argue. Making mistakes is understandable, but remember young people look up to adults. They see you—especially if you're a parent—as the type of person they want to become someday. They want heroes. That's why it's so important to be the best person you can be. Adult Role Models is Asset 14 of 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 that young people are more likely to exhibit positive, responsible behavior when they have parents and other adults in their lives who model positive, responsible behavior. Having good role models is one of the greatest desires of most young people. However, only 27 percent of young people, ages 11–18, say their parents and other adults model positive, responsible behavior, according to Search Institute surveys. Let's all try a little harder to “practice what we preach.”

Tips for building this asset

According to experts, what most young people need more than anything else in their lives is positive social interaction with adults. These interactions expose young people to real-life heroes. Be a role model for the young people around you, and help them find other responsible adults to be part of their lives as well. The more positive role models young people have, the better!

Also try this

In your home and family: Do your best to model appropriate behavior at all times. When you make mistakes, admit them. Apologize for missteps.

In your neighborhood and community group: Don't be afraid to start a conversation with a young person in your neighborhood. Begin by asking: How did you meet your best friend? What is your favorite family tradition?

In your school or youth program: As a group, list questions young people can ask their adult role models to learn more about choices they made. Then, have students or participants interview that person. Discuss their findings.