

19. Religious Community

Meeting the needs of the spirit

Young people involved in a faith community benefit in at least three ways: 1. They are more likely to have positive values; 2. They have strong bonds with people of different ages and interests; and 3. They spend less time experimenting with risky behaviors than those not involved in such a community. Religious Community is Asset 19 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 who spend at least one hour a week involved in activities within a faith-based organization are more likely to: provide service to others, enjoy youth programs, follow and provide positive peer influence, and exercise restraint when it comes to risky behaviors. About 58 percent of young people, ages 11–18, spend one or more hours a week in activities in a religious institution, according to Search Institute surveys. Providing a place for spiritual growth and exploration could help reduce violence, alcohol and other drug use, and sexual activity among young people.

Tips for building this asset

Faith-based organizations strongly emphasize their ideas of positive values. It's important for parents to choose carefully. When you find a faith community that supports your family's values, your kids are more likely to internalize these values and make responsible decisions. Visit various faith-based organizations, and include your children in decisions about how and where to be involved. If you're already part of a faith community, welcome new parents and young people into your organization.

Also try this

In your home and family: Include faith and spirituality into your family's daily life. Choose ways that best fit with your values, traditions, and culture.

In your neighborhood and community: Become an active member of a faith community and help promote the well-being of young people in your community.

In your school or youth program: Avoid scheduling events that conflict with families' spiritual or cultural commitments. Use a community calendar of events to help with your planning. If your community doesn't have such a calendar, consider creating one.