

26. Caring

Follow your good intentions with great actions

People can help and care for others directly or indirectly. Direct help is when you spend time and interact with people who need care. Indirect help is when you collect money, food, or other items to give to people who distribute the items to those in need. It's important for young people to be involved in both direct and indirect caring. Caring is Asset 26 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 place a high value on caring are more likely to promote and model positive rather than negative behaviors. About 50 percent of young people, ages 11–18, say they place a high value on helping others, according to Search Institute surveys. If *everyone* cared for one another, the world would be a safer, happier, more peaceful place.

Tips for building this asset

Caring about others includes caring for a lot of different people: those in your family, neighborhood, school, community, state, country, and the world. It can also include caring for animals and the environment. Volunteering—whether for a group or an individual—is an excellent way for young people to show they care. But the easiest, quickest way to demonstrate you care? Simply smile at those around you.

Also try this

In your home and family: Do volunteer work together as a family—at an animal shelter, a nature center, a food bank, or for another cause you care about.

In your neighborhood and community: Have a neighborhood garage sale. Use the proceeds to purchase necessities and gifts for a local family in need or donate them to a local charity.

In your school or youth program: Facilitate a reading circle in which middle and high school students spend one hour a week reading to—and interacting with—elementary school children.