29. Honesty

Honesty is the best policy

Honest people are trustworthy, sincere, and genuine. They display dignity and earn respect from peers and others in the community. Although telling the truth is not always easy, teaching young people the value of honesty, is important. Without it, dishonest habits, such as lying and cheating, can become a big problem. Honesty is crucial for success in all areas of life, including relationships, school, and jobs. Honesty is Asset 29 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 grow up healthy when they tell the truth, even when it's not easy. Honesty leads to less violence and reliance on alcohol and other drugs. About 66 percent of young people, ages 11–18, say they tell the truth even when it's not easy, according to Search Institute surveys. People who are honest value diversity, good health, and success in school. They also make effective leaders.

Tips for building this asset

To instill the value of honesty, adults need to talk about it, model it, and explain why it's important. Work with your family, school, and community to come up with rules about honesty and the consequences for dishonesty. Encourage the young people you know to make a personal commitment to tell the truth—and you do the same. Honestly admit to your own successes and mistakes.

Also try this

In your home and family: Don't overreact or be accusatory if you suspect that your child is lying to you. Instead, give her or him the opportunity to tell the truth by asking questions, such as "Do you think I may be struggling with believing you right now?"

In your neighborhood and community: Model honest behavior. For example, return extra change if you receive too much from a store clerk.

In your school or youth program: Discuss what it means to be honest. Ask whether there are situations in which it's better to tell a "little white lie."