

35. Resistance Skills

The art of resistance and reasoning

Learning resistance is one of the most important social skills to develop. This skill gives young people the confidence to say “no” to people or situations that make them uncomfortable. Learning to assert themselves also helps young people make their voices heard and express opinions. With these skills in hand young people make appropriate decisions and stand firm in what they believe. Resistance Skills is Asset 35 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 can resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations are more likely to avoid risky behaviors and focus on positive attitudes. About 41 percent of young people, ages 11–18, say they can resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations, according to Search Institute surveys. Speaking up for themselves takes practice, but with your help, young people can learn to take a stand.

Tips for building this asset

Teach young people resistance skills, but also teach them the values that support why they would take a stand on an issue. Having many conversations with a teenager about drug use, sex, safety, and personal boundaries increases the chance he or she will make a safe choice when, for example, asked to ride in a car with a driver who has been drinking.

Also try this

In your home and family: Model and role-play resistance skills, specifying what to say or not say. Talk with your child about what was easy and what was difficult. Focus not only on how to resist, but also on what to say “yes” to.

In your neighborhood and community: Offer a safety net to the young people you know. Let them know they can call you if they feel pressured or tempted to do something unsafe or unhealthy.

In your school or youth program: Learn about people in the world who stood up for their values and resisted what everyone else was doing (such as Rosa Parks and Gandhi). Discuss why they were able to do so.