

37. Personal Power

Feel control over your own destiny

Having personal power means understanding and accepting the things we can and can't control. You can find a new job, work out a conflict, or move to a new location if you choose. When young people feel empowered, they feel more confident to make their own choices—to get good grades, participate in activities they enjoy, and take action to find solutions to problems. Personal Power is Asset 37 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 if they feel a sense of control over the things that happen to them. A sense of personal power gives young people the confidence to embrace positive attitudes and behaviors, and walk away from risky situations and behaviors. About 42 percent of young people, ages 11–18, feel that they have control over things that happen to them, according to Search Institute surveys. Caring adults provide opportunities for young people to make their own decisions.

Tips for building this asset

Young people who have a strong sense of their own power believe that when good things happen to them, they had some control over the outcome. If things go wrong, help young people focus on the positive steps they can take to remedy the situation. Help them see how they can make a difference in their lives and the lives of others.

Also try this

In your home and family: Teach your child practical skills, such as how to change a tire, cook a meal, and sew on a button. Well-prepared young people are more likely to feel a sense of personal power.

In your neighborhood and community: Support young people's efforts to be industrious. For example, buy lemonade from their lemonade stand, read their homemade newspaper, and attend a play they put on in their garage.

In your school or youth program: Challenge the young people in your class or program to come up with a creative way to raise money for an underprivileged family or a charity in your area. Then put the plan into action. Serving others helps young people realize they can make a difference in the world, which gives them an enormous sense of personal power.