

9. Service to Others

By helping others, young people learn to help themselves

To many young people, the world is small. It's made up of their school, home, and neighborhood. They may assume all schools are like their school. And, when they're very young, they may think the world revolves around them. But when young people start to reach out and help others, their world grows and so does their confidence. In fact, many young people report that when they give of their time and energy, they receive much in return. Serving others can help kids feel good about themselves and that they can make a difference in the world. Service to Others is Asset 9 of Search Institute's 40 Developmental Assets, qualities, experiences, and relationships that help young people grow up healthy, caring, and responsible.

Here are the facts

Research shows that young people who serve others in the community for one or more hours a week are more apt to be respectful of others, helpful and kind, and patient. They also tend to value diversity. About 48 percent of young people, ages 11–18, serve in the community one hour or more a week, according to Search Institute surveys. Encourage all young people to recognize the value of helping others.

Tips for building this asset

The best way to teach young people the value of helping others is to be a role model. Activities such as providing a meal to a new parent, driving a neighbor to an appointment, or babysitting can make a huge difference in someone's life. Look for service opportunities to do with a young person. Join organizations that involve—and provide leadership roles for—both young people and adults.

Also try this

In your home and family: Together, think of 10 ways your family can serve others. Choose one idea. Pick a date to do the activity. Afterward, talk about your experience.

In your neighborhood and community: Join or support an organization that teaches (and provides opportunities for) serving others. Some possibilities to consider: Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Habitat for Humanity, United Way, YMCA/YWCA, and Youth Service America.

In your school or youth program: Seek learning opportunities for students and group members to engage in community service projects. Also bring community resources into the classroom or program setting.