

# 1. Positive Family Communication

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## The importance of an open door

Sometimes conversations with young people—especially your own children—can become confrontational. Learning to listen can help prevent slamming doors and, instead, open them. Though challenging, being available for frequent, in-depth conversations is an important role parents and other adult family members can play in children’s lives—from the time they learn to talk all the way into adulthood. The goal is to promote and maintain an open-door policy. Ask open-ended questions and then listen, listen, listen. Positive Family Communication is Asset 2 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 experience positive communication with their parents are more likely to grow up healthy and are more willing to seek their parents’ advice and counsel. About 28 percent of young people, ages 11–18, enjoy positive communication with their parents and are willing to seek their parents’ counsel and advice, according to Search Institute surveys. Practice consistently communicating—talking *and* listening to young people—with an open mind and heart.

## Tips for building this asset

Positive communication also means listening to understand a young person’s perspective, not to advocate your position. Be available when young people need you—and even when they think they don’t. Take good care of yourself so when your children want to talk, you can give them your full attention.

## Also try this

**In your home and family:** Make it easy for your child to spend time talking with you: Keep an extra stool or chair in the kitchen, den, home office, or workshop area. When you’re in the car together is a great time to chat, too.

**In your neighborhood and community:** Ask young people you know caring questions, such as: What was the best thing about school today? What was the best act in the talent show? Why? *Listen* to their answers and respond accordingly.

**In your school or youth program:** During parent meetings, discuss the importance of positive communication between parents and children.