

13. Neighborhood Boundaries

Make time to be a good neighbor

When people don't take responsibility for monitoring young people's behavior in their neighborhood, sometimes it's due to fear. But often it's due to peoples' busy and somewhat solitary lives. Young people fare better when they have adults in their lives who expect them to do their best. To achieve the most positive effects, parents and guardians, schools, youth organizations, and, yes, neighbors all need to be involved in providing rules, monitoring behavior, and setting high expectations. Remember: everyone is someone's neighbor. Young people benefit from knowing their neighbors are looking out for their safety, as well as monitoring their behavior. Don't become paralyzed by fear, apathy, or the pure busyness of life. Neighborhood Boundaries is Asset 13 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 will focus more of their energy on positive activities than on negative ones if they live in a neighborhood in which neighbors take responsibility for monitoring young people's behavior. About 47 percent of young people, ages 11–18, say they have neighbors who take responsibility for monitoring young people's behavior, according to Search Institute surveys. Creating and enforcing neighborhood boundaries helps promote leadership, fairness, and success among young people.

Tips for building this asset

You don't have to be a community organizer to help create a community where neighbors monitor young people's behavior. All you need to do is get to know the people who live near you—children *and* their parents. Talk with parents about the boundaries they would like for their children in the neighborhood.

Also try this

In your home and family: Talk with your child about the importance of following rules in your neighborhood and community: What are the boundaries of our neighborhood? How do you know? Which neighbors seem to notice what you do? How do you feel about that?

In your neighborhood and community: Get together with other adult neighbors—parents and nonparents. Discuss neighborhood boundaries. Identify three boundaries everyone agrees on, such as no alcohol at teen parties. Agree to help enforce the boundaries. And when you see young people making a positive contribution and setting a good example, be sure to thank them.

In your school or youth program: Talk to the young people in your class or group about their neighborhoods. Do they know what the boundaries are? Do they feel safe in their neighborhood? Do they care about their neighborhood and how other young people behave there? If they feel they don't know their neighbors or their neighborhood boundaries, brainstorm ways they could make positive changes in their neighborhood.

