

## 28. Integrity

---

### It's important for young people to honor their beliefs

It's one thing to have beliefs and values. It's quite another to stand up for them, especially when you feel like you're sticking your neck out alone. Anytime young people draw on their inner spark of courage and act based on their values, they have *integrity*. History is packed with stories of honorable people with integrity. The best way to teach integrity to young people may be to practice and model it yourself. Think of the things you do every day: recycle an empty can if you care about the environment; point out something positive about a person who others are making fun of. Integrity is Asset 28 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 have integrity feel good about themselves, make thoughtful decisions, and lead others through their positive influence. About 68 percent of young people, ages 11–18, report that they act on their convictions and stand up for their beliefs, according to Search Institute surveys. Help young people gain confidence to act in ways that reflect their values and beliefs, even when it's difficult.

### Tips for building this asset

Be a role model for the young people in your life: Think about what you believe in and value. Is it being a good friend? Helping vulnerable people? Honesty? Education? Health? Ask yourself whether your daily actions show you are true to yourself and your values. Confidence, trust, and respect are a direct result of integrity, and there are many ways adults can help young people foster these characteristics.

### Also try this

**In your home and family:** Talk with your child about a belief or value you admire and respect in him or her. Brainstorm ways to provide support and positive feedback when your child acts with integrity.

**In your neighborhood and community:** If you notice a young person who is being teased for not doing something considered "cool," because it goes against his or her values, praise the young person for his or her integrity.

**In your school or youth program:** Ask students or participants to tell about a time when they acted with integrity, even though it was difficult. Congratulate each person.