

32. Planning and Decision Making

Decisions, decisions . . .

Wear a blue shirt or a red shirt? Try to fit in or create your own style? Go out with so-and-so or find a way to say “No thanks”? Watch some TV or do homework first? Young people make a lot of decisions every day. Some are easy, others difficult, and still others just plain irritating. But all of these decisions are good practice for their future as they learn how to take more control of their lives. Best of all, when young people start connecting the choices they make today with their futures (goals, dreams, ideas for jobs), the better they’ll get at actually planning for what they want. Planning and Decision Making is Asset 32 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 learn to make good decisions and plan ahead do better in school, are less likely to engage in drinking, smoking, or using other drugs, and are better able to accomplish more of what they want. Only about 29 percent of young people, ages 11–18, say they know how to plan ahead and make choices, according to Search Institute surveys. Show young people different strategies to effectively plan ahead and make healthy decisions.

Tips for building this asset

Encourage young people to keep a daily “to do” list and check off items as they complete the tasks. Allow room for mistakes, but avoid rescuing them from the consequences. Celebrate progress and accomplishments in planning and decision making.

Also try this

In your home and family: Talk with your child about how you make decisions. Have you changed your approach over time? Invite your child to help with making a decision or plan a family event.

In your neighborhood and community: Invite local young people to help plan and organize a neighborhood party or potluck.

In your school or youth program: On the board or using newsprint, make two columns. Write *Decision* above one column, *Future* above the other. Have each young person list a decision he or she needs to make, then rank how connected (1 = low, 5 = high) it is to a future goal or plan (grades, college, jobs). Discuss.