

## 39. Sense of Purpose

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### What if you live to be 100?

If you lived to 100, what would you want people to remember about you? Would your actions over the years reflect what you believed in and stood for? When young people think today about what they want to accomplish in their lives, it shapes their sense of purpose. Each and every young person has something unique to offer the world. Sense of Purpose is Asset 39 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 young people who have a sense of purpose feel good about themselves, get along better with their parents, and get into less trouble. About 57 percent of young people, ages 11–18, say their life has a purpose, according to Search Institute surveys. For those who do not, caring adults can help them identify what matters most to them and what they find meaningful.

### Tips for building this asset

Ask young people what inspires or excites them and share your thoughts on the subject with them. Encourage them to write down their thoughts about the meaning of life to help gain a greater understanding about what's important to them. Tell them to review what they've written from time to time and notice how some of these things may change over time. Let them know changes are healthy and natural as people mature. Encourage them to aim for the things that give their lives purpose.

### Also try this

**In your home and family:** Ask your child how he or she would like to contribute to the family and to others in the community. Then help her or him get started.

**In your neighborhood and community:** Look for stories or images that depict local people who've lived with a clear sense of purpose. What did they accomplish? Write an article about one of these people for your local newspaper or newsletter.

**In your school or youth program:** Ask young people in your school or program to help younger kids. Pair them up in general mentoring relationships or for tutoring on specific school subjects. This will give the older kids a sense of purpose, as well as model to the younger ones what it means to help others.