

40. Positive View of Personal Future

Looking forward to a bright future

Stories about people who have overcome incredible odds to make a difference or achieve a dream abound throughout history. It's important to have goals and dreams, but what do you do when the going gets tough? It's important to model a positive attitude, seek solutions to problems, and keep moving toward your goal. Studies show when people envision themselves reaching their goals, they're more likely to make them happen. Positive View of Personal Future is Asset 40 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 are optimistic about the future have better relationships with their parents, increased self-esteem, and decreased emotional or behavioral problems, such as depression, early sexual activity, and violence. About 72 percent of young people, ages 11–18, are optimistic about their personal future, according to Search Institute surveys. Since young people are our future adults, it's important to help them realize the positive aspects of their lives now and in the years to come.

Tips for building this asset

Having a sense of hope is one of the most important human traits to embrace. Everyone faces ups and downs in life. But it's important to teach young people that a bad day, failed test, break-up, or loss of a loved one doesn't mean the future is without hope. When bad things happen or mistakes occur, help young people focus on solutions or positive aspects of the situation instead of problems.

Also try this

In your home and family: Clip articles from newspapers or magazines of people doing hopeful things. Post them so the entire family sees them.

In your neighborhood and community: If you have concerns about your neighborhood, talk to neighbors about them. Gather a group to address these concerns and create a better future for everyone who lives nearby. Young people who live in a safe, clean, friendly neighborhood are more likely to feel positive about their future.

In your school or youth program: React positively when young people tell you their dreams—no matter how far-fetched or unreachable they may seem. Together, figure out a plan to make their dreams come true.