

SERVING OUR COMMUNITY'S FAMILIES

The 40 Developmental Assets are building blocks for healthy, happy and engaged children. Developed by the Search Institute, the New Canaan YMCA promotes these assets which enable young people to develop into successful and contributing adults.

ASSET OF THE MONTH

#2 POSITIVE FAMILY COMMUNICATION

Young people who experience positive family communication experience higher self-esteem, decreased substance use, less anxiety and depression, and greater school engagement. For positive family communication to occur, all family members must be comfortable sharing their needs, wishes, and concerns in an honest and trusting environment without fear of rejection. Establishing positive communication when children are young may help keep the channel open in adolescence.

BE INTENTIONAL

ABOUT THE ASSETS

CONVERSATION STARTERS

Whether at the dinner table or in the car, get the conversation going...

The following discussion topics can help young people identify the ways and locations where they do, and do not, feel safe, and promote conversations about how to improve safety for themselves and others.

- Who do you enjoy talking with, and why?
- What makes it easier to talk to family members, and what makes it more difficult?
- Which topics are easiest for you to talk about with your parents, and which are more difficult? Why?

The communication skills that young people develop in their families help set the pattern of how they'll communicate for the rest their lives. Teaching your children to communicate effectively with friends, teachers, co-workers, parents, peers, and others is a lasting legacy that parents can give to their children.

Additional Resources

The following books and website offer practical tips on creating and improving family communication:

- ⇒ How to Talk So Kids Will Listen and Listen So Kids Will Talk
- ⇒ The Essential Guide to Talking with Teens
- ⇒ Conversations on the Go: Clever Questions to Keep Teens and Grown-Ups Talking
- ⇒ <http://www.parentfurther.com/parenting-matters/familycommunication>.

LIVE THE ASSETS

Here are tips for promoting the assets wherever you are.

- Create opportunities for unstructured communications. Sometimes the best conversations occur when you're side-by-side instead of face-to-face, such as when you're driving or working together in the kitchen.
- Hold regular family meetings to check in with each other and discuss family issues like holidays or chores. Make sure everyone has an opportunity to participate.
- Try having each parent set an "individual date" with each child where they spend time together away from home somewhere where they can talk, such as a restaurant or coffee shop. This kind of one-to-one conversation makes it possible for a young person to discuss issues privately with their parent's undivided attention.
- Listen more than you talk.
- Positive family communication isn't just between parents and children—siblings should also be encouraged and supported to communicate with each other openly and effectively.

Learn more about the assets at www.searchinstitute.org.

The enclosed information is provided by Project Cornerstone's Asset-a-Month program. For more information, visit www.projectcornerstone.org.