

Tips for Communicating with Your Teen

Provided by the Bernards Township Municipal Alliance Against Substance Abuse for the 14th Annual Youth Summit 2010 Source: [Preparing for The Teen Years](#) by Drs. J. David Hawkins and Richard F. Catalano

- Take an interest in your teen's activities. Ask him/her to tell you about what's happening in his/her life, but don't push it.
- Communicate to your teen that you care about him/her. Be sure he/she recognizes that your love and your desire to be a good parent underlie your discussions.
- Be prepared to talk when your teen is ready. If he/she begins discussing an issue while you're driving him/her to the store, go with it. Remember, it may be easier for him/her to talk to you when he or she's not facing you, or when you're both sufficiently distracted to lessen the drama of the talk.



- Use open-ended questions. Don't set yourself up for "yes," or "no," and "I don't know" responses. Think about questions beginning with, "tell me about," and "how do you feel about."
- Think about different ways to communicate with your teen, such as notes, letters in the mail, taped messages, or even E-mail.
- Give your teen space. If he/she doesn't want to talk with you, assure him/her that you're always ready to listen, and encourage him/her to talk with someone else he/she trusts and feels comfortable with.
- Use "I" statements. Acknowledge your own feelings. "I feel that you've been ignoring me," is more likely to be accepted than, "You've been ignoring me."
- Listen. Always listen. Reinforce your teen's talking by treating what he/she says seriously. Think before you respond, and respect him/her.

The 40 Developmental Assets

External Assets: influences and experiences that young people need to receive from their surrounding world

Support	1. Family Support	Family life provides high levels of love and support.
	2. Positive Family Communication	Young person and her or his parent(s) communicate positively and young person is willing to seek advice and counsel from parents.
	3. Other Adult Relationships	Young person receives support from three or more non-parent adults.
	4. Caring Neighborhood	Young person experiences caring neighbors.
	5. Caring School Climate	School provides a caring, encouraging environment
	6. Parent Involvement in Schooling	Parent(s) are actively involved in helping young person succeed in school.
Empowerment	7. Community Values Youth	Young person perceives that adults in the community value youth.
	8. Youth as Resources	Young people are given useful roles in the community.
	9. Service to Others	Young person serves in the community one hour or more per week.
	10. Safety	Young person feels safe at home, school, and in the neighborhood.
Boundaries & Expectations	11. Family Boundaries	Family has clear rules and consequences and monitors the young person's whereabouts.
	12. School Boundaries	School provides clear rules and consequences.
	13. Neighborhood Boundaries	Neighbors take responsibility for monitoring young people's behavior.
	14. Adult Role Models	Parent(s) and other adults model positive, responsible behavior.
	15. Positive Peer Influence	Young person's best friends model responsible behavior.
Constructive Use of Time	16. High Expectations	Both parent(s) and teachers encourage the young person to do well.
	17. Creative Activities	Young person spends three or more hours per week in lessons or practice in music, theater, or other arts.
	18. Youth Programs	Young person spends three or more hours per week in sports, clubs, or organizations at school and/or in the community.
	19. Religious Community	Young person spends one or more hours per week in activities in a religious institution.
	20. Time at Home	Young person is out with friends "with nothing special to do" two or fewer nights per week.

Internal Assets: characteristics and behaviors that young people need for personal growth and development

Commitment to Learning	21. Achievement Motivation	Young person is motivated to do well in school.
	22. School Engagement	Young person is actively engaged in learning.
	23. Homework	Young person reports doing at least one hour of homework every school day.
	24. Bonding to School	Young person cares about her or his school.
	25. Reading for Pleasure	Young person reads for pleasure three or more hours per week.
Positive Values	26. Caring	Young person places high value on helping other people.
	27. Equality and Social Justice	Young person places high value on promoting equality and reducing hunger and poverty.
	28. Integrity	Young person acts on convictions and stands up for her or his beliefs.
	29. Honesty	Young person "tells the truth even when it is not easy."
	30. Responsibility	Young person accepts and takes personal responsibility.
Social Competencies	31. Restraint	Young person believes it is important not to be sexually active or to use alcohol or other drugs.
	32. Planning and Decision Making	Young person knows how to plan ahead and make choices.
	33. Interpersonal Competence	Young person has empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills.
	34. Cultural Competence	Young person has knowledge of and comfort with people of different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds.
	35. Resistance Skills	Young person can resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations.
	36. Peaceful Conflict Resolution	Young person seeks to resolve conflict nonviolently.
Positive Identity	37. Personal Power	Young person feels he or she has control over "things that happen to me."
	38. Self-Esteem	Young person reports having a high self-esteem.
	39. Sense of Purpose	Young person reports that "my life has a purpose."
	40. Positive View of Personal Future	Young person is optimistic about her or his personal future

To learn more about the 40 Developmental Assets, please visit: www.search-institute.org
or contact the Community Assets Coordinator at (908) 204-3068 or assets@bernards.org

The 40 Developmental Assets™ may be reproduced for educational, noncommercial uses only. Copyright ©1997 by Search Institute™ 615 First Avenue NE, Suite 125, Minneapolis, MN 55413; 800-888-7828; www.search-institute.org. All rights reserved.