The Role of Developmental Assets

In Helping Children and Families To Thrive

Presented by Kathleen Chaffee, MS, PCC-S
What are assets? Why are they important?

• 40 building blocks of healthy physical, intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual development

• Fortify children to help them deal effectively with disappointment, crises, and trauma
More Assets / Fewer Risky Behaviors
More Assets / More thriving

RESEARCH INSIGHTS

Assets and Thriving among US Youth

Youth who have higher levels of Developmental Assets are much more likely to engage in thriving behaviors.

The average number of thriving behaviors youth engage in (out of 8 measured) based on the level of Developmental Assets they experience.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assets</th>
<th>0 - 10</th>
<th>11 - 20</th>
<th>21 - 30</th>
<th>31 - 40</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8 THRIVING INDICATORS

- Succeed in school
- Help others
- Value diversity
- Maintain good health
- Exhibit leadership
- Resist danger
- Delay gratification
- Overcome adversity

DATA SOURCE

Search Institute surveys of 121,157 U.S. youth, grades 6-12, between 2012 and 2015.

VISIT: [www.search-institute.org/developmental-assets](http://www.search-institute.org/developmental-assets)
SUPPORT

Family

Neighbors

Program Leaders/VIP Adults

Climate in child care settings / parent involvement

Positive family communication
Empowerment

Community values kids

Service opportunities

Adults prioritize child safety

Youth are resources!
Boundaries and Expectations

- Boundaries everywhere - family, school, community
- Positive expectations
- Positive peers
- Positive adult role models
Constructive Use of Time

- Play
- Participation in a faith community
- Time at home (Family interaction!)
- Community programs
Commitment to Learning

- Motivation to Mastery
- Early Literacy/Reading for Pleasure
- Bonding to child care settings/School
- Engagement in Learning
Positive Values

Acting on Empathy

Honesty and Integrity

Self regulation
Social Competency

Planning – Decision Making
Interpersonal Skills
Resistance Skills
Cultural Awareness and Sensitivity
Positive Identity

- Self-Esteem
- Purpose
- Personal Power

Optimism about the future!
Average Number of Assets – 20.6  Females report a slightly higher average (21.3) than males (19.9)

Best News:
Between 70-75% of students reported having integrity, achievement motivation, family support, positive view of their futures, honesty, and a sense of responsibility.

Room for Improvement:
Fewer than 1/3 of students reported having positive family communication, parent involvement in schooling, reading for pleasure, participating in creative activities, having adult role models.  1/3 or fewer reported a sense that they are seen as resources and are valued by their communities

11% of students reported 10 or fewer assets  11% of students reported 31-40 assets

Assets by Race/Ethnicity

RESEARCH INSIGHTS

Asset Levels by Race-Ethnicity

The average number of Developmental Assets (out of 40) reported by each group of youth, grades 6 to 12.

- African American: 20.0
- American Indian: 18.7
- Asian American: 21.0
- Latinx American: 18.6
- White: 21.0
- Multi-Racial: 19.6

DATA SOURCE: Search Institute surveys of 121,157 U.S. youth, grades 6-12, between 2012 and 2015.

VISIT: www.search-institute.org/developmental-assets
Turning Knowledge into Practice

Knowledge of Assets

YOU

Inspire and guide adults and youth to incorporate asset building into daily life
How do people adopt and maintain constructive practices? How do destructive habits fade and healthy/effective habits take their place?

- Maintain a healthy weight
- Avoid harmful drug use
- Meet children’s emotional needs
- Recognize and act on their ability to bring out the best in kids
IS CHANGE EASY?
Dr. Jeffrey Kottler’s Research on “Significant Transformative Change That Endures.”
Adult Survivors of Trauma, Neglect and Abuse Who Develop Positive Parenting Skills

Source: Factors that Increase Successful Parenting Skills in Adult Survivors of Childhood Trauma, Neglect and Abuse: A Systematic Review
Victoria A. Christian
Search Institute Research on What is Most Effective in Helping Children Acquire Assets

“After decades of forming hypotheses, conducting surveys, crafting and writing definitions, analyzing data, and writing journal articles, Search Institute researchers and practitioners have arrived at a surprisingly simple conclusion: *nothing* has more impact in the life of a child than positive relationships.”

Peter L. Benson, Creator of the Developmental Asset Framework.
Impact of Positive Relationships on Youth Who Experience Significant Stressors

• “Whether the burdens come from the hardships of poverty, the challenges of parental substance abuse or serious mental illness, the stresses of war, the threats of recurrent violence or chronic neglect, or a combination of factors, the single most common research finding is that children who end up doing well had at least one stable and committed relationship with a supportive parent, caregiver, or other adult.”

• Excerpt from the Search Institute Publication “Relationships First – Creating Connections that Help Young People Thrive.” Research conducted by the National Scientific Council on the Developing Child.
Search Institute Research on “Developmental Relationships”
What are Developmental Relationships?

- Kids discover who they are
- Develop abilities to shape their lives
- Kids learn to contribute to the world
Elements of “Developmental Relationships”

Express Care

Challenge Growth

Support
Elements of “Developmental Relationships”

- Share power
- Expand possibilities
Impact of the Quality of Parent – Child Relationships on Development

Source: Search Institute; research sample 633 families

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Asset</th>
<th>Percentage Attributed to Developmental Relationships</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self Awareness</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Competence</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Openness to Challenge</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Responsibility</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation to Learn</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prosocial Behavior</td>
<td>36%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Impact of Race/Ethnicity on Parent Developmental Relationships

**RESEARCH INSIGHTS**

**Five Elements of Developmental Relationships in Families, by Race/Ethnicity**

Overall levels of developmental relationships vary little by the parenting adult’s race/ethnicity. Different racial-ethnic groups show different strengths across the five elements in Search Institute’s developmental relationships framework. (Percentages shown are the highest and lowest across the four racial-ethnic groups shown.)

**Data Source:** Search Institute surveys of 1,086 U.S. parenting adults with children ages 3-13. See: Don’t Forget the Families: The Missing Piece in America’s Effort to Help All Children Succeed (2015).

Visit www.searchinstitute.org/relationships
Impact of Financial Strain on Parent Developmental Relationships

RESEARCH INSIGHTS

Financial Strain May Make Relationships Harder

Young people whose families have a harder time making ends meet are less likely to experience each of the five elements of developmental relationships with parents when compared to those who do not face financial challenges.

DATA SOURCE

Search Institute surveys of 622 parent-youth pairs in two communities in the United States. Parents reported their level of financial strain. The experience of developmental relationships includes both the parent and youth perspective.

Visit www.searchinstitute.org/relationships
Strong Parent/Child Developmental Relationships Promote Resilience in Children Living in High-Stressed Families

In “high stressed families,” youth who report strong parent child relationships are

• 21 times more likely to manage emotions well

• 17 times more likely to take responsibility for their actions

• 5 times more likely to be good at making and keeping plans

• 4 times more likely to have a sense of purpose in life

...compared with youth who report weak parent-child relationships

Search Institute research project including 633 families. High stressed families are those who scored in the top 30% on a measure of 14 high stress events, including parental death, parental incarceration, and chronic disability or illness.
How Many Developmental Relationships do Kids Need?  With Whom?

At least one strong, sustained relationship

3-5 anchor relationships

Web of relationships with other caring persons
How are Youth Faring with Developmental Relationships?

• Strong relationships are defined as the youth experiencing all five dimensions often or very often.

• 28% of youth experience strength in 4 – 5 relationships

• 40% report 1 or NO type of relationship that is strong

Source: 2016 Search Institute survey; 25,395 students, one US City with diverse communities
What Else in Addition to Relationships Helps People Learn and Maintain Constructive Practices?

- Get the parts of the brain that are needed for particular functions “in gear”
- Recognize and respect that change is a process
- Building on strengths is an easier road to change than focusing on deficits
## Getting the Brain in Gear

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Layer of the Brain</th>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Action/Intervention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Neocortex</td>
<td>Language, abstract thought, imagination, complex learning and reasoning; critical thinking</td>
<td>Provide information; teach and model skills; assist with planning and problem solving; support self-examination and reflection to help people determine which actions and practices to adopt that will achieve their goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limbic</td>
<td>Emotions, including judgments and conclusions based on emotions; memories; “relational brain”</td>
<td>Build positive relationships with children and people who most strongly impact their development AND help parents and other youth “VIP’s” to establish positive relationships with children; use of stories to positively challenge and inspire people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brainstem (&quot;Reptilian Brain&quot;)</td>
<td>Survival (heartbeat, breathing); highly aroused when survival is perceived to be threatened</td>
<td>Must be regulated so that survival is supported but not so highly aroused that it overrides other brain functions (patterned, repetitive rhythmic activities – e.g. walk, run, dance, sing, swing, breathe; yoga, meditation; prayer; etc.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Stages of Change Model

Developed by Boston University School of Public Health

- Precontemplation
- Contemplation
- Determination
- Action
- Maintenance
- Relapse

Can enter/exit at any point
Expand on Strengths Rather Than Focus on Deficits

Communicates that you recognize people’s capabilities

Focusing on deficits is often draining, discouraging, and motivation deflating - especially when people do not believe they have the resources that would help them address deficits

Focusing on strengths is energizing, uplifting, and motivation enhancing. HOPE GROWS!
Final Thoughts..
“The effectiveness of child-serving programs, practices, and policies, is determined first and foremost by whether they strengthen or weaken developmental relationships... When developmental relationships are prevalent, development is promoted. When this type of relationship is not available or diluted, interventions show limited effects.”

J. Li and M.M. Julian, 2012
Implications for Strengthening Families Programming

The most powerful tool you have as an effective change agent is your ability to establish “developmental relationships” with pre-school and day care providers, parents, caretakers, and youth.
Incorporate information about assets in easy to understand formats in all of your work.

Learning takes place when new connections are made between brain nerve cells.

New connections are strengthened through REPETITION.

“What fires together, wires together.”
“We don’t know which of our acts in the present will shape the future. But we have to behave as if everything we do matters. Because it might.”

author unknown