

**Focusing on youth assets to prevent risk behaviors and promote positive health behaviors:**

**Which assets are most important and what are the strategies to strengthen them?**



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**Presenter Disclosures**

**Roy Oman**

The following personal financial relationships with commercial interests relevant to this presentation existed during the past 12 months:

**No relationships to disclose**



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## Collaborators

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- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Division of Reproductive Health
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## Background

- Many youth health promotion programs focus on preventing one risk behavior or encouraging one positive behavior
- One asset can protect youth from engaging in many risk behaviors and promote participation in several positive behaviors
- Why not place more emphasis on developing efficacious asset-building programs?



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## Purpose

- Identify youth assets that were:
  - protective from numerous youth risk behaviors
  - predictive of positive health behaviors/outcome, and
  - review selected strategies to strengthen the assets




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## 17 Youth Assets

### Individual Level Assets

- General aspirations for the future
- Educational aspirations
- Cultural respect
- Responsible choices
- Good health practices (exercise/nutrition)
- Religiosity
- General self-confidence

### Family Level Assets

- Family communication
- Parental monitoring
- Relationship with mother
- Relationship with father

### Community Level Assets

- Use of time (groups/sports)
- Use of time (religion)
- Community involvement
- School connectedness
- Positive peer role models
- Non-parent adult role models




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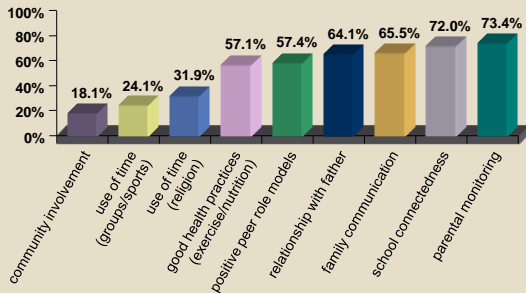
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## Asset Prevalence in the Youth Asset Study




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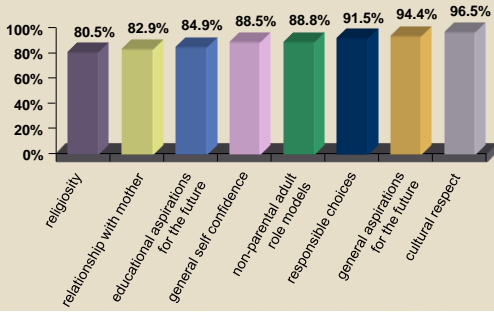
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### Asset Prevalence in the Youth Asset Study




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### Risk Behaviors

- Tobacco Use
- Drug Use
- Physical Fighting
- Weapon Carrying
- Truancy
- Arrested/picked-up by police
- Sexual Intercourse
- Oral Sex
- Use of Birth Control
- Binge Drinking
- Alcohol Use




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### Positive Behaviors or Outcomes

- Regularly participate in amount of physical activity sufficient to realize health benefits
- Healthy weight
- Good grade point average




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- **Considerations when selecting assets for programming**
  - **Protect youth from numerous risk behaviors and promote positive health behaviors**
  - **Focus on youth and family**
  - **Emphasis on 12 to 14 year olds**
  - **Changeability**
  - **Anticipated school-based intervention**
  - **Current programs**




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- **Assets consistently associated with numerous risk and health behaviors but not included in the review of intervention strategies:**
  - **Good Health Practices (Exercise/Nutrition) (11)**
  - **Non-Parental Adult Role Models (11)**
  - **Religiosity (10)**
  - **Use of Time (Religion) (10)**
  - **Community Involvement (10)**
  - **Use of Time (Groups/Sports) (8)**




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**Number of Times That Selected Assets Were Prospectively Associated with Risk and Positive Behaviors (14 Behaviors)**

Asset	All Youth	12 - 14 year olds	15 - 17 year olds	Female	Male	White	Black	Hispanic
Peer Role Models	13	12	12	11	10	11	7	10
Parental Monitoring	13	8	10	11	10	9	9	7
School Connectedness	13	9	7	11	10	5	6	9
Responsible Choices	11	11	5	10	11	10	11	10
Family Communication	11	11	5	9	8	7	7	9
Educational Aspirations	8	8	5	5	8	3	3	7
General Aspirations for the Future	7	10	5	5	8	5	3	6
Relationship with Father	9	10	8	9	13	9	5	8




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What can we do to strengthen these youth assets?



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## Resources

- Search Institute
- Communities that Care
- National Clearinghouse on Families and Youth
- The Forum for Youth Investment
- The Institute for Youth Development
- National Youth Development and Information Center



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## Strategies

- Peer Role Models
  - Conduct group activities that illustrate the power of peer pressure and identifying true friendships
  - Develop peer training programs to improve decision-making skills
  - Start a city youth council
  - Create a peer mentoring program



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## Strategies

- **Peer Role Models**
  - Conduct group activities that illustrate the power of peer pressure and identifying true friendships
    - “Who is a True Friend?”
      - Discuss the qualities of a good friend
      - Have students complete and discuss “Who is a True Friend” activity sheet aloud
      - Divide class into small groups and create posters:
        - » How can I be a good friend?
        - » How do I know I can trust my friends?
        - » How do I show support to my friends?
        - » How do I make new friends?



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## Strategies

- **Parental Monitoring**
  - Allow youth to role-play constructive ways to discuss rules with parents
  - Implement training program to:
    - Encourage parents to set clear expectations and boundaries for their youth
    - Monitor their youth’s free time
    - Follow through with appropriate discipline
  - Assign “homework” to encourage collaborative parent-child rule setting to involve the youth in the family decision making



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## Strategies

- **Parental Monitoring**
  - Allow youth to role-play constructive ways to discuss rules with parents
    - “Let’s Make a Change”
      - Discuss family rules in the home, i.e. curfew, TV time, manners, etc.
      - Each person writes 1 rule they disagree with on a sheet of paper and place in jar/container
      - Groups of 2 role-play a child asking a parent to revise 1 of these family rules
      - Discuss what was effective and what can be improved



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## Strategies

- **School Connectedness**
  - Develop a recognition program to reward positive youth and staff behavior
  - Host teacher appreciations and involve students in the planning and implementing of the program
  - Encourage all staff members to seek positive interactions
  - Create a school improvement team (comprised of administrators, teachers, staff, parents, and students) to discuss and implement ways to improve the school environment and solve problems to foster school connectedness



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## Strategies

- **School Connectedness**
  - Develop a recognition program to reward positive youth and staff behavior
    - “It Pays to be Kind”
      - Discuss kind acts by students/adults in the school
        - » What kind acts have you observed?
        - » What did you do after you observed the acts?
      - Facilitator introduces the Recognition Card by awarding a student with the card
      - Students pass out cards to others in the school who are kind



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## Strategies

- **Responsible Choices**
  - Educate youth about the importance of decision making skills and allow youth to role-play nonviolent ways to resolve conflict
  - Start a youth court to allow peers to judge juvenile offenders
  - Lead group discussions about identifying and avoiding unhealthy situations



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## Strategies

### • Responsible Choices

- Educate youth about the importance of decision making skills and allow youth to role-play nonviolent ways to resolve conflict
  - “Stop, Think, Choose”
    - Discuss the meanings of conflict and impulse control and how to deal with conflict situations
    - Review “Stop, Think, Choose” poster in small groups
    - Students share times when it was difficult to stop and think before acting
    - Discuss the positive and negative consequences and what it means to take responsibility



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## Strategies

### • Family Communication

- Provide “homework” that encourages constructive dialogue between parents and youth
- Host student-led family nights to encourage participation and communication between youth and parents
- Establish a Family Resource Center to conduct outreach activities for parents and youth
  - Distribute electronic newsletter to parents reminding them of ways to build assets
  - Maintain parental communication regarding their child’s positive behaviors



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## Strategies

### • Family Communication

- Provide “homework” that encourages constructive dialogue between parents and youth
  - “The Family History of Talk”
    - Ask each student talk with their parents/guardians about the parent’s adolescent years
    - Students should ask many questions to learn more about similar and different family dynamics
    - Example questions:
      - » What did you think of your parents when you were a teenager?
      - » What are some of your best memories of your parents when you were a teenager?



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## Strategies

- **Educational Aspirations**
  - **Conduct group activities that emphasize continued learning**
  - Have youth create educational goals and steps to achieve goals
  - Ask youth to help plan parent-teacher conferences and allow youth to present their education plan and goals



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## Strategies

- **Educational Aspirations**
  - **Conduct group activities that emphasize continued learning**
    - Host high school and college student guest lecturers to discuss the importance of continuing education and aspiring to accomplish more
    - "Committed to Learning"
      - Form teams and assign each a statement:
        - » I am motivated to do well in school
        - » I am actively engaged in learning
        - » I do at least 1 hour of homework every school day.
        - » I read for pleasure 3 or more hours per week
      - Each team creates a catchy slogan to put on a poster board and display around the room
      - Discuss the ease/difficulty of the slogans and who/what will motivate them to keep learning



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## Strategies

- **General Aspirations for the Future**
  - **Allow youth to discuss future goals and specific skills needed to reach those goals**
  - Offer internships, job shadowing experiences, and full-time opportunities for youth
  - Offer job training to help youth develop viable skills
  - Promote civic engagement through volunteering in voter registration drives, political campaigns, and nonprofit organizations



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## Strategies

- **General Aspirations for the Future**
  - Allow youth to discuss future goals and the specific skills needed to reach the goals
    - “I Can Do Anything”
      - Youth brainstorm and create a list of specific skills they can use to achieve their personal goals
      - Complete the “I Can Do Anything” worksheet and share with the group
      - Discuss the need to break down a goal into smaller, manageable steps to avoid being overwhelmed



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## Public Health Implications

- **Strengthening or increasing the number of assets youth possess is likely an effective intervention strategy**
  - Some assets protect youth from a range of risk behaviors and promote positive behaviors
- **The challenge is to develop effective programs that promote/strengthen multiple assets**



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*Make a deliberate effort to be an asset-builder in your home, school, organization, or community.*



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