



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT™
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY



JANUARY Asset of the Month: **ADULT ROLE MODELS** *Parents and other adults model positive, responsible behavior.*

This handout is designed to help adults throughout Silicon Valley develop materials and activities to promote the asset of **Adult Role Models**. Developmental Assets®, created by Search Institute, are the positive values, relationships, skills, and experiences that help children and teens thrive.

The Importance of Role Models

When we reflect on the experiences that shaped us when we were young, we often remember a special adult in our lives. It might have been a teacher, coach, older relative, community member, or other caring adult that made a big impact on us. We see these role models as being important in shaping our lives. That's no surprise—research shows that positive adult role models have a tremendous impact on young people and can have the following benefits:

- Higher levels of self esteem
- Reduced use of tobacco, alcohol, marijuana, and hard drugs
- Improved high school graduation rates
- Greater aspirations and expectations for their careers

Unfortunately, many youth in Silicon Valley do not have the adult role models that they need to thrive. In the 2016 Search Institute Developmental Assets Survey, implemented by Project Cornerstone for Santa Clara County schools, **only 57% of 4th-6th graders and 38% of 7th-12th graders reported the presence of positive adult role models in their lives.** To help address this problem, January is *Adult Role Model* month in Silicon Valley.

The good news is that no special skills are needed for adults to be a positive role model for youth! In fact, most youth who said that they had role models identified them as caring friends and relatives. Every single one of us has the potential to make a difference in the lives of young people. What matters most is a willingness to take the time to get to know a young person and let them get to know you, and to share your experience and knowledge.

The following discussion topics can help young people recognize the role models that influence their lives:

- What is the difference between a hero and a role model?
- Can celebrities (e.g., athletes, actors, musicians) be positive role models? Why or why not?
- Which adults do you know that you admire? What do you admire about them?
- What have you learned from adults that have helped or inspired you?
- What would you like to be able to talk about more with adults?

Activities

For all adults

- Make a point of talking about people you admire or who had a positive influence on you, and why. Ask a young person to do the same.
- Share stories and experiences that reflect positive values, such as when a friend treated you with honesty or a coworker behaved responsibly. This can help young people develop a better understanding of their own values and how to act in different situations.
- Take the time to pass on your unique skills and knowledge. Youth often appreciate the opportunity to learn new skills, even if they have never been exposed to them before.
- In conversation, provide opportunities for youth to discuss their view of the world.
- Model integrity by following through on any commitments that you make, especially with young people.
- Demonstrate positive responses to difficult situations, such as offering a sincere apology when appropriate, or trying again when you fail to achieve a goal.

For adults who work directly with youth

Adults who work with young people are potential role models. It is up to you to demonstrate the positive behaviors that will be expected of adults and youth.

- Model hard work, a positive attitude, and respect for others. Avoid making negative comments about coworkers, sports teams and individual players, and others with whom you compare yourself or compete.
- Be sure that you and your staff “walk your talk” by modeling respect and trust among coworkers.

At school or in youth programs

- Throughout the month, discuss the importance of role models and what qualities are important.
- Have youth make a paper or digital role model collage: First, have participants collect or create pictures and drawings of their role models. Then, have them cut out words or phrases from magazines and newspapers that describe these role models, or write the words or phrases themselves. Finally, glue the images and words onto construction paper or poster board or print the digital images and hang the collage where the youth can be inspired by their creation each day.
- Help youth identify the difference between positive and negative role models in the media: First, hang two pieces of newsprint or poster board on the wall. Label one “Positive Role Models” and the other “Negative Role Models.” Hand out a variety of recent magazines and newspapers, including teen, news, sports, and entertainment media or have youth search online. Ask youth to cut out or print pictures of newsmakers and celebrities, and tape or glue the pictures under the appropriate category. Discuss who they chose and why; whether some of the people could appear in both categories; and how to decide if a person is a positive role model.
- Discuss ways that youth can be role models for younger children at school or in the program and create opportunities for older youth to spend positive time with younger children, such as reading together or working together on projects.

About the Asset of the Month Toolkit

The Asset of the Month toolkit is designed by YMCA of Silicon Valley Project Cornerstone using Search Institute’s research-based Developmental Assets framework. The toolkit highlights 12 Developmental Assets and provides an editable poster (available in English and Spanish) and an overview handout for each asset. To access all 12 months of resources, go to <https://www.ymcasv.org/ymca-project-cornerstone/developmental-assets/asset-month-toolkit>

About Project Cornerstone

Project Cornerstone is an initiative of the YMCA of Silicon Valley with a mission to ensure all youth feel valued, respected, and known so they grow into healthy, caring, and responsible adults. For more information, visit www.projectcornerstone.org or email us at info@projectcornerstone.org.