



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT™
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY



JUNE Asset of the Month: **SAFETY**

Young people feel safe at home, at school, and in the neighborhood.

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

The Importance of Safety

Feeling safe at home, at school, and in the community is necessary for young people's health and wellbeing. There are multiple elements of safety for young people, all of which are important to help children thrive. These elements include safety from accidents and hazards, crime and violence, and sexual and physical abuse, just to name a few.

For young people, feeling unsafe, experiencing bullying and/or abuse can result in physical, emotional, and social consequences. Youth that identify as LGBTQIA+ and/or are living with a disability, are more likely to experience bullying and/or abuse. When we create environments where youth feel safe and are safe, they are less likely to skip school, more likely to achieve academically, have more friends, and thrive. It is important to know that even if a young person experiences trauma or adverse childhood experiences, they can achieve lifelong health and wellbeing.

In the 2016 Search Institute Developmental Assets Survey, implemented by Project Cornerstone for Santa Clara County schools, **only 58% of 4th-6th graders and 44% of 7th-12th graders** reported that they feel safe at home, at school, and in their neighborhoods. To help raise awareness of the importance of safety to youth's psychological as well as physical wellbeing, June is *Safety* month in Silicon Valley.

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.

- Were there incidents at school, in the neighborhood, at the mall, or anywhere else that may have made you feel unsafe, afraid, or worried?
- Do you know what to do in case of an earthquake? Fire? Serious injury or illness?
- If you or a friend were being bullied, what would you do?
- 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 20 boys will experience childhood sexual abuse and in 91% of the reported cases, the person causing harm is trusted by the child or is a family member (including siblings, mothers, and grandparents). Early conversations and education may help prevent future abuse. See Darkness to Light's "5 Steps to protecting children" for information on recognizing, discussing, and acting: <https://www.d2l.org/education/5-steps/>

While safety is a critical concern, it is also important that adults help young people understand that small risks are normal. Sometimes overstressing safety can lead children to avoid healthy risks that help them grow. Helping young people learn to manage their own safety and react in case of emergency will help them develop confidence and independence that will serve them well throughout their lives.

Activities

For families

- Does everyone understand the rules of online safety, opening the door to strangers, and spending time at home alone? Work together on safety rules that everyone can agree upon and follow.
- Does everyone understand where to go and what to do in a fire or other emergency? Practice fire and earthquake drills so that children can easily recall the instructions during the stress and confusion of an actual event. Together, identify at least three neighbors to whom your children can go in case of an emergency at home.
- Hold honest, open, and age-appropriate discussions with your children about personal safety, avoiding dangerous situations, and what to do if they feel threatened.
- At an early age, talk about and use proper names for body parts. Teach children body boundaries. Let them know that "body secrets" are not okay and that they can always say "stop" and leave a situation and get help. Let them know that these rules apply even with people they know (i.e., family).
- Talk to your children about bullying, including what to do if they or their peers are being bullied. Bullying is a form of intimidation, and directly impacts young people's sense of personal safety and comfort.

For all adults

- Make your home a safe place for all children in the neighborhood to go to if they are threatened, hurt, or lost.
- Create or serve on a neighborhood watch group for your community.
- Be an "askable adult" who youth can go to when they have questions or concerns about their safety.
- Model safe behaviors! Wear a helmet when you ride a bicycle and fasten your seatbelt in the car.
- Pay attention to what is going on with the youth around you and intervene if it seems that someone is being threatened, harassed, or bullied, or if youth are engaging in unsafe behaviors.

At school or in youth programs

- Take a safety walk with youth to identify places where people might get hurt or threatened and discuss where young people do and don't feel safe at the site. Brainstorm ways to address the issues and work with the administration or facility staff to solve the problems.
- Create and communicate clearly defined rules for physical and interpersonal behaviors. It is important that youth know that bullying is not acceptable. Discuss and role-play ways that youth can stand up for themselves and their peers if they're being bullied. Make sure that youth understand the importance of reporting bullying incidents and the difference between reporting and "telling."
- Involve parents and caretakers in safety discussions to ensure message consistency and reinforcement.

Resources

- While the National Center for Missing and Exploited Childrens' Take 25 initiative is no longer available, it's "25 Ways to Make Kids Safer" handout can still be found online. Here is a link to a PDF in English and Spanish: https://www.sbsheriff.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/SAFETIP_ES.pdf
- There are many organizations offering training, resources and support around sexual abuse, including Darkness to Light (<https://www.d2l.org/>) Parenting Safe Children (<https://parentingsafechildren.com/>), and Stop It Now! (<https://www.stopitnow.org/>).
- Electronic bullying online or through mobile phones, known as "cyberbullying," is a growing phenomenon, especially with the relative anonymity for those who are doing the bullying. A useful resource to help youth understand the issues is <http://www.stopcyberbullying.org>. For adults, <http://www.cyberbullying.org> serves as a clearinghouse for the latest research and information about cyberbullying.
- Common Sense Media has an extensive list of online safety resources: <https://www.commonsensemedia.org/articles/online-safety>
- For K-12 schools, Project Cornerstone offers the Expect Respect peer abuse and bullying prevention workshop. With the guidance of a skilled facilitator, teams of diverse students develop leadership skills and action plans to promote healthy behaviors and reduce bullying on campus. Contact Project Cornerstone at (408) 351-6482 or info@projectcornerstone.org for more information.

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.