

What Are Developmental Assets?

Search InstituteSM of Minneapolis, Minnesota, has identified 40 building blocks that are key to the healthy development of children and teenagers. This framework of *40 Developmental AssetsTM* has grown out of extensive research on the positive relationships, experiences, opportunities, and personal qualities of young people. There are two categories of assets – external assets and internal assets.

External Assets

External assets are the positive experiences that young people receive from the world around them. If you think of children and youth as young birds, the external assets form the nest where the young birds grow and develop.

These 20 assets are about supporting and empowering young people, about setting boundaries and expectations, and about positive and constructive use of young people's time. External assets identify important roles that families, congregations, schools, neighborhoods, and youth organizations play in promoting healthy development.

The Four Categories of External Assets

- **Support** – Young people need to be surrounded by people who love, appreciate, and accept them.
- **Empowerment** – Young people need to feel valued and valuable. This happens when youth feel safe and respected.
- **Boundaries and Expectations** – Young people need clear rules, consistent consequences, and encouragement to do their best.
- **Constructive Use of Time** – Young people need opportunities outside of school to enjoy themselves, develop new skills, and build positive relationships with other youth and adults.

Internal Assets

Internal assets identify those characteristics and behaviors that come from the positive internal growth and development of young people. Considering the image above of children and youth as young birds, the internal assets are the wings and the instincts that grow and develop to enable the young birds to progress into adulthood.

The 20 internal assets are about positive values, positive identity, social competencies, and commitment to learning. These internal assets serve as an “internal compass” to help young people make thoughtful and positive choices. These assets also help youth to be better prepared for situations in life that challenge their inner strength and confidence.

The Four Categories of Internal Assets

- **Commitment to Learning** – Young people need a sense of the lasting importance of learning and a belief in their own abilities.
- **Positive Values** – Young people need to develop strong guiding values or principles to help them make healthy life choices.
- **Social Competencies** – Young people need skills to be able to interact effectively with others and cope with new situations.
- **Positive Identity** – Young people need a sense of their self-worth, power, purpose, and promise.

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