



OCTOBER Asset of the Month: Positive Family Communication

Young person and her or his parent(s) communicate positively, and young person is willing to seek advice and counsel from parent(s).

This document is designed to help adults throughout Silicon Valley develop materials and activities to promote the asset of positive family communication.

Newsletter Content

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The Importance of Positive Family Communication

Young people who experience positive family communication experience less substance use and abuse, higher self esteem, less anxiety and depression, and greater school engagement than those who do not. However, in Santa Clara County, only **63% of 4th-6th grade students and 30% of 7th-12th grade students** reported that they and their parents communicate positively and that they are willing to seek advice from their parents. To help promote this valuable asset, October is Positive Family Communication month in Silicon Valley.

For positive family communication to occur, all family members must be comfortable sharing their needs, desires, and concerns in an environment that encourages honesty, trust, acceptance and fairness without fear of being rejected or ignored. By establishing positive communications when children are young, families can ease or even avoid some of the communications problems that may occur in adolescence.

No matter how old your children are, it's never too late to start a tradition of positive, open communication among family members! The following questions can help your family identify the patterns of communication in your family and open the door to improvements. Encourage your child to answer these questions honestly, with no fear of recrimination:

- Who do you enjoy talking with, and why?
- What makes it easier to talk to family members, and what makes it more difficult?
- Which topics are easiest for you to talk about with your parents, and which are more difficult? Why?

The communication skills that young people develop in their families help set the pattern of how they'll communicate with others for the rest their lives. Teaching your children to communicate effectively with friends, teachers, co-workers, parents, peers, and others is a lasting legacy that parents can give to their children.

This article was provided courtesy of Project Cornerstone's Asset-a-Month program. For more information, visit www.projectcornerstone.org.

Activities

For families

- Create opportunities for unstructured communications. Sometimes the best conversations spontaneously occur when you're side-by-side instead of face-to-face, such as when you're driving somewhere or working together in the kitchen.
- At dinnertime, instead of asking "How was your day?" (which often generates one-word responses), play Worst and Best, where everyone—including parents—takes turns sharing the worst thing and the best things that happened to them during the day.
- Hold regular family meetings to check in with each other and discuss family issues like holidays or chores. Make sure everyone has an opportunity to participate.
- Try having each parent set an "individual date" with each child where they spend time together away from home in an atmosphere conducive to talking, like a restaurant or coffee shop. This kind of one-to-one conversation makes it possible for a young person to discuss issues privately and for a parent to provide undivided attention.
- **Listen more than you talk.**
- Positive family communication isn't just between parents and children—siblings should also be encouraged and supported to communicate with each other openly and effectively.

For all adults

- Model positive, respectful communications at all times.
- Talk to young people about the importance of family communication.

At school or in youth programs

- Send home a list of "conversation starters" with information about the value of positive family communication. (see Resources at the end of this document for suggested books.)
- Assign homework that requires students to talk to parents or other family adults.
- Create and deliver a unit on "family" that helps youth understand different kinds of families and appreciate their own.

Resources

- The following books offer practical tips on creating and improving family communication:
 - [*How to Talk So Kids Will Listen and Listen So Kids Will Talk*](#)
 - [*The Essential Guide to Talking with Teens*](#)
 - [*Conversations on the Go: Clever Questions to Keep Teens and Grown-Ups Talking*](#)
- The MVPParents Web site covers several topics related to positive family communication, including tips on how to talk about emotions, developing listening skills, and the impact (positive and negative) of digital technologies on communication. For more information, visit <http://www.mvparents.com/time-together/communication>.

November Asset of the Month: Positive Cultural Identity

If you or your organization can share ideas related to the developmental asset of positive cultural identity (young person feels comfortable with and proud of his/her identity, including but not limited to disabilities, ethnicity, faith/religion, family status, gender, language, and sexual orientation), please contact Elissa Miller at (408) 351-6425 or by email at Elissa@projectcornerstone.org.

About the Asset-a-Month Program

The Santa Clara County Asset-a-Month program is an initiative of the Project Cornerstone public policy team, which contains representatives from local governments, agencies, and youth-serving organizations. The goals of the Asset-a-Month program are to help align adults throughout our diverse community in their efforts to promote positive youth development by fostering developmental assets. For more information about the Santa Clara County Asset-a-Month program, contact Anne Ehresman, Project Cornerstone's executive director, at (408) 351-6424 or Anne@projectcornerstone.org.