



Asset-Building Ideas

for Religious Youth Workers

A major goal of religious youth workers is to address young people's spiritual needs and to ground them in the faith tradition. Asset building can be an important part of nurturing a faithful, value-centered person. A caring, welcoming environment that supports young people and challenges them to grow will keep young people involved and interested in your congregation. Here are some suggestions:

Learn about the asset framework. Make a commitment to building assets for youth in your congregation—and for all the children and young people around you.

Plan a youth program that Intentionally addresses one or more of the assets. For example, plan a series of events focused on the positive-values assets (#2631).

Nurture your own assets. Surround yourself with people who support you and your work. Empower yourself by serving others. Set boundaries on your time and high expectations for yourself. When you spend time with young people, do it because you really want to, not because you feel you have to or should. Uphold positive values. Build your own social competencies. Focus on what excites you about youth work and dream big about the future.

Identify how your programs and activities already build assets. List all the formal and informal opportunities your congregation offers for youth and evaluate each in light of the asset framework.

Nurture an asset-building climate in your youth group. Focus on creating an atmosphere that is warm (where young people, volunteers, and youth leaders are friendly and welcoming), caring, thinking (where young people are challenged to think and grow), and

valuing (where young people are **valued** and respected).

~ **Ensure that retreats, camps, and trips are asset-building experiences by balancing fun with learning and by building relationships.** Expose young people to new people, cultures, experiences, and opportunities to learn about themselves and their abilities. Take time after these experiences to reflect on what happened—the positives and the negatives—to help young people process what they learned.

~ **Form partnerships with other people who are interested in building assets.** Some of these people may be members of your congregation; some may be part of a different faith tradition in your community; others may be in a youth-service organization or school. The important thing is to find other caring people who want to bring out the best in young people. By working together, you'll develop creative ideas, be able to expand your outreach, and make a bigger difference in the lives of kids.

~ **Involve youth in asset-building efforts.** Include them on planning teams, ask for and use their ideas about programs and activities, and build relationships with them by working together to build assets for all young people and youth in your congregation.