

## Importance of Role Models

Sometimes we all do things we aren't proud of—mistakes are a part of being human and living life! But it's also important to remember that we're often role models for the youth (and even other adults!) in our life, and we should strive to set positive examples whenever possible.

Research shows that young people are more likely to exhibit positive, responsible behavior when they have parents and other adults in their lives who model positive, responsible behavior. We've all heard the phrase "small eyes are watching you"; the second half of that might as well be "and they're copying your behaviors!". We **know** that youth with positive social interactions with adults, and relationships with adults who model positive behaviors has a tremendous impact on their development. But what does it mean to "be a role model"?

For the wee ones in your life (ages 3-5), this means each of us should be modeling self-control, positive social skills, engagement in learning, and living a healthy lifestyle. As the youth in your life get a bit older (ages 5-9) your behaviors should stay the same, but we can start to encouraging them to follow our healthy examples. The pre-teens and teens in our life (and other adults!) can be challenged to identify and utilize the positive, responsible behavior we're modeling and identify what works best for them.

We can specifically think about developing this External Asset:

**In your home and family** – by doing our best to model appropriate behavior at all times. When we make mistakes, we admit them and apologize for missteps.

**In your neighborhood and community groups** – by starting a conversation with a young person in your neighborhood. You can start to get to know them by asking how they met their best friend, what's their favorite family tradition, what do they love about this time of year, etc.

**In your school or youth program** – if you lead a group of youth, you could brainstorm a list questions they can ask their adult role models to learn more about choices they made. Students or participants could be challenged to ask these questions to the adults in their lives, and share back their findings.

Making sure we're challenging ourselves to be the best role model we can, as well as encouraging youth to identify role models in their lives can help build this Asset. Upstream wants to challenge you to be a role model for the young people around you, and help them find other responsible adults to be part of their lives as well. We're not expecting anyone to be perfect, but we can all strive to be the best version of ourselves – especially when we know the youth in our lives are watching! We know the more positive role models young people have, the better! Are you interested in connecting with other adults, and learning more about supporting our youth making healthy decisions? Consider joining Empower Johnson County on April 14<sup>th</sup> for their lunch-time Town Hall! Learn more and register at [LINK](#).

Want to know more about the 40 Developmental Assets and ideas for helping young people build them? You can learn more about what Upstream is doing at [www.upstreamprevention.org/assets](http://www.upstreamprevention.org/assets), or go directly to the Search Institute source at [www.search-institute.org/assets](http://www.search-institute.org/assets)

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Developmental Assets® are positive factors within young people, families, communities, schools, and other settings that research has found to be important in promoting the healthy development of young people. Upstream created this content modified from the *Instant Assets: 52 Short and Simple E-Mails for Sharing the Asset Message*. Copyright © 2007 by Search Institute. You can find more of their information at [www.search-institute.org](http://www.search-institute.org).