

## Help young people reach their potential

Young people have all kinds of hopes and dreams: winning a contest, going to college, or flying to the moon. When caring adults show they believe in young people and help them reach their potential, youth are better able to do just that. Express your expectations to young people as a *hope* you *hold* for them. After all, would you want people to doubt your abilities, not expect much of you, or even give up? Offer encouragement, but avoid applying unreasonable pressure. Remember: Few people succeed at *everything* they try. **Setting clear, high expectations is one of the External Developmental Assets within the Boundaries and Expectations domain.**

Research shows that young people whose families and teachers have high hopes for them have higher self-esteem, try harder, do better in school, and believe they'll be able to get good jobs. About 48 percent of young people, ages 11–18, say parents, teachers, and other adults encourage them to do well, according to Search Institute surveys. As a caring adult, you play an important part in setting and adjusting expectations for young people.

Are you clear about the expectations you have for your children, students, or other young people in your life? Discussing their hopes and dreams with them is the first step in making sure expectations bring out their best. If you're unsure how to tackle this, use these tips:

**In your home and family:** Talk with your child about a hope or dream you hold for her or him. State a clear expectation that reflects that hope. Ask your child what he or she expects of himself or herself. Ask how you can support her or him in reaching goals. Discuss how together you can find the resources necessary to make that hope or dream a reality.

**In your neighborhood and community:** When you talk to young people in your community, be sure to ask them about their goals and how they plan to achieve them. Praise young people **for doing the best they can and encourage them when they encounter setbacks.** Use setbacks as an opportunity to discuss what they might do differently next time.

**In your school or youth program:** Talk with students and participants about a time when they met an expectation that at first seemed too high. How did it make them feel? What did they learn from any mistakes along the way?

As graduation and other celebrations are right around the corner for many, make sure you're also setting expectations around substance use for the youth in your life. If you missed Empower's Town Hall, you can watch it here, to listen to other community members talk about the importance of setting expectations and boundaries.

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).