

## Looking forward to a bright future

It's graduation season, which means it's also commencement speaker season! This is a time when we get to celebrate achievements and celebrate next steps, but also a time when we hear more stories about people who have overcome incredible odds to make a difference or achieve a dream. It's important to have goals and dreams, but what do you do when the going gets tough? It's important to model a positive attitude, seek solutions to problems, and keep moving toward your goal. Studies show when people envision themselves reaching their goals, they're more likely to make them happen. **Having this positive view of personal future is one of the assets within the Positive View Internal Asset Domain of the Developmental Assets.**

Research shows that young people who are optimistic about the future have better relationships with their parents, increased self-esteem, and decreased emotional or behavioral problems, such as depression, early sexual activity, and violence. About 72 percent of young people, ages 11–18, are optimistic about their personal future, according to Search Institute surveys. Since young people are our future adults, it's important to help them realize the positive aspects of their lives now and in the years to come.

Having a sense of hope is one of the most important human traits to embrace. Everyone faces ups and downs in life. But it's important to teach young people that a bad day, failed test, break-up, or loss of a loved one doesn't mean the future is without hope. When bad things happen or mistakes occur, help young people focus on solutions or positive aspects of the situation instead of problems.

In addition to having these conversations and modeling looking for the positives, you can also build this asset:

**In your home and family:** Clip articles from newspapers or magazines of people doing hopeful things. Post them so the entire family sees them. Remember that it's okay to have bad days, but to try and look for the hope and positive when faced with stress.

**In your neighborhood and community:** If you have concerns about your neighborhood, talk to neighbors about them. Gather a group to address these concerns and create a better future for everyone who lives nearby. Young people who live in a safe, clean, friendly neighborhood are more likely to feel positive about their future.

**In your school or youth program:** React positively when young people tell you their dreams—no matter how far-fetched or unreachable they may seem. Together, figure out a plan to make their dreams come true – this graduation season and beyond!

Building this positive view of personal future is an important asset to Upstream; we know it has far reaching implications when our youth (and everyone!) can build up their ability to lean into their strengths, hope, and positivity when they're having a rough time. We also recognize that sometimes, our rough time is out of the capability of a positive spin. If you're in one of these rough patches, or know someone who is, we encourage you to reach out to 211 and get connected with a variety of resources – from food to housing to crisis support.

As summer gets started, we also want to wish all of the graduates out there a hearty Congratulations! We're so excited to see what you do next!

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)

-----  
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).