

Building Social Competencies

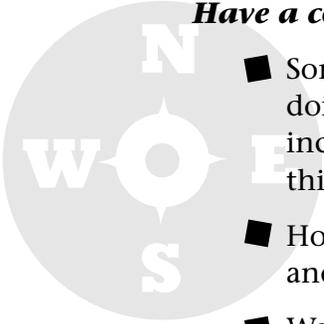
The Social-Competencies Assets (32 to 36) are as follows:

- 32. Planning and Decision Making:** Young person knows how to plan ahead and make choices.
- 33. Interpersonal Competence:** Young person has empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills.
- 34. Cultural Competence:** Young person has knowledge of and comfort with people of different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds.
- 35. Resistance Skills:** Young person can resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations.
- 36. Peaceful Conflict Resolution:** Young person seeks to resolve conflict nonviolently.

Children and teenagers need to understand how others may feel and to respect them even when they disagree. The following ideas and tips can help you build the Developmental Assets* in the social-competencies category, with a special focus on asset 32.

Think about ways you can build these assets

- Letting go and letting children practice social competencies can be one of the most confusing parts of parenting. But there is no other way these assets can emerge.
- Think of your job as creating “right-sized” learning experiences when your child is young. Gradually let her or him assume more responsibility in these areas. For example, you might ask a toddler if he wants to wear his red sweatshirt or his blue one. You might *remind* an elementary student that it is chilly outside and let him choose how to dress. If he goes without a jacket, allow him to experience the logical consequences of that decision.
- As your child gets older, he or she can gain wonderful insight if you are willing to share examples of your own successes and mistakes in planning and making decisions.



Have a conversation about . . .

- Some aspect of your life together in which your child can start doing some of the planning and decision making. This could include such things as vacation times, garden plans, decorating, thinking about getting a pet, or choosing what to wear.
- How you approach projects, breaking big tasks into smaller ones and giving yourself deadlines.
- Ways you've expanded your group of friends to include people of backgrounds different from your own.

Look for and encourage your child's asset-building actions

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- Find opportunities at home for your child to plan things. Even very young children can help make a grocery list, help shop for and make a meal, or hold tools, maybe even read instructions when you are working on a home project. Older children can help plan family vacations, learn to budget their expenses, and help compare prices.
 - To encourage a regular time for homework, you might say you have paperwork of your own to do to meet certain deadlines (paying bills, for example). Then do your task at the same time your child works on school assignments.
 - Mention the tasks you have to plan ahead for and ask your child what school assignments are coming up. Show your child how to break tasks into smaller steps, then put them on a calendar.
 - The older your child gets, the less you'll need to "direct" her or him and the more you can expect to see independence and responsibility. It still helps your child to observe your thought process, whether it is something for your job, improvements where you live, or a volunteer commitment.