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## Positive Values

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*Values influence every part of our lives. They give us a sense of who we are and they shape the way we act and react to people and situations in our daily lives. It makes sense that positive values promote positive behaviors. Teaching youth positive values can help them avoid negative peer pressure and grow into caring, responsible adults. This newsletter looks at six values which research indicates are essential for parents and teachers to promote as they work together to help youth succeed.*



Caring for, or serving someone is one of the best ways a youth can spend his or her time.

Research has found that youth who spend at least an hour a week helping others are much less involved in destructive behaviors such as drug use or school failure.

**✓ PARENTS:** Make your home a place where youth learn to help and care for others by example. Assign older children to teach younger siblings skills such as tying their shoes, or writing their name, etc. Schedule regular family service projects such as helping an elderly neighbor, working in the community food bank, or volunteering at the local animal shelter. It's important for youth to see their parents helping others and being involved in good works!

**✓ SCHOOLS:** Give extra credit to students involved in community service projects. Work with community organizations to learn where students could serve, and then help students become involved in those projects. As a school, schedule annual service projects such as "Sub for Santa" or other such programs.

**✓ CONGREGATIONS:** Make service projects a regularly scheduled youth activity,

and involve the youth in the planning stages. Also, organize service activities which involve the entire congregation, and ensure that youth have meaningful roles in these projects.

**✓ COMMUNITY LEADERS/**

**NEIGHBORS:** Honor and recognize outstanding youth who serve in the community -- sponsor an annual awards program or use the media to publicize their good deeds. Promote neighborhood rehabilitation projects and invite local schools to participate. Give public praise to youth for participating in service projects.



As children grow older, they become more aware of worldwide concerns such as poverty and hunger. Parents and other adults must take the time to teach youth that they *can* make a difference in the lives of others.



**✓ PARENTS:** As a family, discuss world events and ask youth how they feel about current issues such as poverty and injustice. Talk about ways that one individual or a small group of people can make a difference. Discuss the distress caused by natural disasters and ask youth to suggest ways your family can help relieve the suffering.

**✓ SCHOOLS:** Use class time to discuss differences between cultures, and talk about equality and social justice. Assign students to research and write about people who have made significant contributions to society through their service or social activism. Involve students in news reports where social justice was not experienced.

**✓ CONGREGATIONS:** Help youth to identify local and/or global needs, such as hunger or poverty, and invite them to suggest

ways that your congregation could help meet those needs. Be careful not to discourage youth who want to "change the world," rather, help them find ways to make a positive contribution to society. Create a service project to help youth in a country recently confronted with a disaster of some sort.

**✓ COMMUNITY LEADERS/**

**NEIGHBORS:** Support local scout groups, schools or charities in food drives, clothing drives, or other activities designed to eliminate suffering. Evaluate community events, classes or other community-sponsored activities to assure that the needs of all community members are being considered, and not just the majority culture.



Youth must be encouraged to act on their convictions and stand up for what they believe. Although difficult at times, youth who act according to their conscience, gain confidence and develop integrity.

**✓ PARENTS:** Tell your child about a time when you did or didn't stand up for something that you believed in. Explain how you felt, and ask your youth to share their feelings about similar experiences they may have had. Compliment your youth for acting on a belief or conviction in a difficult situation. Be a model for integrity by making sure your youth understand your values and beliefs, and that they see you acting on those convictions.

☑ **SCHOOLS:** Learn about men and women in history who acted on their convictions, and discuss current political or national figures who demonstrate integrity. Ask students to discuss the difference between assertiveness and aggression in standing up for one's beliefs.

☑ **CONGREGATIONS:** Use the scriptures, and/or other religious texts and traditions to teach about integrity. Talk with youth about situations when acting on their religious beliefs may be a difficult thing to do -- role-play situations and ask how they would react.



Teaching youth to be honest can be a difficult task, yet the rewards are great. To

instill the value of honesty, parents, teachers, and other adults must model honesty and trustworthiness in every aspect of their behavior.

☑ **PARENTS:** Be an example! Your youth will watch you closely, so be honest with your children, with telemarketers, store clerks, neighbors, friends and co-workers. "Catch" your youth being honest and praise them for their actions. Be careful how you react to children's misdeeds -- they will lie if they fear a harsh reaction.

☑ **SCHOOLS:** Outline expectations for students, and establish rules and consequences for cheating, lying, stealing, etc. Include honesty in your school's code of ethics.

☑ **CONGREGATIONS:** Give youth an opportunity to discuss honesty, and related moral and ethical issues. Encourage them to share personal experiences of being honest in difficult situations, and offer support for youth as they face these challenges.



Teaching youth to be responsible takes time and must

be done step by step. If taught correctly, responsibility can help youth

better understand actions and consequences. Responsible youth are able to make better choices.

☑ **PARENTS:** All children and youth should be given various chores and household tasks, but be realistic in assigning these responsibilities. Break tasks down into small steps at first, and make sure youth know how to perform each step of the task before requiring complete responsibility. Don't nag youth or assume their responsibilities -- use natural consequences for tasks left undone.

☑ **SCHOOLS:** Give students tasks and responsibilities within the school or classroom, and teach them how to fulfill those responsibilities. Help students learn how to complete large projects by breaking them down into smaller tasks. Express your confidence in students, and let them know that they are expected to take responsibility for their own actions.

☑ **CONGREGATIONS:** When appropriate, ask congregation members to share experiences in which their lives were changed in connection with choices they made.

☑ **COMMUNITY LEADERS/NEIGHBORS:** Challenge the stereotype of irresponsible youth by giving public recognition to youth and youth groups who are making positive contributions to the community. Teach responsibility by requiring restitution for youth involved in destructive activities such as graffiti, or other property damage.



Research has shown that youth who abstain from sex, alcohol, and drugs are less likely to fight, get in trouble with the police, feel depressed or suicidal, or be involved in other troublesome behavior. Restraint, or abstinence, is a value associated with successful youth.

☑ **PARENTS:** Keep the lines of communication open on the topics of sex, alcohol and illicit drugs. If you are

uncomfortable discussing these issues with your teenager, admit it, then look for other ways to share your concerns. Encourage youth to date in groups and discourage one-on-one dating, especially prior to young adulthood. Provide your youth with good reading sources about human sexuality.

☑ **SCHOOLS:** If sex education is taught, use a values-based curriculum which promotes abstinence for youth. Support DARE or other drug resistance programs. Involve the parents in programs with instruction about sex and drugs.

☑ **CONGREGATIONS:** Youth need to understand what their faith or religion teaches about sexual behavior, alcohol and drug use. Caring youth leaders will help youth identify their own values, and understand how those values are directly related to their private behavior.

☑ **COMMUNITY LEADERS/NEIGHBORS:** Support local efforts and legislation which would eliminate or reduce youth access to alcohol, tobacco, and sexually explicit videos and magazines.

✂️<<CLIP AND SAVE >>✂️



### Parents' To-Do List

1. Ask my teen to help a younger sibling with homework.
2. Sign the family up for a turn helping at the community food bank.
3. Praise my teen for standing up for his beliefs.
4. Give the kids meaningful chores to do, and thank them for a job well done!
5. Help my youth practice different ways of saying "no" when they are feeling pressured by friends.
6. Make time for fun!

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