



*Helping our youth become responsible individuals involves building their self-confidence. This is done by including youth in service activities, providing them a safe home, school and community environment, and by reassuring them they are valued members of the community. This newsletter discusses ways that we can let youth know they are valued, and improve their self-confidence as we work to **help youth succeed.***

Communities need to let youth know they are valued members of society. As youth recognize their role in the community, they become more responsible and aware of the contributions they can make. Youth can then become great assets to the community.



PARENTS: Involve your family in community events. Volunteer to serve as a parent representative on community committees or councils, and talk about these activities with your children and youth.

SCHOOLS: Keep community leaders in touch with changes that youth are experiencing and the unique challenges that they face. Recognize students' contributions to the school and to the

VALUING YOUTH

"The more a young person is valued and feels valuable, the more likely it is that he or she will grow up healthy." Peter L. Benson, Ph.D., What Kids Need to Succeed

community through newsletter spotlights or special awards. Teach students how society has benefited from contributions made by local and national youth organizations.

CONGREGATIONS: Make youth activities a high priority for your congregation. Assign enthusiastic and caring adults to serve as youth leaders, and offer wholehearted support for youth programs!

COMMUNITY LEADERS/NEIGHBORS: Provide youth a place to meet and engage in appropriate activities, such as a community youth or recreation center. Seek youth input to assure that community-sponsored activities are meeting the needs of youth.



Youth need to be seen as useful resources. When given roles and responsibilities to fulfill, youth feel valued and will be more likely to be found engaged in appropriate activities.



PARENTS: Hold family meetings on a regular basis and include youth in discussions about planning vacations, activities, or weekly work projects. Assign chores and tasks to youth, based on their age and ability to contribute -- help them feel useful. Talk about current topics with youth around the dinner table, and ask youth how *they* would approach the issues or problems.

SCHOOLS: Develop peer-tutoring programs, where older students can teach and counsel younger students. Encourage students to voice their opinions on issues facing youth, by writing letters to the local paper, or attending community meetings. Utilize class time and club activities to teach youth how to contribute to the community.

CONGREGATIONS: Teach youth leadership skills by allowing them to help plan congregational activities involving youth. Also, give youth opportunities to use their unique talents or abilities to contribute to the congregation, either in Sunday services or other church gatherings.

COMMUNITY LEADERS/NEIGHBORS: Find ways to involve youth in community organizations -- for example, organize a Youth City Council or Youth Court. Discuss critical issues facing your community and then ask youth for their input. Listen to their ideas, and whenever possible, find ways to implement their suggestions!



Giving service to others is a great way for youth to develop self-confidence and to feel a part of the community. Research has shown that youth who are involved in service activities learn how to get along and relate to others, develop leadership skills, learn patience, and gain great satisfaction from their service activities.



❑ **PARENTS:** Be an example! Involve your children when you provide service to others in your neighborhood or through community volunteer organizations. Help youth choose areas where they would like to contribute, and support them in those projects.

❑ **SCHOOLS:** Organize service activities that students and student clubs can participate in. Support regular service activities during the holidays, such as gathering food for the local food bank, or providing gloves for needy children.

❑ **CONGREGATIONS:** Youth leaders can involve youth in service-oriented projects within their own congregations. Leaders should be excited about service projects, and make serving others a fun experience.

❑ **COMMUNITY LEADERS/NEIGHBORS:** Organize a clean up party for the neighborhood, and make special assignments to neighborhood youth and/or community youth organizations.



For youth to achieve their potential, they must feel that they are safe, and able to express themselves at home, school and in the community.



❑ **PARENTS:** Make your home a safe and pleasant place to be. There should be no violence toward any family member. Physical punishment, yelling and belittling youth are not good discipline methods, even when wrong choices are made. Develop a trusting relationship with your youth, so that when they make mistakes, they will not be fearful of discussing their problems with you.




❑ **SCHOOLS:** Teach youth about personal safety, and ensure that appropriate safety precautions are implemented at school. Provide adequate supervision during lunch and other free time, so that youth will feel safe and protected from threats of physical violence from peers.

❑ **CONGREGATIONS:** Provide a safe environment for all youth activities, and teach youth to recognize unsafe situations. Help youth learn appropriate times to help and offer service, and when to be cautious.

❑ **COMMUNITY LEADERS/NEIGHBORS:** Organize a crime watch program, or implement other crime prevention activities in the community. Involve youth in other neighborhood committees designed to prevent crime.



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Parents' To-Do List

1. Ask my teenager's opinion on a topic - any topic - every day.
2. Take the family on a picnic at one of our community parks.
3. Ask my teen to help with a fix-up project around the house.
4. Take the neighbor's dog for a walk - bring one of the kids along and talk along the way.
5. Make time for fun!

HELPING YOUTH SUCCEED is produced by Utah State University Extension and the Utah State Office of Education and based on research by the Search Institute. Special thanks to newsletter editor, Tami Pyfer, M.Ed., and contributing authors Dr. Thomas Lee and Dr. Glen Jenson, Utah State University.

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 · Search Institute, 700 South Third Street, Suite 210, Minneapolis, MN, 55415, or 1-800-888-7828, or <http://www.search-institute.org>
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 · Utah State Office of Education, Center for Families in Education, 250 East 500 South, Salt Lake City, UT 84111 or 801-538-7723

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