

# Helping Kids Succeed – Alaskan Style!

## Practical Suggestions for Building Assets in Your Child

### Asset # 11- Family Boundaries

#### To Build Asset # 11 Parents and Extended Family Can . . .

Involve kids in deciding what the rules and consequences are. Make sure they are understood by everyone. Follow through with consequences if a rule is broken. — Tenakee

Meet the parents of your children's friends before allowing your children to visit there. Have a list of phone numbers for all your kids' friends and "hangouts." Touch base with them often. Keep a message board. — Anchorage

Make sure you and your partner have the same rules for your kids and that you support each other in keeping them. If divorced, stay involved in your children's lives when they are not with you. Work with their other parent to have consistent rules. Your kids need to know that they have two loving parents who communicate and care about them. — Cube Cove

Get detailed information about what children are going to do away from the home before you give your permission for them to go. If they don't know all the answers to your questions, they will have to find out before you say yes. — Valdez

Put up with the chaos that can come from kids in your home, and make it a place that kids like to gather. — Anchorage

Get advice from other parents, books, or experts if you are having problems with setting or keeping boundaries. Don't just give up on them. — Sitka

#### Traditional Ways to Promote Asset # 11

Grandfathers, teach your grandkids to follow the beliefs and customs of the culture. To be honest, to share, to work along-side others in the community, to speak kind words. Teach the consequences of not following these customs. — Toksook Bay

Children need to know that their parents are responsible for them until they are adults. If they are late, go out and look for them. When you find them, they will be very happy to see you and come home. — Elim

Teach and give your children rules and limitations on their behavior at the Potlatch and elsewhere. For instance, if they cannot sit still, send them outside to play. — Kluti-Kaah

#### Asset # 11 — Family Boundaries

Parents set clear rules and consequences for their kids' behavior. They monitor their children's whereabouts.

43% of youth surveyed by Search Institute have this asset in their lives.\*

\*Based on Search Institute surveys of almost 100,000 6th to 12th grade youth throughout the United States

#### What are Assets?

Assets are 40 key building blocks to help kids succeed. Like a dream catcher, assets are the supporting threads in a young person's life that can keep away harm and invite goodness.

## INSIGHTS

### Family Boundaries

The research is clear. Children and Youth need a clear sense of the rules and limits in all the environments that touch their lives. Of course, as children and youth grow, these rules and limits change. A fellow in the Sitka Pioneer's Home was speaking to me about setting boundaries for young people. His words were, "You have to learn to play the scales, before you can play jazz." What I heard in that simple sentence was that kids needed to learn and practice the "rules" of life, before they could go out and improvise.

Too many times we think that we prepare our kids for a life of boundless possibilities by not giving them clear boundaries and limits. However, what we often do is prepare them for a life of limbo. Our youth too often are not able to play the scales, and spend their lives wondering why they can't play jazz.

I have spent some of my career working with adults who have been in treatment, in jail, or in a jam. A vast majority of them had no practice "playing by the rules" and "each believed that they were just improvising."

## Research

### News You can Use

Family Boundaries have been shown to be associated with the following:

- ⊙ Higher Self-Esteem
- ⊙ Greater Social Skill Development
- ⊙ Greater Peer Likability
- ⊙ High School Achievement
- ⊙ Higher Rates of Graduation
- ⊙ Better School Performance
- ⊙ Greater Adaptation to School
- ⊙ Decreased Problem Behaviors
- ⊙ Reduced Teenage Alcohol Use
- ⊙ Reduced Teenage Use of Drugs
- ⊙ Decreased Early Sexual Behavior
- ⊙ Fewer Self-Regulation Problems

Boundaries are broader than family boundaries.

Rules and standards are important in all of the webs of support that the youth is involved in.

However, we know that parents are their child's first teachers and this foundation of support allows young people to more readily interpret the boundaries of the other environments they move through during their growing up.

### Quote:

Family life is too complex to be ruled by fairness; giving a tit for a tat. To sustain a family, the spirit of love must dominate. This spirit transcends fairness and leads to justice.

*Derek Peterson*

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