

Helping Kids Succeed – Alaskan Style!

Practical Suggestions for Building Assets in Your Child

Asset # 20- Time at Home

To Build Asset # 20 Parents and Extended Family Can . . .

Role model: don't fill up your time with activities away from the house either! — Anchorage

Have games and things around the house that your children enjoy doing. Turn the TV off and help your children invent games and activities to play with each other. — Craig

When you are visiting a family with kids, invite the young people to be in the room with you. Try to make the children feel welcome around adults. — Toksook Bay

Be clear with your teenager about limits to time he or she can be employed. Help your teen be very clear about this with his or her employer. — Eagle River

Treat your kids with respect and love. Make your home a happy and comfortable place for young people. — Juneau

Some families face issues like alcoholism, violence, or emotional abuse. If this is the case, home is not especially good for kids. If you have these problems, be courageous and get help — for your kids' sake. — Kodiak

Have some time scheduled into the week so your children get to decide what they will do at home. Go along with their choice, even if it wouldn't be your choice. — Palmer

Make this a part of family boundaries. Talk about it as a family and agree to a plan. — Glennallen

Traditional Ways to Promote Asset # 20

Definition: *Child chooses to spend quality time at home.*

Spend at least one hour a day talking with your children, going on outings, and getting involved in their lives. — Kluti-Kaah

Share family stories of success, adventure, love, and laughter around the table. Read stories to your children and let them hear stories from their grandparents. — Shaktoolik

Go on hikes, explore, or gather food. Let children explore and learn on their own and with others. — Tuluksak

Asset # 20 — Time at Home

Kids go out with friends "with nothing special to do" two or fewer nights each week.
50% 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.

Words of Encouragement

Typically, teen years are a time for young people to move out into the world, and pull away from their families. It is common for young people to want to spend more time away from home, with friends, or simply be left alone (given some privacy) in their rooms. Sure, we adults understand this natural need to move into independence. We all had to go through this developmental process too.

However, we also remember that the goal is not simply independence - from family, culture, and supportive people. Actually, what wise people have taught us over the years is that we are to work toward interdependence. Interdependence can be found by the simple act of allowing the youth some supported freedom in their move toward independence.

Like the strands of the Alaskan dream catcher, the web supports the youth. And the youth, like a balloon, is allowed to bounce upon the web of support < being moved higher and higher, taking risks, and experimenting in the world.

However, this image only works when the web of support remains supported by the adults in the family, school, and community. Just because the youth desires and needs autonomy, does not mean that they are put out into the world alone and without support. On the contrary, the youth needs our support more than ever. Certainly, they don't always acknowledge our support - some may not even see it. However, they will see the effects of this support, when they grow into healthy adults who are more likely to be happy and successful. And more likely to build systems of support for their children and youth when they are adults.

How well do you hold onto your strands in this web of support for the youth in your life? Who supported you when you were a youth? Isn't it time you returned the favor?

Quote:

When I hear a teen say that there is "nothing to do," what I hear is this: "that there is no one to do nothing with."

Derek Peterson

Research

Today, when Alaskans talk about kids having time at home, one of the images that comes to mind is the movie "Home Alone" or "Risky Business". The parents leave and the youth run wild.

Fortunately, the other image that comes to mind is sitting down to the dinner table with loved ones to eat a meal, have good conversation, and feel love and support.

Today, because Alaskans are working hard, many kids are home alone for hours after the school day ends. This usually results in youth spending more hours among peers with little or no supervision from adults.

Youth being home alone, unsupervised provides the possibility of increased exposure to experimentation with health compromising behaviors (Crockett & Peterson, 1993). Some youth use this time to socialize with friends who are not making positive impacts on their lives (Crockett & Peterson, 1993; Patterson & Stouthamer- Loeber, 1984.) One researcher found that teens who spent time at home were less likely to get into trouble when their parents telephoned regularly and if they had rules to follow when their parents were not present (Steinberg 1986.)

Time at home is much more than being "locked in the house." Time at home represents both the quantity and quality of the time spent in the home. It is best identified when asking the youth whether s/he "likes" to be at home. The quality of this time at home has been identified by Smith (1992) when he found that how parents and teens related to each other over homework was more important than the amount of time spent on homework. This was supported by Warr (1993) who found that spending quality time with parents reduces the negative effects of peers on teen behavior.

Throughout Alaska, youth are home alone; most with boundaries and expectations, some without. What can you do to give youth quality and quantity time with more adults? This research shows that we do make a difference.

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