

Building Interpersonal Competence: Exercises

Asset 33: Interpersonal Competence (young person has empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills) influences many opportunities that may come your child's way over her or his lifetime. Having good people skills affects how well children do at school, on teams, in their family, with friends, and on the job. Talking about these skills with children is one step toward helping them increase their mastery of these skills. The following exercises will help you build this Developmental Asset* with your child.

Exercise #1: Friends

1. Think about a best friend you had at your child's age. What were the qualities you admired in that friend? Are they still the qualities you seek in a friend? Why or why not?
2. Ask your child to think about a friend. What qualities about this friend does your child like best? What things can your child do to be a good friend?
3. Listen to your child's comments. Affirm the things your child mentions that you also appreciate in her or his friend.

Exercise #2: Newcomers

1. When you notice that someone new has moved into the neighborhood or your faith-based organization, or you hear that a new child has joined the classroom, use the opportunity to talk about how it feels to be a newcomer.

2. Together brainstorm ways to make the new person feel more welcome. You might bake cookies or take a small bouquet of flowers from your garden or make a list of the nearest neighborhood services (gas station, Laundromat, hardware store, for example).

3. Pick one of the ideas you generated and act on it.

4. Later, ask your child how he or she felt doing this and make a commitment together to be mindful of other opportunities to make new people feel welcome.

For more ideas about building this asset and others in your child's life, see:

What Kids Need to Succeed: Proven, Practical Ways to Raise Good Kids

What Teens Need to Succeed: Proven, Practical Ways to Shape Your Own Future

What Young Children Need to Succeed

Your Family: Using Simple Wisdom in Raising Your Children

These books are all available from Search Institute (www.search-institute.org).

*Developmental Assets® are the healthy building blocks all young people need to succeed. To learn more about Search Institute® and Developmental Assets, visit www.search-institute.org. This handout may be reproduced for educational, noncommercial uses only (with this copyright line). From *Speaking of Parenting: Introducing Developmental Assets to People Raising Kids—Scripts, Handouts, and Activities*. Copyright © 2006 by Search Institute; 800-888-7828; www.search-institute.org.