FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT™
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

PROJECT CORNERSTONE
A YMCA of Silicon Valley Initiative

OCTOBER Asset of the Month:
POSITIVE FAMILY COMMUNICATION
Young person and her or his parent(s) communicate positively, and young person is willing to seek advice and counsel from parent(s).

This document is designed to help adults throughout Santa Clara County develop materials and activities to promote the asset of adult role models.

Newsletter Content

The following text may be used in organizational newsletters. Please include the attribution at the end of the article.

The Importance of Positive Family Communication

Young people who experience positive family communication experience higher self-esteem, decreased substance use, less anxiety and depression, and greater school engagement. However, in Santa Clara County, only **63% of 4th-6th grade students and 33% of 7th-12th grade students** reported in Project Cornerstone's 2011 survey that they and their parents communicate positively and that they are willing to seek advice from their parents. To help promote this valuable asset, October is Positive Family Communication month in Silicon Valley.

For positive family communication to occur, all family members must be comfortable sharing their needs, wishes, and concerns in an honest and trusting environment without fear of rejection. Establishing positive communication when children are young may help keep the channel open in adolescence.

No matter how old your children are, it's never too late to start! The following questions can help your family. Encourage your child to answer these questions honestly:

- Who do you enjoy talking with, and why?
- What makes it easier to talk to family members, and what makes it more difficult?
- Which topics are easiest for you to talk about with your parents, and which are more difficult? Why?

The communication skills that young people develop in their families help set the pattern of how they'll communicate for the rest their lives. Teaching your children to communicate effectively with friends, teachers, co-workers, parents, peers, and others is a lasting legacy that parents can give to their children.

This article was provided courtesy of Project Cornerstone's Asset-a-Month program. For more information, visit www.projectcornerstone.org.

Activities

The activities below are a starting point to help adults find ways to show youth that they are valued and appreciated.

For families

- Create opportunities for unstructured communications. Sometimes the best conversations occur when you're side-by-side instead of face-to-face, such as when you're driving or working together in the kitchen.
- At dinnertime, instead of asking "How was your day?" play Worst and Best, where everyone—including parents—takes turns sharing the worst thing and the best things that happened to them during the day.
- Hold regular family meetings to check in with each other and discuss family issues like holidays or chores. Make sure everyone has an opportunity to participate.
- Try having each parent set an "individual date" with each child where they spend time together away from home somewhere where they can talk, like a restaurant or coffee shop. This kind of one-to-one conversation makes it possible for a young person to discuss issues privately with their parent's undivided attention.
- **Listen more than you talk**.
- Positive family communication isn't just between parents and children—siblings should also be encouraged and supported to communicate with each other openly and effectively.

For all adults

- Model positive, respectful communications at all times.
- Talk to young people about the importance of family communication.

At school or in youth programs

- Send home a list of "conversation starters" with information about the value of positive family communication. (See Resources at the end of this document for suggested books.)
- Assign homework that requires students to talk to parents or other family adults.
- Create and deliver a unit on "family" that helps youth understand different kinds of families and appreciate their own.

Resources

- The following books offer practical tips on creating and improving family communication:
    - *How to Talk So Kids Will Listen and Listen So Kids Will Talk*
    - *The Essential Guide to Talking with Teens*
    - *Conversations on the Go: Clever Questions to Keep Teens and Grown-Ups Talking*
- The Parent Further web site covers several topics related to positive family communication, including tips on how to talk about emotions, developing listening skills, and the impact (positive and negative) of digital technologies on communication. For more information, visit http://www.parentfurther.com/parenting-matters/family-communication.

NOVEMBER Asset of the Month: Positive Cultural Identity

If you or your organization can share ideas for positive, creative activities for young people, please contact (408) 351-6482 or by email at info@projectcornerstone.org.

About the Asset-a-Month Program

The goals of the Silicon Valley Asset-a-Month program are to help align adults throughout our diverse community in their efforts to promote positive youth development by fostering developmental assets. For more information about the Asset-a-Month program, contact Project Cornerstone at (408) 351-6482 or info@projectcornerstone.org.