

Article #37

The 40 Developmental Assets were assessed in June 2005 using the survey *Me and My World*. Of the children surveyed in our community, 73% report that they experience the asset *Healthy lifestyle*.

Asset #31: Healthy lifestyle-Parent(s) tell the child it is important to have good health habits and an understanding of healthy sexuality.

Consider this . . .

Our society sends many mixed messages about sex, alcohol, and even illicit drugs. On one hand, they are glamorized by popular culture. On the other, they are demonized by those who believe abstinence is the only choice. The challenge for adults who care about helping young people make safe and responsible decisions is to provide them with accurate and appropriate information. Equally important are clear expectations that are presented with warmth and support.

Try this . . .

Adults:

- When talking with young people about the choices they make regarding sexual activity and alcohol or other drug use, focus on helping them see why restraint during adolescence is important to their physical, emotional, and mental health.
- Monitor young people's activities and whereabouts. It's reasonable to expect them not to attend parties or other events where alcohol or other drugs are available or where there is no adult supervision.
- As young people get older, they are bound to become more interested in their own sexuality. Talk with them about the continuum of sexual behaviors and the relative risks of different activities.

Parents:

- Pledge to your children that you will always come and get them—regardless of time or place—with no questions asked until the next day when everyone has had a chance to calm down.
- Talk to young people about sex. Make sure they know how people get pregnant and how sexually transmitted diseases are spread.

Youth:

- Help create a network of your peers who are committed to a healthy lifestyle. Plan alcohol-and drug-free events and activities.

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