



# Asset of the Month

May Asset Category: Boundaries and Expectations (External Asset)

## **May Asset: #15. Positive Peer Influence**

In a healthy community a young person's best friends model responsible behavior.

(63% of youth surveyed believe that they have this asset in their lives.)

**What youth say about Boundaries and Expectations:** "Set fair boundaries." "Be a role model." "Challenge me to succeed, and comfort me when I fail."

## **Parenting Tips & How-to-live the Asset of the Month: Positive Peer Influence**

Young people have an urgent need to be accepted by their peers and to be members of a group that both supports and reinforces their personal identity at a time of life when physical and emotional changes can affect self esteem.

Peer relationships can be a powerful positive influence in the lives of adolescents. Most adolescents discuss options with their friends before reaching a consensus about what to do. Peer groups provide an opportunity for teenagers to interact with equals. Their friends give teen's companionship, emotional support, and a sense of belonging. This is normal and healthy, but peer influences can also be very negative. Teens whose friends are involved in risky behaviors, illegal activities or experimenting with drugs, may easily be persuaded to join in. Parents may dislike their teenagers' friends, and possibly for good reasons, but most often when teens are forced to choose between their parents or their peer group, they choose their friends.

Although parents can't force their children to avoid negative peers, there are some things parents can do to help encourage their teens to become associated with positive peer groups.

- Learn to work with peer influence, not against it.
- Encourage involvement organized activity groups, such as school events, sports and clubs.
- Make a special effort to spend time alone with teens, doing something you both enjoy.
- Invite your teens friends to your home to meet them spend time doing things with your teen that involves friends.
- Set limits that eliminate the opportunity for negative activities. For example, do not allow unsupervised activities for long periods of time, or late at night.
- Kids get hurt in lots of ways during the middle years. But sometimes knowing the odds can help you be better prepared for, or even prevent, the worst.
- Here are some of the biggest risks based on the hard numbers from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and other sources. The good news: School fights and weapons have declined more than 25 percent in the last decade.
- **Sex**
- **Odds:** 1 in 10 kids have had intercourse by age 13. Kids are bombarded with images of sex through television, music and video games without always hearing about the consequences: pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases and emotional turmoil.
- **Antidote:** The biggest factors in stopping teen sex are you and the clock. When you can't be with your child, make sure they are with another adult. Get your daughter involved with a program during the after school hours, which is when kids are most likely to have sex. Have your son volunteer to tutor elementary students.

- **Drugs**
- **Odds:** 1 in 5 kids have smoked tobacco and 1 in 4 kids have consumed alcohol by age 13. Studies have shown that use of drugs at this age greatly increases the possibility of other risky behavior and later substance abuse. Not concerned yet? Consider that 1 in 10 students have already tried marijuana before entering high school.
- **Antidote:** While your child deserves some privacy, if you suspect drug use, be a snoop. You may be the “bad guy” for a while, but it will pay off in the end. If you see someone abusing drugs in the media, ask your child why he thinks they’re doing it. Not getting through? See if your local police department or hospital has an educational program for kids. Sometimes shock is the only way to scare a child straight.
- **Depression**
- **Odds:** By ninth grade, 1 in 4 students have suffered from prolonged depression — feeling sad or helpless almost every day for at least two weeks in a row. How do you know when your child crosses the line from being in a funk to being seriously depressed? Well, that’s a tough one.
- **Antidote:** Watch for signs. Typically the first is a lack of interest in activities she used to enjoy. Other warning signs include a change in sleep patterns, irritability, loss of appetite, significant weight gain or loss and risky behavior like sex and drug abuse. Ask teachers if they’ve noticed anything different or if her work habits have changed. Still unsure? Enlist the help of a school counselor or a mental health professional.
- **Boredom**
- **Odds:** 1 in 3 kids report that they’re bored in school. So what? Well, bored kids are more likely to get into other kinds of trouble and to act out in the classroom. Some kids get bored because they’re struggling with difficult subjects or tasks. They find it too painful to do the work. High potential students get bored with work that does not challenge them. Both types may drop out for real when they hit high school if they don’t get help.
- **Antidote:** Talk to your kids about what being bored really means. For a struggling student, look for tutors and work with teachers and counselors to pinpoint the problem. For instance, some kids have lots of great ideas but fall apart trying to put those ideas on paper. For a gifted student, ask the school about changing courses and finding more challenges both during and after school.
- **Cheating**
- **Odds:** 1 in 2 kids say they have cheated on schoolwork in one form or another. If your child hasn’t, one of his friends probably has. It’s not surprising, given our culture of winning by any means in sports, politics and business. But cheating not only means he’ll learn less now; it could lead to other forms of lying and stealing that will burn him later.
- **Antidote:** Lead by example; show your child how doing your own work is satisfying to you. Coach him on his homework, but keep the ball in his court. Reward him when he does well on a test or learns something new, even if he doesn’t score a perfect “A.” You can also point out examples in the news about cheaters who get caught.

### **Be a Positive Influence:**

1. **Role Models are important.** Young people need adults and peers who set standards and uphold them, act in ways that are respectable, and show them that some things are worth working and waiting for.
2. **Expect the best of each other.** When adults don’t expect much of young people, they may not get much. But if adults expect young people to do their best, chances are good that they will. The same goes for teenagers’ views of adults: Expecting that boundary setting is about whose more powerful will lead to conflict and true power struggles. Expecting that adults will negotiate boundaries in good faith will boost the chances that exactly that will happen.

3. **Accept the best each has to offer.** No one's perfect – no teenager or adult. So temper your expectations to match personalities and experiences.

\* Visit <http://www.familyresourcesheboygan.org>. Learn more about Positive Peer Influence and the other 39 assets. This website also lists other great websites for parents, youth group leaders, teachers, etc. with tools, handouts, etc.

### **HCHY Accomplishments / Events/ Featured Youth Agency**

- To date over 600 youth have been through a 40 asset interactive workshop including: Upward Bound Students, 4H Leaders, Sheboygan Falls Middle School, Horace Mann Builders Club.
- Middle Schools involved to some degree in the HCHY Initiative: All Sheboygan Middle Schools, Plymouth Riverview, Random Lake, Sheboygan Falls – hopefully more soon.
- Have you heard the Asset of the Month message on WHBL, B93, WHBZ, or WXER?
- Intentional asset building is evident in several newsletters and staff trainings – including: Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, church bulletins, FRC Drug & Alcohol awareness newsletter. Others?
- **Girl Scouts of Manitou Council** ([www.gsmanitou.org](http://www.gsmanitou.org) or 920-565-4575).  
Check out the Camp Evelyn Open House where you will tour the beautiful camp grounds and rental facilities, and see where campers eat, sleep and play! You will also meet the staff, other parents, advisors, campers and friends. Sample activities such as archery, boating, games and arts & crafts.  
Camping is a great way to build assets: new relationships, new skills, sense of community, and a deep appreciation for nature - caring for the environment and others around them. Camping is an opportunity to grow, explore, and have fun – always under the guidance of caring, trained adults.

Sunday, May 23 1:00-4:00pm at Camp Evelyn, Plymouth

Cost: \$2.00 per person - Children must be accompanied by a parent/guardian.

**\*Please add other asset building events and forward this information to co-workers, clients, families, and other contacts.**

\*Please respond with feedback, ideas for upcoming assets of the month, etc., or if your organization would like to be listed as a resource to: [ysports@sheboygancountymca.org](mailto:ysports@sheboygancountymca.org) or [erikfrc@excel.net](mailto:erikfrc@excel.net) . Also contact us if your organization would like a 40-asset presentation or training – for teens, pre-teens and/or parents.

**\*Next Month's Asset of the Month:** Category: Positive Identity: #37 Personal Power.

**\*Upcoming months:** July: #4 Caring Neighborhood; August: #20 Time at Home

Sponsors: Kohler Credit Union, Van Horn Automotive Group

*The Asset of the Month is a campaign is an effort under the Healthy Community/ Healthy Youth Initiative:*

