

POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

See: www.search-institute.org

Positive Youth Development (PYD) is an approach or framework that emphasizes the supports young people need in order to be successful. It focuses on the strengths of each youth to ensure that they will become positive contributors in their communities.

In the past, researchers and providers looked at the risks surrounding teens; parental divorce, lack of friends, drugs or alcohol, dropping out of school. Working with youth was based on addressing those risks. PYD recognizes that the more strengths or positive aspects a youth has in his/her life, the more likely he or she will be to become successful. PYD enhances and builds upon an individual's existing strengths such as family life, church, positive friendships, sports or school, community service.

The 40 Developmental Assets – This theory was created by the Search Institute and suggests that youth need a mixture of internal and external assets to grow to be caring, responsible adults. The assets refer to the relationships, opportunities and personal qualities that young people need to avoid risks and thrive.

Characteristics of External and Internal Assets

EXTERNAL ASSETS (RELATIONSHIPS AND OPPORTUNITIES)	INTERNAL ASSETS (PERSONAL QUALITIES)
Support Empowerment Boundaries and expectations Constructive use of time	Commitment to learning Positive values Social competencies Positive identity

Positive Youth Development emphasizes services and opportunities to support all young people in developing a sense of a competence, usefulness, belonging and empowerment. While individual programs can provide youth development activities, the youth development approach works best when entire communities, including young people, are involved in creating a continuum of services and opportunities that youth need to grow into happy and healthy adults. ¹

PYD is about people, programs, institutions and systems who provide all youth, “troubled” or not, with the supports and opportunities they need to empower themselves. Youth Development strategies focus on giving young people the chance to form relationships with caring adults, build skills, exercise leadership, and help their communities. ²

Key elements to the Youth Development *approach* are the following: ³

- Youth are viewed as a valued and respected asset to society;
- Policies and programs focus on the evolving developmental needs and tasks of adolescents, and involve youth as partners rather than clients;
- Families, schools and communities are engaged in developing environments that support youth;
- Adolescents are involved in activities that enhance their competence, connections, character, confidence and contribution to society;
- Adolescents are provided an opportunity to experiment in a safe environment and to develop positive social values and norms; and
- Adolescents are engaged in activities that promote self-understanding, self-worth, and a sense of belonging and resiliency.

¹

Positive Youth Development, National Clearinghouse on Families & Youth (NCFY), Silver Spring, Maryland, 2001, available at www.ncfy.com

²

Center for Youth Development and Policy, “What is Youth Development?” Academy for Educational Development, available at <http://cyd.aed.org/whatishtml>.

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This list of key elements draws on materials from: Teipel, K., *Minnesota Adolescent Health Action Plan*, forthcoming; findings from key informant interviews conducted by Stephen Conley for the Partnership; *Community Programs to Promote Youth Development*, National Academy Press, Washington, DC (January, 2002); and the National Youth Development Web site: <http://www.nydic.org/nydic/devdef.html>

40 Developmental Assets® for Adolescents (ages 12-18)

Search Institute® has identified the following building blocks of healthy development—known as Developmental Assets®—that help young people grow up healthy, caring, and responsible.

EXTERNAL ASSETS

Support

1. Family support—Family life provides high levels of love and support.
2. Positive family communication—Young person and her or his parent(s) communicate positively, and young person is willing to seek advice and counsel from parents.
3. Other adult relationships—Young person receives support from three or more nonparent adults.
4. Caring neighborhood—Young person experiences caring neighbors.
5. Caring school climate—School provides a caring, encouraging environment.
6. Parent involvement in schooling—Parent(s) are actively involved in helping young person succeed in school.

Empowerment

7. Community values youth—Young person perceives that adults in the community value youth.
8. Youth as resources—Young people are given useful roles in the community.
9. Service to others—Young person serves in the community one hour or more per week.
10. Safety—Young person feels safe at home, school, and in the neighborhood.

Boundaries & Expectations

11. Family boundaries—Family has clear rules and consequences and monitors the young person's whereabouts.
12. School boundaries—School provides clear rules and consequences.
13. Neighborhood boundaries—Neighbors take responsibility for monitoring young people's behavior.
14. Adult role models—Parent(s) and other adults model positive, responsible behavior.
15. Positive peer influence—Young person's best friends model responsible behavior.
16. High expectations—Both parent(s) and teachers encourage the young person to do well.

Constructive Use of Time

17. Creative activities—Young person spends three or more hours per week in lessons or practice in music, theater, or other arts.
18. Youth programs—Young person spends three or more hours per week in sports, clubs, or organizations at school and/or in the community.
19. Religious community—Young person spends one or more hours per week in activities in a religious institution.
20. Time at home—Young person is out with friends "with nothing special to do" two or fewer nights per week.

INTERNAL ASSETS

Commitment to Learning

21. Achievement Motivation—Young person is motivated to do well in school.
22. School Engagement—Young person is actively engaged in learning.
23. Homework—Young person reports doing at least one hour of homework every school day.
24. Bonding to school—Young person cares about her or his school.
25. Reading for Pleasure—Young person reads for pleasure three or more hours per week.

Positive Values

26. Caring—Young person places high value on helping other people.
27. Equality and social justice—Young person places high value on promoting equality and reducing hunger and poverty.
28. Integrity—Young person acts on convictions and stands up for her or his beliefs.
29. Honesty—Young person “tells the truth even when it is not easy.”
30. Responsibility—Young person accepts and takes personal responsibility.
31. Restraint—Young person believes it is important not to be sexually active or to use alcohol or other drugs.

Social Competencies

32. Planning and decision making—Young person knows how to plan ahead and make choices.
33. Interpersonal Competence—Young person has empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills.
34. Cultural Competence—Young person has knowledge of and comfort with people of different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds.
35. Resistance skills—Young person can resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations.
36. Peaceful conflict resolution—Young person seeks to resolve conflict nonviolently.

Positive Identities

37. Personal power—Young person feels he or she has control over “things that happen to me.”
38. Self-esteem—Young person reports having a high self-esteem.
39. Sense of purpose—Young person reports that “my life has a purpose.”
40. Positive view of personal future—Young person is optimistic about her or his personal future.