

Core Messages

You'll want to convey certain key messages regardless of the nature of your audience. These include the following:

- Developmental Assets are essential building blocks for young people's achievement and thriving.
- Developmental Assets are essential building blocks for young people's avoidance of high-risk behaviors.
- All young people—from infants to adolescents, from whatever geographic location or family background—need Developmental Assets.
- Assets are built mainly through strong, positive relationships.
- Everyone can build assets, including young people.
- It's everyone's responsibility to build assets.
- Asset building is an ongoing process.
- Young people need to receive consistent messages from a variety of sources.
- It's important to build assets intentionally.
- Building Developmental Assets is consistent with the goals of both individuals and organizations.
- Using the Developmental Assets framework can help by providing a common language for talking about what all the different parts of society need to do and by presenting an overview of many of the kinds of important things young people need to succeed.

The type of audience listening to you may influence the tone as well as the content of your presentation. Obviously, no one wants to be talked down to, and everyone wants to be acknowledged for the fine work they're doing. But, for example, you may want to adopt a more formal tone for speaking to more formal organizations, such as businesses. You may want to adopt a more "we're all in this together" tone for speaking to peers. And you may want to adopt a more "what do *you* think" tone for speaking to young people.

If you are able to identify some common characteristics of your audience before you speak – and you may not always be able to do that – consider the basic strategy of determining each group's primary mission and then relating it to the Developmental Assets Framework.

For example, school staff are concerned with young people's academic success; parents and guardians are concerned with their children's overall well-being; health-care providers are concerned with young people's health; and people in law enforcement are concerned with young people's relationship with the law. For all these audiences, you can show how building assets for and with young people is consistent with—and contributes to accomplishing—their mission. So here are comments, additional messages, and ways that members of some specific audiences might help build assets (most of the last are from *Pass It On! Ready-to-Use Handouts for Asset Builders*, Search Institute, 1999).