
SCRIPT FOR A 25-MINUTE PRESENTATION

This is a script for a presentation that will run for about 25 minutes (the actual time will depend on such things as your pacing and the number of stories and activities you include). **WE DON'T INTEND FOR YOU TO READ FROM THIS SCRIPT TO AN AUDIENCE OR EVEN PRESENT IT FROM MEMORY.** What we want to do is to give you an example of how a short presentation might run. This is the kind of tone we think works well, this is the kind of content we'd like you to present, and these are the materials we're suggesting you use. You'll need to modify this presentation based on your audience, your relationship to your audience, and your own presentation style. We assume you'll want to title your presentation in a way that suits the particular audience and venue, but you can use the title "Developmental Assets: You Can Make a Difference for Young People."

Before the presentation begins, make sure that you or your sponsor distributes to each member of the audience a packet of the handouts you've chosen to use. Invite participants to fill out a name tag and wear it.



*First, show the PowerPoint slide **Welcome (T1)**. Thank your sponsor for inviting you to speak, and thank the audience for attending. Introduce yourself, and then say something about your connection with Developmental Assets. For example, perhaps you're working for a community initiative, and you can describe that initiative at the outset.*

Following that introduction, we suggest that you begin by telling your audience about someone who made a difference in your life. Relate a short story about an adult who made a difference in your life when you were growing up. Talk briefly about what that person did to make you feel that you mattered and why it was important to you, using some of the key terms in the list of Developmental Assets (e.g., supported me, valued me, used me as a resource). Then continue:

I'd like each of you now to think of an adult who made a difference to you when you were growing up, somebody that made you feel that you mattered—and then find a

partner and share that story. If you're still growing up—that is, if you're a young person—think of an adult who currently makes a difference to you. If you can't think of anyone, then think of someone you would like to have had. (*Wait a few minutes.*) Okay, what did you hear? What have people done that has made you feel that you mattered? (*Get a few responses.*)

This is one of the main things young people need to succeed: adults who care about them, adults who make them feel that they matter. One way for young people to get the important experiences, skills, and guidance they need—what we call Developmental Assets—is for young people to be connected with and supported by a web of caring, responsible adults. The more adults who make this effort, the better the chances that every young person will get what they need. For the next 25 minutes or so, I'm going to talk with you about a way of looking at young people—and a way of behaving with them. For the young people in the audience, I'm going to talk with you about a way of looking at yourselves and each other. This way of relating to young people will help them believe that *they* matter—and help them grow up successful as well. Learning about this may require some shifts in your thinking, however, and that's what I want to address first.

Unfortunately, much of today's society has come to see young people as problems—or at least as having problems. Young people are getting into trouble with drugs. Young people are having sex. Young people are becoming involved in violence. Young people are putting down other young people. They have no respect for others, no respect for themselves, no character, no morals, no values, no common sense . . . I can go on. So can you. And what is society's answer to these problems? Why, it's to fix those young people, fix their problems. That's been our standard response—we've been fixers.

But think about this: **a way of relating to young people that focuses not on their problems, but on their strengths;** a way of relating to young people that focuses not on fixing their perceived shortcomings, but on affirming and increas-

ing their skills and talents. After all, we know that even some young people with very difficult problems are resilient. Young people from violent families, young people with physical or mental disabilities, young people with everything going against them—many of these young people make it. **There are strengths in every young person, and every young person has the potential—with the help of a caring, dedicated community of adults—to use those strengths to overcome their problems.** We don't want to ignore the problems. But we want to focus more on the strengths.



*(Show the first shift on the PowerPoint slide **Two Shifts [T2]**.)* So that's the first shift I'm going to ask you to make: moving beyond fixing young people's problems and toward affirming and increasing young people's strengths. Now, if we can all agree that affirming young people's strengths is a good thing, let's talk about *how* to affirm and increase young people's strengths. And that's the second shift. In education, in organizations, in companies, what's the usual way we try to solve problems? If we have a problem with violence or drugs or anything else, what do we usually do? We implement a program. We implement a program to reduce the incidence of drug use, or of bullying, or of teen pregnancy, or just about anything else we can think of. In many cases, we implement a targeted program to "fix the kids." Now, many programs, implemented well by competent people, are effective; but there's got to be more than programs. This second shift I'm going to ask you to make is to go beyond programs—beyond programs and toward relationships, relationships for and with all young people.



*(Show the entire PowerPoint slide **Two Shifts**.)* This way of looking at young people focuses on *how* we—and I mean everyone here, including myself—how we interact with young people. That's where it starts. We can have the greatest programs in the world, but if the people who deliver the programs aren't treating those young people with respect, with genuine care and interest, and with a continual message that the young people are valued—well, not much good is going to happen. Or if it does, it'll happen despite those

programs. And besides, most of a young person's experience growing up happens outside programs; it happens in informal interactions at home, down school corridors, and in the general community. It happens in their relationships with other people. Relationships are what help us move through adolescence to adulthood—positive, healthy relationships.

So let's keep those two shifts in mind as we get more into what Developmental Assets are. I'd like you to look at your first handout—**40 Developmental Assets (H1)**.

This list was developed by Search Institute, a nonprofit organization based in Minneapolis, Minnesota, in partnership with Lutheran Brotherhood, now Thrivent Financial for Lutherans, a member-owned financial services organization. Your next handout is a **Search Institute Fact Sheet (H2)**, and you can look at it anytime for more information.

The list of Developmental Assets grew out of much reading, thinking, and discussion—among the researchers and with community people who work in the field of youth development—about what young people need to succeed. Once the list was made, researchers looked for and found literally hundreds of studies that support the choice of these assets. In addition, they constructed a survey that measures the number of assets in young people's lives, and they found that the more assets young people have, the better off they seemed to be. Essentially, these 40 assets are building blocks that young people need to grow up healthy, caring, and productive. What are these assets? Let's look. Take a few seconds to scan the list.

*(Show the PowerPoint slide **The Categories of Developmental Assets [T3]**.)* They're divided first into external assets—those that young people can get from outside sources, like friends, family, school, and organizations in the community—and internal assets—those that young people develop within themselves. For example, an asset in the Support category is Asset 3, Other Adult Relationships: The young person receives support from three or more nonparent adults. You can follow along on your handout. An asset in the Empowerment category is Asset 9, Service to Others:



The young person serves in the community one hour or more per week. Asset 11, in the Boundaries and Expectations category, is Family Boundaries: The family has clear rules and consequences and monitors the young person's whereabouts. And under the Constructive Use of Time category you can find Asset 17, Creative Activities: The young person spends three or more hours per week in lessons or practice in music, theater, or other arts. All these are external assets, good things we need to surround young people with.

There are all kinds of examples of how individuals and communities are working to build external assets for young people. In Hampton, Virginia, the town has formed the Hampton Youth Commission, all of whose members are teenagers, which not only advises city government on policies but also has control over a significant budget to support community asset building. The commission was instrumental in having bike racks installed at all schools and developing a new bikeways system for the city. **Don't you think the young people in Hampton feel valued and empowered, and sense they are viewed as resources?**

Now look at the internal assets, competencies and values that young people learn and internalize on their way to becoming responsible and healthy adults. In the Commitment to Learning category is Asset 22, School Engagement: The young person is actively engaged in learning. In the Positive Values category is Asset 30, Responsibility: The young person accepts and takes personal responsibility. Look at the Social Competencies category: Asset 35 is Resistance Skills: The young person can resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations. And finally, look at the last category, Positive Identity. An example is Asset 37, Personal Power: Young people feel that they have control over things that happen to them.

A story about internal assets in action: In Hazen, North Dakota, teenagers were faced with nowhere to go on weekends. Hazen's a small town, and there was no convenient location that would offer a place to talk, have fun, and just hang out. So a leadership team composed of teenagers did

some research, wrote some proposals, and acquired the upstairs part of a hockey arena that was no longer being used. They turned it into a place for young people to hang out. They brought in pool tables, arcade games, furniture, and especially people. They named it “Upstairs.” It’s now open on weekend nights, and it’s staffed by adult volunteers. They sell concessions, and they even have a quiet room for people to talk. It’s a good, safe place to go on the weekends, and the teenagers did it all. All kinds of internal assets here: Responsibility, Planning and Decision Making, Personal Power. These teenagers took control and did something to improve their lives.



Let’s take this idea of the assets and bring it home to our own lives. Your next handout is a **Checklist of 40 Developmental Assets (H3)**. Go down the list and check the assets that you think were there for you when you were growing up—say, when you were a teenager. And if you are a teenager, check the assets that you think are there for you now. Don’t think too much about these; just try to put yourself in your teenage world and go down the list. When you’re finished, go back and circle those assets that you think have been particularly important for you. Maybe your parents continually modeled positive, responsible behavior, and that was an inspiration to you to do the same. If that was the case, circle 14. Or maybe you were always optimistic about your personal future, and that got you through a lot of tough situations. If that was the case, circle 40. When you’re finished, I’m going to ask volunteers to share what they circled. Take a few minutes to do this. (*Wait a few minutes.*)

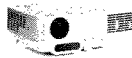
Okay, any interesting findings to report? What did people circle as the important assets? (*Get several responses.*)

You may be saying to yourself, “So what? What difference does it make how many assets people have when they’re growing up?” Consider the experiences of Jazmin Calvo, a resource specialist at an elementary school in California. Calvo was born in Costa Rica, along with seven of her eight brothers and sisters. The family moved to California in 1964. Although none of them spoke English when they arrived, and the family didn’t have much money, Calvo’s father took

various jobs as a handyman and slowly learned English; the children all did well in school. Today, Calvo's siblings include a physician, a teacher, a principal, a graphic designer, and several business owners—all successful. They remain close with their parents and with each other. Until Calvo became aware of Developmental Assets, she could never quite understand why her family did so well despite their relatively adverse circumstances. When she looked over the list of Developmental Assets, however, she found that she could recognize the consistent presence of 38 out of 40 assets in her life while growing up. She later gave the checklist to her brothers and sisters, and they agreed that they had all had more than half of the assets present in their lives. Calvo says that **the asset framework gave her the language to understand that although her family was never financially rich, they thrived because they were rich in Developmental Assets.**



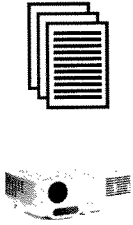
Now look at your next handout, **The Power of Developmental Assets (H4)**, while I refer to the slide. You'll see that Search Institute's research bears out Jazmin Calvo's experience.



*(Show the PowerPoint slide **The Power of Assets to Protect [T4]**.)* Search Institute surveyed more than 89,000 students in grades 6 to 12 to determine the relationships between assets and types of behaviors—risky behaviors and positive behaviors. Look at these relationships: **The more assets students report having, the less they report that they're involved with drug use and violence.** The same is true for delinquency and a host of other problem behaviors. In short, the more Developmental Assets a young person reports having, the less likely he or she is to get in trouble.



*(Show the PowerPoint slide **The Power of Assets to Promote [T5]**.)* And look here: **The more assets young people report having, the more likely they are to report that they succeed in school and maintain good health.** The same is true for many other thriving behaviors. And the relationship between high levels of assets and fewer risky behaviors and more thriving behaviors has held true for *all* the young people that Search Institute has surveyed, no matter what



their ethnic heritage or their economic situation or their geographic location.

Let me show you something. Look at your handout **The Gap in Assets among Youth (H5)**.

*(Show the PowerPoint slide **The Gap in Assets among Youth [T6].**)* This is why it's important for adults to work to *build* Developmental Assets for and with young people. According to Search Institute's surveys, the average student has 20.1 assets—20.1 out of 40. Ideally, all young people would have 31 to 40 of these assets, but only 11 percent of students surveyed report that they have more than 31 of the 40 assets, and more than half have 20 assets or fewer. You can also see that girls tend to report having several more assets than boys do, that younger students generally report having more assets than high school students do, and that rural students report having slightly fewer assets than urban students do. Despite these small differences, what's really striking is the remarkable consistency across groups. The point remains: **many, many young people, in all types of settings and places, have too few of the Developmental Assets.**

So what can we do to change the situation? It sounds like a big job, and maybe a hard one. How can we find out what young people need, and what can we do as individuals, and what can we do together, to help them get it? And how does the asset framework make it easier?

Imagine this: The principal of a middle school in Georgetown, Texas, took the asset framework to heart, and he wanted to make a start at building assets for and with *all* the young people in his school. So he had the names of all 900 students posted on the wall. Then he gathered his staff and asked them to put star stickers by the names of 10 of the students with whom they had a close relationship. Together, they looked at the result. About a quarter of the students had one star, and a few had more than one star. What was startling was their discovery that more than half the students didn't receive any stars at all. The school adults then began making plans for how to address this gap in their

school community, starting with intentionally building relationships with the young people without stars by their names, and spreading out from there to work on building more assets through those new relationships and enhancing their school's environment, programs, and practices.

So the good news is, if we take a little time and look for places to intentionally make a difference by building Developmental Assets, we can do many things. The things we can do range from the very simple—learning young people's names and calling them by their names—to the fairly complex—setting up an environment in which every young person feels welcome, respected, cared for, and useful.

In the future you may want to plan how as a community, or as unified groups within a community, we can build assets with young people. But right now, let's plan how as *individuals* we can build assets with young people.



Look at your last handout, **Asset-Building Ideas for Individuals (H10)**. Take a look at how simple the Ideas for Young People are. “Learn the names of your neighbors. Build a relationship with a younger child.”

It's the same with the Ideas for All Adults. “Thank people who work with children and youth.” What could be simpler? And under Ideas for Families: “Eat at least one meal together every day.”

They're basically all like that. It's not difficult to do any of these, but it may be challenging to recognize the many opportunities we constantly have to build assets, and then to build them *intentionally*. There's a driver of a school bus in upstate New York; her name is Mary Yagel. She's been driving a school bus for thirty years. When she picks up new children in the morning, she introduces herself, asks about them, and takes their pictures. And on holidays, those children receive hand-designed cards with their photographs on them. Simple? Sure. Intentional? Definitely. Worthwhile? What do *you* think?

Remember what I said at the beginning of my presentation: Growing up, it's very important knowing that we matter. **Remember the people who made a difference to you, who made you feel that you mattered. You can make a difference to someone else.** You can make someone else feel the same way. And you know what? You may not even know it. You may not even know that you're the person who matters to someone else. No matter how old we are, no matter what we do during the day and evening, we influence people all the time, every place we come into contact with them, whether we know it or not. If we have a respectful, caring relationship with young people—if we have a positive *connection* with them—then we can more easily help them build assets. Of course, this is a two-way street: Young people have a responsibility as well—to form those relationships with adults and with younger children.

And here's something else I'd like to point out: It's relatively easy to spend time and give attention to the young people who are close to us—our friends, our relatives, our students. But it's a little more challenging to go out of our way to begin relationships, even small relationships, with young people we don't even know—the new student in school or in the club, the neighbor's child, the counter person at your favorite fast-food place. **That's the key—to expand our philosophy to think about all young people, to try to build assets with all young people.**

There will be time for questions in a few minutes, but I'd like you to think now about three young people on whom you might be able to have a positive effect; three young people with whom you can have a respectful, caring, genuine relationship. They may be people very close to you, like a younger sibling or a close friend. Or they may be people you see only occasionally, like the bagger at your local grocery store or one of your children's friends. Write their names—or, if you don't know their names, a description—on the bottom of your handout. Go ahead, do it now. I want to make the transfer from words to deeds, and this is a good way to do it—to have the names of those people staring right up at you. (*Wait a minute.*)

I'd like you to do something, within the next 24 hours, to make a positive difference to one of those young people, using the assets to guide your thinking. Maybe it's to take time to talk with one of them, giving that young person support and expressions of caring or encouragement. Maybe it's to take time to ask one of them to teach *you* something, showing you value that young person as a resource in the community. Do something in the next 24 hours, even if it's as simple as complimenting the young clerk at the grocery store for doing his or her job well, and asking what he or she is planning to do about a career in the future. Turn to the person next to you and tell that person what you're going to do. I'd like you to make the public commitment. Go ahead, just take a minute and tell the person next to you how you're going to make a positive difference to one of those young people. (*Wait a minute.*)

I want to leave you with one other assignment, and that's to talk to people about Developmental Assets. The asset approach is a philosophy, a framework for attitudes and behaviors. And as more and more people across the country use the asset approach to reach for more positive attitudes and more asset-building behaviors, it's becoming a movement, really, a movement toward healthier communities, to a better world for all young people, and for all of us. And movements need people to move. That's what you can do. Start to tell others about the shifts in attitudes required to build assets for—and with—young people.

So, in the remaining time, I'd be glad to answer questions, but I want to leave you with this: **In the end, we're not talking just about information or a message about new attitudes. We're talking about deeds, actions, relationships.** That's what building Developmental Assets is all about. It starts with attitudes, but it can't end there. And *it starts* with relationships, because to a great extent, we can build Developmental Assets through our relationships with young people. *It grows* with each person and each community that begins to act with the assets in mind, and with each new pulling together of people to make more positive things happen. *It ends* with young people growing up believing that they're good, strong, and productive—because they are.

It ends with young people believing that *they matter*—because they do. That’s what all of us want—and you can make it happen. As the anthropologist Margaret Mead said, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world.”

Thank you.