

ideas for parents

Easy Ways to Build Assets for and with Your Child

FAST FACTS

ASSET #35: Resistance Skills

Youth are more likely to grow up healthy when they can resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations.

42%

*of youth surveyed by Search Institute have this asset in their lives.**

What Are Assets?

Assets are 40 values, experiences, and qualities that help kids succeed. "Resistance skills" is one of five social-competencies assets.

* Based on Search Institute surveys of 217,277 6th- to 12th-grade youth throughout the United States during the 1999-2000 school year.

Resistance Skills and Reasoning

Sometimes parenting feels like a struggle. At times, your child challenges the boundaries that you've set. Or, your child starts to question your advice. What is going on?

Your child is practicing resistance skills.

While we all want our children to resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations, our children don't easily learn what's important to resist and what's not. So they practice—at times—on everything. By saying no, they're figuring out what they don't want. And they're also discerning what they do want—what they want to say yes to.

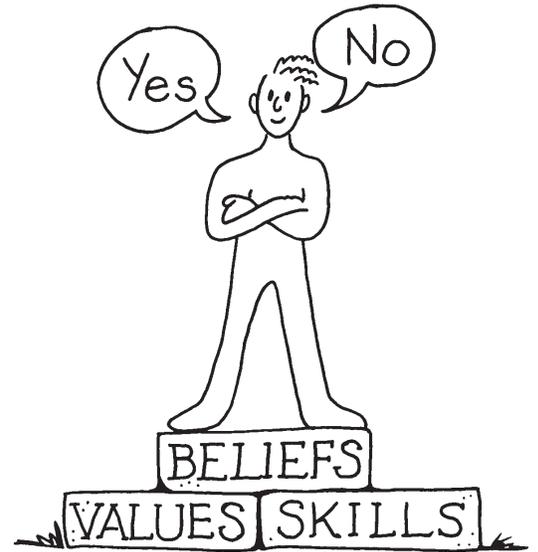
Teach your child resistance skills, but also teach your child the values that support why he or she would take a stand on an issue. Having many conversations with your teenager about drug use, premarital sex, safety, and personal boundaries increases the chance he or she will make a safe choice when asked to ride in a car with a person who has been drinking alcohol.

So, as you build this asset in your child, focus not only on how to resist and assert, but also on what to value. What to say yes to. What is healthy. What is safe. Then when your child is confronted with a sticky situation, you can

Helpful Hints

Tips that help your child develop resistance skills:

- **Encourage your child to express her or his feelings, beliefs, values, and opinions at home.**
- **Allow your child to tell you when he or she disagrees with you.**
- **Point out two or three things youth are saying yes to by saying no.**



feel more confident that he or she will make a good decision and stand firm in what he or she believes.

time together

Three ways to help your child build resistance skills:

1. **Model and role-play resistance skills and specific lines to use to say no.** Afterward, talk together about the experience and what was easy and difficult about it.
2. **Read stories and talk about people in the world (such as Rosa Parks and Gandhi) who resisted doing what everyone else was doing.** What was key to their doing so?
3. **As you observe others, point out the different ways people use resistance skills: some are subtle, some are assertive, and some are aggressive.** Talk about what's appropriate to handle different situations.

Quick Tip:
Saying no doesn't have to
be negative.

talk together

Questions to discuss with your child:

- What kinds of negative peer pressure do you feel?
- How easy is it for you to say no? Why?
- What is difficult for you to resist? Why? How do you act when you have trouble resisting?

Saying No

Have your child practice different ways of saying no. Remind her or him that it may be harder to do than he or she thinks.

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“Saying no is like giving yourself a present . . . It establishes boundaries. It gives you self-definition and self respect.”
— Louise Hart, Ph.D., author of *The Winning Family*

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Ways to Resist

Resisting negative peer pressure and dangerous situations isn't always easy. With your child, discuss these possible ways to resist. Which of them does your child like? Dislike? Why?

- Walk away from the situation.**
- Calmly say no.**
- Share your feelings.**
- Use humor.**
- Stand up for yourself.**
- Ignore the person or situation.**
- Confront the person.**
- Call a friend to help you.**
- Stay away from the situation from then on.**
- Invite a peer mediator to help.**
- Tell a caring adult.**

More Help for Parents

How to Say No and Keep Your Friends: Peer Pressure Reversal for Teens and Preteens by Sharon Scott. This book gives practical advice on how to help young people develop resistance skills. (Published by Human Resource Development Press.)

Healthy Communities Healthy Youth, Old Saybrook is part of the Search Institute's national Healthy Communities Healthy Youth network.

Our local initiative has opportunities for anyone interested in joining our effort to increase the number of developmental assets for ALL Old Saybrook youth.

For more information contact HCHY Coordinator Wendy Mill at Youth and Family Services, 860-510-5050 or via email at wmill@town.old-saybrook.ct.us.