

Give your children good, solid basis for adulthood

Our children are currently in middle school, and we're looking for guidance on how to help them make their teen years good ones. What do you recommend?

Many parents who have basically good kids still want to go the extra mile to give them a solid underpinning for their teen years and beyond. There are plenty of self-help books that offer good advice for parents like you.

One resource you might investigate is "CYFERnet," the online Children, Youth and Families Education and Research Network (<http://www.cyfernet.org/>). It has thousands of resources for parents, educators and researchers from universities and other institutions nationwide. To find resources written specifically for parents, choose the "Advanced Search" option, type in "teen" as the keyword, choose "General Public and Consumers" as the primary audience and "General Information" as the content type. You'll find more than a dozen resources ranging from general parenting guidance to advice on specific issues, such as body image and drug use.

CYFERnet's resources range from single-page fact sheets to the 100-page "Raising Teens: A Synthesis of Research and a Foundation for Action," from the Harvard School of Public Health. The latter offers a brief summary of the "Ten Tasks of Adolescence," outlining the developmental stages teens undergo as they transition to adulthood, as well as a rundown on the "Five Basics of Parenting Adolescents," which reviews practical strate-



gies parents can draw upon during their children's teen years.

Another resource that's often recommended is the nonprofit independent Search Institute, which has identified 40 "Developmental Assets" that help young people become healthy, caring and responsible adults. The institute's research has shown that young people with more of these assets are less likely to engage in risky behaviors, such as drinking alcohol or engaging in unsafe sex. One of its books, "What Kids Need to Succeed" by Peter Benson, Judy Galbraith and Pamela Espeland, is a great introduction and offers practical tips.

These assets include many things you may already be doing, including positive family communication, parental involvement in schooling, and youth's involvement with other positive adult role models. It also includes internal assets, including self-esteem, integrity, and planning and decision-making. Check out the full listing, online at <http://www.search-institute.org/assets/>.

Parents can help build those assets in a wide variety of ways. The Search Institute has books and other materials you can purchase, but you can gain a lot of insight by browsing its Web site. For example, one archived article, "Building Assets: What Parents Can Do," provides concrete ideas to use every day. It's online at <http://www.search-institute.org/archives/wpcd.htm#2/>.

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By Martha Filipic
(614) 292-9833
filipic.3@cfaes.osu.edu

Dear Subscriber: This column was reviewed by Terri Worthington, family and consumer sciences educator for OSU Extension in Geauga County.

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**Section of Communications
and Technology
News and Media Relations**
2021 Coffey Road
Columbus, OH 43210-1044
(614) 292-2011

208 Research Services
Building
1680 Madison Ave.
Wooster, OH 44691-4096
(330) 263-3780

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