

The background features three large, stylized blue handprints. One is at the top right, one is on the left side, and one is at the bottom left. The text is overlaid on these handprints.

Taking Asset Building Personally

A Guide for Planning and Facilitating Study Groups

Taking Asset Building Personally

*A GUIDE FOR PLANNING
AND FACILITATING STUDY GROUPS*





This resource is part of Search Institute's Healthy Communities • Healthy Youth initiative, which seeks to unite individuals, organizations, and communities for children and adolescents. Major corporate support for Search Institute's Healthy Communities • Healthy Youth initiative is provided by Lutheran Brotherhood, a member-owned organization of over 1 million Lutherans joined together for

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Taking Asset Building Personally

A Guide for Planning and Facilitating Study Groups

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Contents



<i>Acknowledgments</i>	v
<i>Introduction: Imagine the Possibilities!</i>	vii
A. Planning Guide	
1. Ways to Use <i>Taking Asset Building Personally</i>	3
2. Setting Up the Small Groups	6
B. Facilitators Guide	
1. Tips for Being an Effective Facilitator	19
2. Getting Ready to Lead the Series	22
Session 1. Understanding Asset Building	23
Session 2. Creating Caring Relationships/ A Chance to Contribute	29
Session 3. Boundaries That Teach/Making the Most of Time	35
Session 4. Learning for a Lifetime/Passing Along Positive Values	41
Session 5. Skills for Growing and Living/Power Purpose, and Promise	47
Session 6. Asset Building: Taking the Next Step	54
Series Evaluation	60



Acknowledgments

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Formed in 1993, Children First was the first community-wide initiative organized to build the developmental assets identified by Search Institute. In 1996, Children First began a concerted effort to bring asset building into individual neighborhoods within the city. This resource was developed as a tool for that effort.

Taking Asset Building Personally was first developed by Children First's Neighborhood Task Force as a way to encourage residents to integrate asset building into their personal lives. Thanks to all the members of the Neighborhood Task Force who helped conceptualize this resource, with a special thank-you to Bob Wittman, who developed the Facilitator Guide and facilitated the *Taking Asset Building Personally* pilot group. They were Karen Atkinson, Susan Farr, Bridget Gothberg, Charlie Meyers, Bob Ramsey, Eugene Roehlkepartain, Jolene Roehlkepartain, Terri Sullivan, and Bob Wittman.

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Introduction

Imagine the Possibilities!

Imagine living in a neighborhood where dozens of young people and adults have spent hours talking in small groups about how they can and do build assets for and with children and youth.

Imagine being part of an organization—a school, a congregation, a civic group—where many participants have made personal commitments to getting and staying involved in the lives of children and teenagers they know.

Imagine living in a community where hundreds of people from all walks of life have a shared experience of talking together about how they individually and collectively can do a better job of raising young people, using the framework of developmental assets as a guide.

Those are some of the images and possibilities that led to the development of *Taking Asset Building Personally*. It's not about how to get people on committees or task forces to organize, plan, and coordinate asset-building efforts in a community. It's not about getting institutions and organizations in a community to shape their programs and policies to support asset building. Those are all important components of a vision of an asset-building community. But they're not what this resource is about.

This resource focuses on encouraging, supporting, and unleashing the asset-building potential of thousands of individuals in neighborhoods, schools, organizations, and communities. It's about helping individuals— young people, parents, friends, neighbors, grandparents, and other adults— make personal commitments to asset building—providing young people with the positive experiences, opportunities, and relationships that help them grow up healthy, caring, and responsible. As Search Institute president Peter L. Benson writes in *All Kids Are Our Kids: What Communities Must Do to Raise Caring and Responsible Children and Adolescents* (Jossey-Bass, 1997):

Personal commitments to building relationships with youth are critical to the success of the movement. No matter how much money is spent, how many elaborate programs are initiated, how many laws are passed, or how many professionals are hired, the experiences of young people do not fundamentally change unless individuals . . . take personal responsibility to contribute to young people's healthy development. (p. 157)

When to Use This Resource

Getting people involved in asset building is a gradual process. People who study behavior change suggest that change is a long-term process that requires different kinds of encouragement, motivation, and support at different stages.

In *All Kids Are Our Kids*, Peter L. Benson draws on the field of social marketing to note that people move through at least four stages when making positive life changes:

1. First comes a stage called “precontemplation,” in which people are unaware of the important role they can play in young people’s lives.
2. Once their awareness is raised, they move to “contemplation,” when they consider whether asset building really has a place in their own lives. This is where they weigh benefits and risks.
3. If they decide that asset building is “worth it” and they have good opportunities, they move to the next stage, “action,” when they do something specific to build assets.
4. But taking action once isn’t a behavior change. That action has to be reinforced, strengthened, and repeated until it becomes a habit. Only then does a person reach the stage of “maintenance,” when asset building is a way of life (pp. 163–172).

Because of the level of commitment involved (six sessions), it’s unlikely that people will participate in small groups if they are only at stage 1 or early stage 2. Other tools and approaches are typically more effective to generate this initial interest and commitment. Some of the Search Institute tools that are designed for these early stages include:

- *You Can Make a Difference for Kids*, an eight-page booklet that introduces the assets and shows people that they already do many things to build assets.
- *The Asset Approach*, an eight-page booklet that presents the basic research about the assets.
- *150 Ways to Show Kids You Care*, a colorful poster/pamphlet that helps people see that building assets can be fun and easy.
- *40 Assets: Start Over, Starting Now*, an eight-minute video (with a Guide for Planning and Facilitating Study Groups) that introduces asset building.
- *Sharing the Asset Message Speakers Kit*, which can be used to make awareness-raising presentations about assets to groups in your community.

People often move quickly to stage 3 with asset building. Once they have been introduced to the basic ideas of asset building, their personal experiences and the research can make it easy to see the value. And they can easily take simple actions, such as saying “hi” to young people they see.

But what next? How do you reinforce, strengthen, and deepen their knowledge and commitment? How do you move people from stage 3 to stage 4—one of the most difficult things to do? That’s where *Taking Asset Building Personally* comes in. It is designed to give people who already want to build assets the information, skills, support system, structure, and positive feedback they need to make asset building an ongoing part of their lives.

Keep this process in mind as you’re considering how to use this resource in your organization or community. For example, in recruiting people to participate in a small group, consider using some of the other tools mentioned to raise initial awareness and interest. Otherwise, people may be reluctant to make a commitment to the entire series simply because they are not yet at that stage of commitment.

Small Groups, Personal Commitments

The power of this resource lies not in the printed material but in what happens when groups of 6 to 10 people gather in living rooms, park centers, meeting rooms, coffee shops, classrooms, and other places to talk about their own roles as asset builders. The people in these small groups gain the knowledge, skills, and supportive relationships that help them move into the community as confident asset builders. And these individual commitments create energy and a shared understanding that can grow and expand throughout the community.

Taking Asset Building Personally has three components:

1. A Planning Guide (Part A of this booklet), which offers tips and ideas for organizing and supporting small groups in your organization, neighborhood, or community;
2. An Action and Reflection Workbook (available from Search Institute), which offers information, worksheets, and ideas to help people shape their own commitment to asset building; and
3. A Guide for Planning and Facilitating Study Groups (Part B of this booklet), which offers step-by-step instructions for leading a series of six small-group discussions (using the Action and Reflection Workbook) with groups of 6 to 10 adults and older youth.

This resource can be used in an individual organization (such as a school, congregation, or parent support group), or it can be used in coordinated discussion groups throughout a community. In each case, the focus is on “what I can—and will—do” to build assets.

Possible Settings for Using This Resource

This resource is designed for maximum flexibility and a wide variety of settings. These include:

- Neighborhood discussion groups
- Community education classes
- Discussion groups in workplaces
- Religious education classes
- Parenting support groups and classes
- Civic groups
- Community leadership groups
- Intergenerational study or action groups
- Other places where people gather to learn and grow together.

What Participants Will Do

Taking Asset Building Personally is a six-session series designed to equip small-group participants to be committed asset builders in their families, schools, neighborhoods, organizations, and communities. The resources and the discussion of them illustrate the power of building assets and the difference that individuals can make when they commit to being asset builders in their families, neighborhoods, or organizations.

As they participate in the six small-group sessions outlined in this material and use the Action and Reflection Workbook for self-reflection and planning, youth and adults will:

- Grow in their personal commitment to make a difference in the lives of children and youth.
- Understand and remember basic information about the eight categories of developmental assets.
- Examine their personal responsibility, ability, and opportunities to build assets.

- Develop new skills that will help them be more comfortable and effective in building assets.
- Commit to specific ways they will build assets for young people in their nuclear or extended family, neighborhood, organization, or community.

How These Small Groups Can Strengthen Asset-Building Efforts

The small groups you organize can strengthen asset-building efforts within families and within your organization or community in several ways by:

- Increasing the number of adults and youth who have a deeper understanding of the assets and a stronger commitment to building them.
- Building relationships among individuals who can be a support group for each other's asset-building activities.
- Enlarging the group of individuals who will hold the community and its organizations, as well as each other, accountable for asset building.
- Surfacing creative ideas for asset building in your organization or community.

Little Things Add Up

Whenever you gather people together to talk about their own lives, experiences, commitments, and priorities, you can't be exactly sure what will happen. The goal of this process is not to have a clear, precise plan for community-wide action or activities. Many of the results may be subtle or intangible.

While they may seem small, these little commitments—the things that each person chooses to do differently—will touch the lives of young people. It's these little things that, over time, will add up to real changes in the culture, priorities, and values of people in communities.

Of course, individual change isn't everything. Systems, programs, and policies also need to be aligned with the vision of asset building. However, the systems, the programs, and the policies are more likely to change when individuals throughout the community share knowledge, passion, and the commitment to making a positive difference in the lives of children and youth.



A. PLANNING GUIDE

This section offers suggestions and ideas for encouraging widespread discussions of asset building within an organization, neighborhood, or community by using *Taking Asset Building Personally: A Guide for Planning and Facilitating Study Groups* as the focus. Your planning needs will vary widely, depending in part on whether you're integrating these discussions into existing groups or encouraging new groups to form to discuss asset building.

If you're leading *Taking Asset Building Personally* with an existing small group, or if you've been asked to facilitate groups that others are setting up, you don't need to read this planning guide. Instead, see the Facilitators Guide (Part B).

1. Ways to Use *Taking Asset Building Personally*

This resource is quite flexible and can be adapted to many settings and uses within an organization and community. Here are some possibilities to consider, depending on your focus:

Community-Wide Asset-Building Initiatives

- Encourage and coordinate small-group discussions across sectors and organizations throughout the community so that many people can participate in settings where they are most comfortable.
- Offer these sessions for people who are part of leadership groups for a community-wide asset-building initiative. It will deepen their knowledge of assets and help them “walk the talk.”
- Offer ongoing training and support to small-group facilitators. Match gifted facilitators with opportunities for leading these conversations in various organizations and settings within your community.

Businesses and Corporations

- Offer small-group discussions for employees over lunch hours or at the beginning or end of work shifts. Consider it part of the way you support your employees and foster their involvement in the community.
- Offer to contribute copies of the Action and Reflection Workbook and Guide for Planning and Facilitating Study Groups to employees who are

interested in leading a group in their neighborhood, congregation, or service organization.

Community Education

- Consider being a host, coordinator, or trainer for facilitators working in neighborhoods and other settings in your community.
- Regularly offer sessions alongside other continuing education options for youth and adults in the community.

Congregations

- Use this resource with an existing class or to create small intergenerational groups from youth and adult religious education classes.
- The video *Foundations for Success* (Search Institute, 1997) focuses on building assets in congregations and would be a good supplement to the resources in *Taking Asset Building Personally*. There are four sections of the video and questions in the accompanying discussion guide that could be used in four of the sessions.
- Invite small-group facilitators to include a discussion of ideas for their congregation as they look at the asset-building ideas in each of the six sessions.
- Assist small-group facilitators in finding appropriate sacred writings and prayers to incorporate into each session.

Neighborhood Groups

- Encourage neighbors to start informal discussion groups in places where they live, using the *Taking Asset Building Personally* modules as their guide.

- Host neighborhood celebrations where everyone who has been part of a discussion group has a chance to get acquainted and share stories.

Schools

- Create study groups within the parent-teacher organization, inviting student leaders to join.
- Help the small groups learn about other asset-building activities in the community and challenge them to think of ways to connect their projects.
- Encourage a few teachers to use this guide as a way of exploring how they build assets through their teaching and relationships with students.

Service Organizations

- Encourage members to participate in these groups as a way of strengthening your organization's commitment to asset building.
- Consider using portions of sessions as part of member meetings to get members interested in how they personally can do more to build assets.

Youth-Serving Organizations

- Plan for an intergenerational study involving youth, leaders, and volunteers in the organization. You may want to complete the entire study in one weekend in a retreat or camp setting.
- Discuss with participants how follow-up action will take place in the organization. Set up a way to encourage and monitor asset-building activity.

2. Setting Up the Small Groups

A small discussion group can occur on its own with little or no external support, preparation, or follow-up. Or it could take place as one topical discussion in the midst of others within ongoing educational opportunities in an organization or community. Such groups can be quite valuable to the participants.

If you see these small groups as part of an overall strategy to get many people in the organization or community to become committed asset builders, you'll need to be more intentional in setting up systems that effectively launch, equip, support, and sustain these efforts.

Here are some steps to consider.

Forming a Steering Committee

If your goal is to encourage and support many of these discussion groups forming in your organization, neighborhood, or community, you may want to create a small steering committee (or tap an existing group) to take responsibility for the following tasks involved in spreading these discussions across your organization, neighborhood, or community. The group can:

- Determine your scope.
- Identify, recruit, and train discussion group leaders.
- Set up small groups.
- Recruit group participants.
- Monitor and support the small groups.
- Reflect, evaluate, and continue the cycle.

Each of these tasks is addressed in more detail below.

Determining Your Scope

As you begin planning, it's important to agree on the scope or vision you have for these groups. Do you hope they will form in many neighborhoods or organizations throughout your community? Do you hope every young person and adult in your organization will participate at some point? Or do you want to have a few groups in your organization or community?

You may choose to begin with one small group, recruiting participants who could be good facilitators themselves. When this first group completes the study, each participant can then recruit friends and neighbors to form one new study group.

In St. Louis Park, Minnesota, where this material was first developed, the goal was to encourage informal groups in many neighborhoods of the community. However, organizers decided to start small and let it build over time.

The first time, they only sponsored one discussion group, led by a professional in adult education who was on the community education staff. They invited members of Children First's vision team (leadership group) to sign up to participate in the series; these volunteers were joined by others from the community. This approach had several advantages in this community:

- The first group was manageable and easily accessible for planners.
- The facilitator—or other community education staff—could later serve as a resource and trainer for future facilitators in other neighborhoods in the community.
- Vision team members had an opportunity to examine their own roles as asset builders. In the process, they became more committed to helping guide the community's overall asset-building effort.

- Many of the people who participated in the original group would likely be comfortable leading small groups in their own neighborhood or organization, once they had completed the series themselves.

Now the groups are expanding, based on interest and awareness. People who participated in the original group are being encouraged to start groups in their own neighborhoods and organizations. The intent is that anyone who facilitates will have first experienced being a participant in one of these discussion groups. In addition, leaders of various organizations and networks in the community are being informed that this resource is available.

Identifying, Recruiting, and Training Small-Group Leaders

You'll need to identify, recruit, and train one discussion leader for each group of 6 to 10 people that forms. Facilitators need not be experts in asset building or group dynamics. The Facilitators Guide (Part B of this book) offers step-by-step directions for leading each session. The key responsibility of small-group facilitators is to help group members exchange ideas in meaningful and respectful ways. The discussions focus on the content of the Action and Reflection Workbook and the participants' perspectives and experiences.

Identifying qualities of effective facilitators—As you consider potential leaders, look for people who are good asset builders. Specifically, these qualities are important for facilitators:

- Good listener.
- Cordial and welcoming to others.
- Diplomatic (able to treat disagreements among group members in ways that all will learn from the different sides of the issue; able to keep a group conversation on task).
- Observant.

- Well regarded among youth and adults in the community or organization.

Writing a job description—Before you approach the potential facilitators you have identified, take time to think through what you expect of these individuals. Prepare a written description of what you are asking them to do. Include:

- Length of commitment (such as prepare for and lead six 90-minute sessions plus one two-hour training session).
- Resources you will provide (such as the Action and Reflection Workbook, the Guide for Planning and Facilitating Study Groups, resources in a lending library).
- Other duties (such as recruiting participants, arranging meeting space and putting it back in order, providing refreshments, ordering materials for participants, keeping records of participation, completing an evaluation).

Inviting people to be facilitators—The best way to ask people to be facilitators is face-to-face. Find a convenient time for each conversation, and take along the Action and Reflection Workbook, the Guide for Planning and Facilitating Study Groups, and a copy of the written position description. Describe the position and tell why you think he or she is a good person to fill it. Leave the *Taking Asset Building Personally* resources and the written job description for the person to study. Allow two or three days for prospective leaders to call you with their decision.

If you're hoping to make the small groups an ongoing part of your organization or community, don't stop recruiting facilitators after the first round. In fact, some of the most effective facilitators may be those who choose to participate in small-group discussions first. Be sure to check in with them at the end of a series to determine who might be willing and ready to lead (or co-lead) another group.

Training facilitators—The ideal training for facilitators is to experience *Taking Asset Building Personally* as a small-group participant. If possible, complete all six sessions with the small-group facilitators as participants. If this is not possible, plan a time to gather leaders to go through Session 1 with you as the facilitator. Allow at least 30 minutes at the end of the session to discuss other responsibilities they will have (record-keeping, room arrangement, evaluation, etc.) and to answer their questions. Be sure facilitators know how to reach you if they have questions or need to find a substitute.

If you recruit people who have already been through the discussion series, consider having an abbreviated training (one to two hours) to talk about some of the specifics of facilitating these groups. If possible, have experienced facilitators be part of that training event so that they become resources to the new facilitators.

Forming Small Groups

Small discussion groups may be existing study groups in organizations or a group of neighbors who want to gather to learn more about assets. Others who may enjoy this study are discussion groups in schools, parent education and support groups, book study groups, community organizations, businesses, governmental agencies, and community education centers.

Here are some issues to consider as you form groups:

Ages to include—*Taking Asset Building Personally* is designed to appeal to adults of all ages and older youth. No previous knowledge of the 40 assets is required. Group members may include youth, young adults, parents, adults with no children, and senior citizens.

Often it's easiest, most convenient, and most comfortable to form groups of people based on age or life experience. For example, you might have groups of parents, senior citizens, students, youth, or others. While

those groups' experiences can be valuable, there's even more power in getting groups together that cross generational and life experience lines. While people may feel a bit awkward at first, they will be breaking down barriers and differences within communities. Having youth and adults meet together to discuss asset building can be particularly potent.

Group size—Groups of 6 to 10 people are most effective for this kind of study. This size allows the most potential for each group member to contribute to the discussion. Each small group needs a facilitator.

If you choose to use this resource with a larger group, plan how you will form breakout groups of 6 to 10 people each. Be sure that you have a designated facilitator and a separate space for each breakout group.

Schedule—Each of the six sessions is planned for about 90 minutes. Maximize participation in small groups by scheduling them so that potential participants have a choice of the day of the week, time of day, and location for their sessions. If the needs of your organization require 60-minute sessions, remind facilitators that they need to modify or eliminate some questions or activities to condense each session to 60 minutes.

Location—When you select meeting locations, seek out homes or meeting rooms where 10 people can be comfortably seated and where the lighting is adequate for reading and writing tasks. Tables are not necessary. Be certain that the locations are accessible, and mention this in the promotional material you distribute.

Child care—Consider making child care available for some small groups so that parents and other caregivers can participate without having to locate a baby-sitter. If several parents want to participate, encourage them to team up to coordinate child care.

Materials fees—Determine whether you need to charge participants a small materials fee to cover the cost of the Action and Reflection Workbook and other

supplies needed in these sessions. Be clear about those expectations up front. Consider asking a business that supports asset-building efforts to contribute these materials so that anyone can participate at no cost.

Keep in mind that you don't have to get all these details figured out before you recruit people to participate. Another option is to identify people who are interested and have them come together to decide when, where, and how often to meet for these discussions.

Recruiting Group Participants

Plan to use a combination of strategies to invite adults and youth in your community or organization to join a small group:

Personal invitation—Enlist the help of your committee members, the small-group facilitators, and the participants who first enrolled to personally invite other youth and adults whom they know to join a small group. This method takes more time but brings out the most participants.

General invitation—Publicize the study sessions in newsletters, newspapers, radio announcements, and flyers mailed to homes. Be sure to highlight the benefits of this study for the participant and for the community. Direct individuals to call and register for their choice of groups. This method will make it clear that all are welcome, but it probably will not result in many participants.

Existing groups—Encourage existing study or service groups to dedicate six sessions or meetings to *Taking Asset Building Personally*. Include the leaders of these groups in facilitator training.

When inviting people, be clear that the process will be most effective if they commit to participating in all six sessions. Sessions—and group relationships—build

on each other. Changes in the group's composition can make it difficult to maintain momentum and direction.

Setting Up Small Groups

The following need to be done so that the groups have what they need and are ready to go before the first session:

Provide essential resources for each small group—Each small group will need the following resources (all available from Search Institute) to lead the sessions effectively:

- The Facilitators Guide, Part B of this book, for the facilitator.
- A copy of the Action and Reflection Workbook for each participant as well as the facilitator.
- *40 Assets: Start Over, Starting Now* (video), which is used in Session 1.

You can do a great service for the facilitators by gathering and providing the supplies that are needed for each session. All are readily available in most communities through discount stores. Many could be contributed by organizations or businesses that are involved in asset building.

Consider offering additional resources—Discussion leaders may appreciate having additional resources available to help them prepare or to offer to participants who want to study assets in more depth. Consider gathering several of these in a central location where small-group facilitators can check them out for their use. The following Search Institute resources may be especially helpful:

- *All Kids Are Our Kids* is the groundbreaking, in-depth book by Search Institute president Peter L. Benson that gives information on the assets and how communities can mobilize individuals and organizations to build assets in young people.

- *Assets: The Magazine of Ideas for Healthy Communities and Healthy Youth* offers information and strategies for building assets for and with young people and for promoting positive youth development.
- *Developmental Assets: A Synthesis of the Scientific Research on Adolescent Development* is a scholarly book that synthesizes extensive research that relates to each of the developmental assets.
- *A Fragile Foundation: The State of Developmental Assets among American Youth* is a research report that gives in-depth statistics on the developmental assets, patterns of risk behaviors, developmental deficits, and thriving indicators.
- *Introducing Healthy Communities • Healthy Youth* is an informational handout that provides an overview of the Healthy Communities • Healthy Youth initiative and Search Institute. It opens to a colorful poster of asset-building ideas.
- *Starting Out Right: Developmental Assets for Children* offers new frameworks for understanding and building the foundation that children from birth through age 11 need to begin a healthy life.
- *What Kids Need to Succeed* is an easy-to-read book that gives practical ideas for building each developmental asset.
- *What Teens Need to Succeed* is a comprehensive, practical book that describes specific ways young people can build each of the 40 assets for themselves and others.

For more information on these and other asset-building resources, contact Search Institute, 700 South Third Street, Suite 210, Minneapolis, MN 55415. Toll-free: 800-888-7828; www.search-institute.org.

Integrate local data, if available—*Taking Asset Building Personally* includes information from Search Institute’s research on almost 100,000 6th- to 12th-grade youth across the United States. These data are based on surveys that many communities have done of their own youth using the survey *Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors*, which is available from Search Institute.

Your community may have conducted this survey with young people in your community or school district. (Contact the administration of your school district or a local asset-building initiative to learn if this information is available.)

If you have access to this information on the developmental assets of young people in your community, consider creating simple handouts for each session using statistics about young people in your community for each category of assets. Distribute the handouts to each group facilitator. Participants will often take the research even more seriously when it’s about “our kids.”

Supporting the Small Groups

Once groups have gotten started, maintain contact and communication. Call each small-group facilitator after he or she has led the first session. Listen to how it went, and ask if any resources or other help are needed. Be sure the facilitators understand that they can call you anytime with questions or concerns.

In addition, your facilitators may want to meet as a group after one or two sessions to exchange ideas and offer each other support.

Reflecting, Evaluating, and Continuing the Process

Each session of *Taking Asset Building Personally* encourages participants to commit to concrete asset-building action in their lives. Individual and small-group action will be an outcome of participation in this study. Think about how your community or organization can stay connected with small groups and encourage their participation in community activities.

After the six sessions are complete, consider sending a note of thanks to each small-group facilitator. You might also publish a public word of thanks in your community or organization newsletter.

In addition, meet with facilitators (either individually or collectively) to find out how the sessions went, what challenges they encountered, and what they'd do the next time. Look at any themes in the evaluations from the final session that need to be addressed. Talk about whether they're interested in leading other groups.

Find ways to keep people involved in asset building after the discussion group has completed its series. Ask the facilitator if any specific interests surfaced during the series that could be nurtured. Don't assume, though, that everyone will want to do formal volunteering in an asset-building initiative; some may prefer to put energy into the informal kinds of asset building that are the focus of the discussions.

One way to encourage ongoing involvement is to find out whether any of the small-group participants are interested in facilitating other groups. If so, talk with them individually to determine whether they're ready and available. Then schedule a training session to get them ready to begin the cycle again.



B. FACILITATORS GUIDE

T**his Facilitators Guide is an easy-to-use companion piece to *Taking Asset Building Personally: An Action and Reflection Workbook*.** This guide includes clear and helpful steps for guiding discussions of the workbook in six sessions. The guide also contains information you need to know to prepare for each session. Inexperienced group leaders may choose to follow the outline and script closely. Experienced facilitators may choose to substitute questions and activities based on their past experiences and successes.

The goal for the six sessions is that all participants will:

- Gain an understanding of the eight categories of developmental assets.
- Identify opportunities to build assets in each of the eight categories.
- Develop new skills that will help them be more comfortable and effective in building assets.
- Commit to specific ways they will build assets in their organization or neighborhood.

1. Tips for Being an Effective Facilitator

As a small-group facilitator, you don't have to be an expert on asset building. Answers to most questions in these sessions will be found within the group itself and the life experiences of its members. Most of the questions you will address do not have an absolute right or wrong answer but simply a personal perspective. Your primary role is to encourage and motivate a healthy, meaningful, and respectful exchange of ideas. Relax—no one expects you to know all the answers!

Understanding Your Role

It is important to create an environment where people feel safe to share their ideas and know their ideas are listened to and respected. Perhaps the most important skills a facilitator can possess are listening, observing, focusing, and connecting:

- **Listening**—Pay attention to what is being said, pressing for clarification and/or probing deeper when needed.
- **Observing**—Notice what isn't being said. Look for nonverbal communication.
- **Focusing**—Keep the group's attention and energy focused on the desired outcomes. In other words, make sure the group stays on track.
- **Connecting**—Assume that the group members wish to know more about each other, and take the time to nurture these relationships. Use name tags, build in time for introductions, and share some personal information to help build trust.

Recognizing Individual Differences

Each of us has our own way of learning and interacting with others. Some learn best from information presented in writing, others by discussing ideas. Some people appreciate a structured agenda; others prefer to let the discussion wander where it will. Keep in mind that there are no right or wrong ways to learn, just differences.

Ideas for Leading Sessions

These suggestions will help you create an engaging atmosphere:

- Create an atmosphere of respect and trust.
- Prepare a written session agenda.
- Allow each participant the opportunity to speak as early in the session as possible.
- Start on time and end on time.
- Include a variety of activities.
- Encourage each individual to express her or his ideas in ways that are comfortable.

Leading Intergenerational Groups

In this often age-segregated society, many people haven't experienced being part of an intergenerational group. However, mixing generations can be a wonderful way to build relationships and a shared understanding. *Taking Asset Building Personally* is a great opportunity to begin getting to know each other.

When leading a group that includes youth and adults, it is important to establish each member as an equal participant and to encourage the group members to listen to each other with respect and understanding. Some ways to make intergenerational groups work effectively are:

- Give people time to get to know each other and to discover common interests or experiences.
- Be honest about people’s levels of discomfort or unfamiliarity. Talk together about why it’s important to find ways to talk and learn together.
- Make sure everyone has an equal opportunity to speak and participate.
- Highlight the ways everyone—regardless of age—contributes to the group.
- Don’t ask anyone—youth or adult—to “represent” her or his age group. Encourage each person to speak for herself or himself, not for others.
- Watch for unconscious stereotyping of any generation by age, appearance, clothing style, or other outward appearances.
- Relax. Learn as you go. If something doesn’t go well, talk together about how to do it better the next time. Remember, everyone in the room is practicing new ways of building relationships across generations.

2. Getting Ready to Lead the Series

If you've agreed to help recruit and register participants for your small group, get started as early as possible. Remember that the best way to recruit is through a personal invitation. Who do you know who would be interested in participating in this series? Call them, explaining what you're doing and what's involved. (For more on recruitment, see the Planning Guide, Part 2.)

Well before the first session, familiarize yourself with the process by reading through the Action and Reflection Workbook and the six sessions in this guide. (If you received training that helped with this basic understanding, scan through the material again to re-familiarize yourself.) Particularly take note of any supplies you need that may take a bit of time to gather.

A week or so before the first session, send an introductory letter or note to participants. Let them know that you're looking forward to seeing them. Note what they can expect by participating.

Each session includes detailed instructions. Most sessions require gathering a few supplies. Finish necessary preparations well before the starting time for the group session. As you prepare to lead each session, read through the complete session plan in this book as well as the related chapters in the Action and Reflection Workbook.

SESSION 1

Understanding Asset Building

(For use with Chapter 1 of the Action and Reflection Workbook.)



Purpose of Session 1

You'll lay the groundwork for understanding the 40 developmental assets and help group members get acquainted. As a result, participants will have a better sense of how they are important in the asset-building work of the community and learn new skills in developing group guidelines.



Goals for Session 1

During this session, participants will:

- Gain an understanding of this six-session series, its purpose, and the expectations of group participants.
- Become familiar with the eight categories of developmental assets.
- Begin building a sense of community among group members.



About Your Participants

This session is an opportunity for participants to learn a little about each other and begin to establish a group culture. If, at the end of the session, the group members leave feeling positive about their involvement and wanting more information about asset building, consider your session a success.



Preparation

Setting the stage for a good first meeting begins with some pre-session homework. Send each participant a welcome letter and their copy of *Taking Asset Building Personally: An Action and Reflection Workbook* about one week prior to your meeting. Ask them to read Chapter 1 and complete the “Looking Back” worksheet.

Read the introduction to this guide if you have not done so.

Read Chapter 1 in the Action and Reflection Workbook and complete the “Looking Back” worksheet.

The session is planned for 90 minutes. If you will have a shorter time, mark which sections you will shorten by reducing the time for discussion. Feel free to eliminate or modify some questions or activities to help you do this.

Gather name tags and pens or pencils. Have a few extra copies of *Taking Asset Building Personally: An Action and Reflection Workbook* available for participants who forget theirs.

Have two index cards for each participant to use.

Make sure the room is ready, with comfortable seating and adequate lighting. Set up so that all participants can see and hear each other.

Locate the video *40 Assets: Start Over, Starting Now* (Search Institute, 1998). Arrange for use of a VCR and monitor.*

Choose a quotation from the Introduction or Chapter 1 of the Action and Reflection Workbook that is meaningful to you. Or, you may choose some other quotation about children and youth that you would like to share with the group.

* If you do not have access to this video or equipment, prepare a short presentation that introduces the developmental assets. The material in the first chapter of the Action and Reflection Workbook can help guide your presentation. Or consider using one of the following two brochures, both of which are available from Search Institute:

- *The Asset Approach: Giving Kids What They Need to Succeed*
- *You Can Make a Difference for Kids*

If you're not comfortable doing this presentation yourself, ask someone in your organization or community who is well versed in asset building to make a 10-minute presentation during this session.



Agenda

- Getting Started (15 minutes)
- Skill Building: Group Guidelines (15 minutes)
- Personalizing the Need: The 40 Assets (15 minutes)
- How Are We Doing? (15 minutes)
- How Can We Improve? (10 minutes)
- What Can I Do Personally? (15 minutes)
- Closing (5 minutes)



Getting Started (15 minutes)

Welcome people and thank them for making the time to participate in this series. Help them feel comfortable and welcome. Ask the host to review any housekeeping items such as bathroom locations, treats, or location of phones. Share with them a little about yourself, your role as the facilitator of the session, and your interest in the topic.

Give them an overview of the six sessions, referring to the table of contents in the Action and Reflection Workbook. Point out that this session will provide an overview of the 40 assets. In Sessions 2–5, you will study the assets in greater depth, focusing on two asset categories per session. Sessions 2 and 3 will focus on the external assets; Sessions 4 and 5 on the internal assets. In Session 6, you will explore specific ways a community, a neighborhood, and an individual can become more powerful and effective asset builders.

Share with them the purpose for this session (from the first page of this session plan) and the agenda.

Invite the participants to introduce themselves by giving their name and answering these questions: How many different communities have you lived in? In which one have you lived the longest?

Explain that one component of building a cohesive group is establishing rituals. For these sessions, the ritual will be the sharing of a reading, poem, or song. Read aloud the quotation you selected from the Action and Reflection Workbook.

Solicit a volunteer to provide an opening thought for the next session. Tell them that an opening thought can be a story, poem, reading, song, or some other means of sharing with the group something special about young people.



Skill Building: Group Guidelines (15 minutes)

Comment that before you get into the topic, it is important to establish some group expectations that will help your work together be more productive. To do this, ask each person to think back on some of the most effective groups they have been a part of and also some of the least effective. Give each person two index cards. On the first card, have them write the word *effective* and one characteristic of the most effective groups they have been in. Next, write on the other card the word *ineffective* and one characteristic of the least effective groups.

Break into two or three smaller groups and have each member share her or his statements. Each smaller group should record two or three key guidelines for small-group discussions and work.

Share small-group comments and guidelines with the large group.

Now ask the group to agree on some guidelines for how they will work together, based on their conversations.

Summarize the ideas. Ask if all members are comfortable with these guidelines and willing to live by them as you continue to meet. If they are not, talk about the concerns and try to reach an understanding. Point out that this process has built assets in your group.



Personalizing the Need: The 40 Assets (15 minutes)

Ask group members to refer to the “Looking Back” section they completed in the Action and Reflection Workbook. Pause briefly for participants to review what they have written or to complete the page.

Tell about one asset builder in your own life, then invite participants to do the same.

Ask the group to summarize: What impact did these people have on your lives? How did they influence the choices you made as young people? What were your feelings as you completed this exercise?



How Are We Doing? (15 minutes)

Introduce the video *40 Assets: Start Over, Starting Now* as a succinct overview of the 40 developmental assets.

To prepare to view the video, have participants refer to page 2 of the Action and Reflection Workbook, which lists the 40 assets. Ask participants to mark the assets they feel they had when they were young.

View the video.

After the video, ask: Which of the assets do you see as most prevalent in the lives of children and teenagers today? Which of the assets do you see as most absent from the lives of children and teenagers today?



How Can We Improve? (10 minutes)

To further discuss the video, ask people to speak to each other in pairs. Present these questions one at a time for pairs to discuss:

- What parts of this video stood out for you?
- What were some of the messages or the lessons that you picked up?
- Now what can we do with this new information?

Invite pairs to share any key insights with the large group.



What Can I Do Personally? (15 minutes)

Form two smaller groups. Refer the groups to “Exploring Ideas” worksheet of the Action and Reflection Workbook. Ask them to look through the ideas and note if there are any items that they are already doing. Then ask each small group to think of two or three other ideas for each of the categories.

Ask each small group to list the ideas.

Ask individuals to take a moment to complete the “Looking Forward” section on page 7 of the Action and Reflection Workbook.

Invite comments from any participants who are willing to share. As you listen, commit to addressing their concerns as you move ahead.



Closing (5 minutes)

Restate the purpose of this session and ask participants to show how well they feel they accomplished this by raising a number of fingers on one hand—one for “I don’t think we even came close” to five for “I feel like we were right on target.”

Ask group members to read and complete the “Looking Back” sections in Chapters 2 and 3 before you meet next time.

If time allows, invite each person to share one new thought and perhaps an action step he or she will pursue because of this session. Allow people to pass if so desired, but use this as a means of summarizing the work done throughout the evening. As the facilitator, go last and fill in any thoughts that may not have been mentioned.

Thank the host and the participants for their active participation. Make it a point to end on time.

SESSION 2

Creating Caring Relationships/ A Chance to Contribute

(For use with Chapters 2 and 3 of the Action and Reflection Workbook.)



Purpose of Session 2

Participants will look at the asset categories of support and empowerment and examine in greater detail how each person can play a vital role in building these assets for young people.

As a result of this session, all participants will gain a greater appreciation of how important it is to create caring relationships and to provide opportunities for young people to contribute to their communities. Participants also will develop listening skills and thus be better prepared to enhance their personal relationships with the children and young people in their lives.



Goals for Session 2

During this session, participants will:

- Practice skills related to listening and effective interpersonal communication.
- Identify the gifts they each have for nurturing caring relationships and providing opportunities for children and youth to contribute to the community.
- Celebrate the things they are already doing to create caring relationships and provide young people the opportunity to contribute.
- Commit to action that will increase the number of caring relationships and provide young people a greater opportunity to contribute.



About Your Participants

Because this is the second of six sessions, most of the people will be familiar with the discussion series and your style as the facilitator. A gentle reminder: Make sure anyone new in the group feels welcome and comfortable. Most groups begin to create a culture from early on, and any person new to the group may feel like an outsider at first.



Preparation

Read Chapters 2 and 3 in the Action and Reflection Workbook. Complete the “Looking Back” pages in each chapter.

The session is planned for 90 minutes. If you will have a shorter time, mark which sections you will shorten by reducing the time for discussion. Feel free to eliminate or modify some questions or activities to help you do this.

Gather name tags and pens or pencils. Have a few extra copies of the *Taking Asset Building Personally: An Action and Reflection Workbook* available for participants who forget theirs.

Make sure the room is ready, with comfortable seating and adequate lighting. Set up so that all participants can see and hear each other. People will need access to movable chairs for one activity in this session.



Agenda

- Getting Started (15 minutes)
- Skill Building: Listening (15 minutes)
- Personalizing the Need: Friendship Gifts (15 minutes)
- How Are We Doing? (15 minutes)
- How Can We Improve? (15 minutes)
- What Can I Do Personally? (10 minutes)
- Closing (5 minutes)



Getting Started (15 Minutes)

Welcome the group and invite the host to do the same. Ask the host to review any housekeeping items such as bathroom locations, treats, or location of phones.

Introduce the person who has volunteered to provide the opening thought for the day. Thank her or him when completed, and solicit a volunteer to provide an opening thought for the next session. Remind the group that an opening thought can be a story, poem, reading, song, or some other means of sharing something special about young people.

Remind participants that the last time they met, they spent time getting to know one another and creating some group expectations and norms. Ask them if they had any subsequent thoughts about these since the last meeting.

Next, move into group introductions (including any new members) and ask people to share their name again and one thought or insight they had while doing either of the “Looking Back” exercises assigned for this session: “Your Greatest Supporters” in Chapter 2 or “Valuable Times” in Chapter 3. Ask the participants to pick one or the other to conserve time.

Explain to the group that *Taking Asset Building Personally: An Action and Reflection Workbook* will be the basis of much of the evening’s discussion, and make sure people have a copy to reference.

Share with the group the purpose of this session as it is explained on the first page of this session plan. Also, share the agenda for the evening and invite any comments or questions before you move on. When all the “business” is taken care of, move on to the next segment of the agenda—the art of listening.



Skill Building: Listening (15 minutes)

This exercise is designed to help people practice a skill that is essential to developing caring relationships—listening. It is a skill we all use every day but seldom work to improve.

First have the participants find a partner and then arrange their chairs so that they are sitting facing each other with their knees almost touching.

Next have the pairs choose which person will be the talker and which will be the listener. The rules of the exercise are:

- The talker will talk for three minutes about her or his experiences in establishing positive relationships with children or teenagers.
- The listener is not allowed to talk, question, or respond. He or she must simply listen for the entire three minutes.
- When the three minutes are up, the listener spends one minute paraphrasing back to the talker what he or she heard. Again, the response is without interruption.
- When completed, the two people switch roles and repeat the exercise with a new question: What could be some reasons many people don't respect and value teenagers in this society?
- Once again, the talker responds for three minute without interruption, and then the listener paraphrases for one minute without interruption.

When the exercise is complete, invite participants to rearrange their seats for discussion.

Guide the discussion with the following questions:

- What was your experience during this activity?
- Who had a similar experience?
- Who had a different experience?
- What did this exercise tell you about the importance and challenges of listening?
- What relevance do you see with today's topics of the support and empowerment assets?
- How does this experience relate to your own interactions with children or teenagers (if you're an adult) or with adults (if you're a young person)?

Finally, ask participants if anyone has any final thoughts about the exercise.

When the group is ready, move on to the next segment of the agenda.



Personalizing the Need: Friendship Gifts (15 minutes)

Form pairs. Have people interview each other to discover the gifts their partner brings to a friendship. The opening question might be: What are gifts your friends say you have that make you a great friend?

After the partners have taken turns interviewing each other, have each person briefly tell the whole group about some of her or his partner's friendship gifts.

When everyone has shared, ask: What are some of the common gifts we bring to our friendships with others?

Then have the whole group brainstorm how we could—and are!—using the friendship gifts in the room to support and empower children and teenagers in our families, organizations, or community.



How Are We Doing? (15 minutes)

How well are we using our gifts and opportunities to support and empower young people? Invite people to simply reflect on their own experiences and perceptions. Prompt the discussion with a couple of questions:

- What are things that help us be effective in supporting and empowering young people?
- What are things that get in the way?

Ask half the participants to turn to the “Looking Around” exercises in Chapter 2 and the other half to the “Looking Around” section in Chapter 3. Ask each group to work through the sections together, then to report their key findings to the entire group.



How Can We Improve? (15 minutes)

Comment that the “Looking Around” worksheets open up opportunities and possibilities for supporting and empowering young people. The next step is to identify specific ways we can tap into those opportunities and possibilities.

Ask participants to briefly skim through the “Exploring Ideas” and “Building Assets through the Years” sections in Chapters 2 and 3. Ask them to share ideas from these pages that might fit in their own lives. Then ask:

- What kinds of things would help you be more intentional about supporting and empowering young people?
- What resources and relationships do you have that can help you be more intentional?



What Can I Do Personally? (10 minutes)

Point out that support and empowerment aren't things *other* people need to do. Each of us plays a role. Give participants a few minutes to complete "Looking Forward," with half of the group working on Chapter 2 and the other half on Chapter 3.

Ask for two or three people to volunteer to share some of their own thoughts.



Closing (5 minutes)

Restate the purpose of this session and ask participants to show how well they feel they accomplished this by raising a number of fingers on one hand: one for "I don't think we even came close" to five for "I feel like we were right on target."

Ask group members to read and complete the "Looking Back" sections in Chapters 4 and 5 before you meet next time.

As time allows, invite each person to share one new thought and perhaps an action step he or she will pursue because of this session. Allow people to pass if so desired, but use this as a means of summarizing the work done throughout the session.

Express appreciation to the host and to the participants. And most important, end on time!

SESSION 3

Boundaries That Teach/ Making the Most of Time

(For use with Chapters 4 and 5 of the Action and Reflection Workbook.)



Purpose of Session 3

Participants will examine the challenges that young people face related to boundaries, expectations, and time well spent. These two topics can stimulate passionate conversation, and thus Session 3 has the potential for being a lively and engaging session.

As a result of this session, participants will be able to reflect on their own values that affect how they establish boundaries and guidelines for time well spent.



Goals for Session 3

During this session, participants will:

- Learn the importance of developing trust in a group.
- Understand how important the asset categories of boundaries and expectations and constructive use of time are to the healthy development of young people.
- Identify and celebrate the successes and challenges they face in setting boundaries and encouraging young people's involvement in constructive activities.
- Explore ways individually, collectively, and with others they can help young people experience consistent boundaries and constructive activities.



About Your Participants

This is the third of six sessions, so most of the participants should feel safe to express ideas and to feel valued as a group contributor. Remember that group members are participating because they have a desire to learn more about the topic and a commitment to helping young people. They want to share their own personal experiences and exchange ideas. The more you can utilize their insights and experiences in your session, the more participants will feel engaged and validated.



Preparation

Read Chapters 4 and 5 in the Action and Reflection Workbook. Complete the “Looking Back” pages in each chapter.

The session is planned for 90 minutes. If you will have a shorter time, mark which sections you will shorten by reducing the time for discussion. Feel free to eliminate or modify some questions or activities to help you do this.

Gather name tags, pens or pencils, and a few additional copies of the *Taking Asset Building Personally: An Action and Reflection Workbook* available for participants who forget theirs.

Set up the room with comfortable chairs and adequate lighting. Make sure all participants will be able to see and hear each other.

For this session, you will need an open area about 10 feet x 10 feet for the experiential activity.



Agenda

- Getting Started (15 minutes)
- Skill Building: Trust (15 minutes)
- Personalizing the Need: Understanding What’s at Stake (15 minutes)
- How Are We Doing? (15 minutes)
- How Can We Improve? (15 minutes)
- What Can I Do Personally? (10 minutes)
- Closing (5 minutes)



Getting Started (15 Minutes)

Welcome the group members, and invite the host to do the same. Ask the host to review any housekeeping items such as bathroom locations, treats, or location of phones.

Introduce the person who has volunteered to provide the opening thought for the day. Thank her or him when completed, and solicit a volunteer to provide an opening thought for the next session. Remind her or him that an opening thought could be a story, poem, reading, song, or some other means of sharing with the group something special about youth.

Review for participants that the last time they met, they discussed assets related to creating caring relationships and providing young people a chance for meaningful contributions to the community. Ask people if they had a chance to practice the listening skill the group worked on last session. Ask them if they had any subsequent thoughts since the last meeting and invite them to comment.

Move into group introductions and ask people to share their names again and any key insights or thoughts they had while doing the “Looking Back” exercises in Chapters 4 or 5 (assigned during the previous session). Ask the participants to comment just on one or the other chapter to save time.

Explain that *Taking Asset Building Personally: An Action and Reflection Workbook* will be the basis of much of the evening’s discussion, and make sure people have a copy to reference.

Share with the group the purpose of this session as it is outlined on the first page of this session plan. Share the agenda for the evening, and invite any comments or questions before you move on.



Skill Building: Trust (15 minutes)

This exercise is designed to help build trust among group members. It serves two purposes: first, to enhance this particular group by building trust; second, to model how important trust is to neighborhoods, organizations, and families. This exercise is called “Willows in the Wind.”

First, share with the group that this will be a safe, yet fun, exercise and that you hope people will participate to their fullest capabilities. If someone is not able physically to participate in the activity itself, he or she can serve as the activity process observer and report back how the group interacted during the exercise.

To begin the activity, have group members stand in a circle with about six inches between participants' shoulders. Ask for a volunteer to be in the middle of the circle. Explain that the person in the middle represents the willow and the participants making up the circle represent the wind.

Have the circle participants extend their hands out in front of their bodies about six inches and ask the person in the middle to cross her or his arms over her or his chest. Now, have one person at a time from the circle—in quick succession—gently nudge the person in the middle toward the other side. The person in the middle should never have to move her or his feet to maintain balance—the willow is flowing and swaying in the breeze. Once the group has the hang of it, make the exercise a little more complicated by asking the person in the middle (the willow) to close her or his eyes and just “feel the breezes.” Allow each person an opportunity to be both the wind and the willow. When you are finished, ask participants to return to their seats. Be sure to thank everyone for participating and making sure everyone was safe.

Discuss the experience, asking these questions as needed:

- What was your experience?
- Who had a similar experience?
- Who had a different experience?
- What was it like to be the willow? What was it like to be the wind? Which role did you find more difficult?
- What is it about this exercise that made us choose it for today?
- What relevance do you see for today's topics of boundaries, expectations, and time well spent?

Finally, ask participants if anyone has any final thoughts about the exercise. When the group is ready, move on.

Personalizing the Need: Understanding What's at Stake (15 minutes)



Ask the participants to skim the “Fast Facts” sections in both Chapters 4 and 5. Invite them to comment on any of the data found there. Use these questions to facilitate the discussion:

- How important do you feel it is for young people to have clear and consistent boundaries?

- What do the boundaries-and-expectations assets contribute to young people’s lives? What about constructive-use-of-time assets?
- How do you react to the fact that 60 percent of young people indicate that their peers model responsible behavior?
- How do you react to the fact that only 19 percent of young people report having creative activities in their lives?

Keep the conversation at a fast pace and try not to allow the group to get bogged down. Be sure that all group members who want to are able to speak. Ask the group to identify any general themes they see emerging. Moving to the next segment may be difficult, but try not to let this part go past 15 minutes.



How Are We Doing? (15 minutes)

Allow a few minutes for participants to find and read the “Looking Around” sections in the Action and Reflection Workbook for Chapters 4 and 5.

Ask participants to work in pairs to discuss one of the sections and share their three key thoughts on it with the rest of the group. Continue the discussion with these questions:

- What are the key ingredients in making healthy boundaries work for young people? Are there different key ingredients for different ages?
- What can we do to develop the constructive-use-of-time assets for young people? Do different things work for different ages?
- What are ways young people can be part of setting their own boundaries and developing their involvement in positive activities?



How Can We Improve? (15 minutes)

Again referring to the Action and Reflection Workbook, have half the participants review “Exploring Ideas” and “Building Assets through the Years” in Chapter 4 and the other half review the same sections in Chapter 5. Ask each group to reflect on both the successes and the chal-

lenges they face in helping set boundaries and expectations and in encouraging young people to use their time constructively. Discuss these questions:

- What kinds of consistent or mixed messages are young people you know getting about boundaries and expectations?
- How well do young people you know balance involvement in positive activities and being at home? What are things that make it easier or harder to balance these two?
- What are things we can do individually, together, and with others to increase the chances that all young people will have consistent boundaries and expectations?
- How can we help ensure that all young people have opportunities to engage in constructive activities?



What Can I Do Personally? (10 minutes)

Remind participants that all their learning together boils down to what each individual can do to support the young people in your organization or neighborhood. Allow a few minutes for participants to read and respond to “Looking Forward” in either Chapter 4 or 5.



Closing (5 minutes)

Restate the purpose of this session and ask participants to show how well they feel they accomplished this by raising a number of fingers on one hand: one for “I don’t think we even came close” to five for “I feel like we were right on target.”

Ask group members to read and complete the “Looking Back” sections in Chapters 6 and 7 before you meet next time.

Invite each person to share one new thought and an action step he or she will leave with after this session. Allow people to pass if so desired, but use this as a means of summarizing the work done throughout the session.

Thank the participants for their contributions, and express appreciation to the host. End the session on time.

SESSION 4

Learning for a Lifetime/ Passing Along Positive Values

(For use with Chapters 6 and 7 of the Action and Reflection Workbook.)



Purpose of Session 4

Participants will begin a discussion of how to encourage children and youth to make or sustain a commitment to learning and how to help give them the strength to live their lives according to a set of positive core values.

As a result of this session, participants will know and understand new things to do and say to encourage children and youth in their commitment to learning and positive values.



Goals for Session 4

During this session, participants will:

- Experience the challenges young people face in dealing with mixed messages about values and commitment to learning.
- Identify qualities of role models in commitment to learning and positive values.
- Reflect on how each participant can encourage and guide youth in their commitment to learning and positive values.



About Your Participants

It is important to take time to set a positive tone for the work of each session. Make participants feel welcome, get them talking to each other, and help them affirm each other as asset builders.



Preparation

Read Chapters 6 and 7 in the Action and Reflection Workbook. Complete the “Looking Back” pages in each chapter.

The session is planned for 90 minutes. If you will have a shorter time, mark which sections you will shorten by reducing the time for discussion. Feel free to eliminate or modify some questions or activities to help you do this.

Gather name tags, pens or pencils, and a few additional copies of *Taking Asset Building Personally: An Action and Reflection Workbook* available for participants who forget theirs.

Set up the room with comfortable chairs and adequate lighting. Make sure all participants will be able to see and hear each other.

For this session, you will need a wrapped candy bar.

Set up a flip chart if you choose to use one during “Personalizing the Need.”

If your community has completed a survey of the assets in your youth, obtain copies of the results to share with the group.



Agenda

- Getting Started (15 minutes)
- Skill Building: Mixed Messages (15 minutes)
- Personalizing the Need: The Perfect Role Model (15 minutes)
- How Are We Doing? (15 minutes)
- How Can We Improve? (15 minutes)
- What Can I Do Personally? (10 minutes)
- Closing (5 minutes)



Getting Started (15 minutes)

Welcome the group and invite the host to do the same. Ask the host to review any housekeeping items such as bathroom locations, treats, or location of phones.

Introduce the person who has volunteered to provide the opening thought for the day.

Thank her or him when completed, and solicit a volunteer to provide an opening thought for the next session. Remind her or him that an opening thought could be a story, poem, reading, song, or some other means of sharing with the group something special about young people.

Remind participants that the last time they met, they discussed the asset categories of boundaries and expectations and constructive use of time. Ask them if they had any subsequent thoughts about that topic and whether they have done, said, or thought something different as a result of that session. For the sake of time, be careful not to reopen the discussion, but simply invite people to share any changes that may have occurred as a result of the last session.

Next, move into group introductions. Ask people to share their names again and a thought they had while doing either of the “Looking Back” exercises. Ask the participants to pick one or the other to conserve time.

Share with the group the purpose of this session as it is given on the first page of this session plan.



Skill Building: Mixed Messages (15 minutes)

Ask for a volunteer to leave the room, assuring her or him that you will do nothing to harm or humiliate her or him upon return.

Quietly explain to the remaining participants that you are going to play the old children’s game, “Hot and Cold.” You will hide an object in the room, and they are to say “hot” or “cold” to guide the volunteer to the object. Tell half the group that they will guide the volunteer to a candy bar, and then hide the candy bar. Tell the other half of the group they will guide the volunteer to a marker, and then hide the marker on the other side of the room from the candy bar. Tell them that both groups will shout their clues *at the same time*.

Call in the volunteer and explain that the rest of the participants are going to play “Hot and Cold” to help her or him find a hidden object. Offer no other explanation.

Tell the participants to begin. Expect chaos as both groups of participants shout directions.

After one minute, stop the game. Ask the volunteer:

- What do you think about this game?
- Why is this so difficult?

- What are your chances of succeeding?

Explain the scheme, and reward the volunteer with the candy bar.

Ask people to reflect on how this activity is like the messages society sends to young people regarding learning and values. Ask:

- What are some of the conflicting messages young people get about learning and values?
- What are some of the sources of conflicting messages?
- What roles can we play in helping young people sort out these conflicting messages?



Personalizing the Need: The Perfect Role Model (15 minutes)

Say to the group: Imagine that you've just met someone who is an ideal role model for children and teenagers regarding a commitment to learning and positive values. What qualities does that person have? What does that person do?

Ask people to share their ideas. Refer participants to Chapters 6 and 7 for ideas. If you have access to a flip chart, record the group's responses to avoid duplication in the discussion and to provide a learning tool for visual learners. Ask:

- How do adults encourage among young people a commitment to learning and positive values?
- How do young people encourage a commitment to learning and positive values?
- According to the first two pages of each of these chapters, what are key elements—the most important things other people can do—to encourage a commitment to learning and positive values?
- How do these insights add to our idea of the perfect role model?



How Are We Doing? (15 minutes)

The “Looking Around” exercises in each of the two chapters help participants reflect on how things are going. Ask half the group to work through one of the sections and then share their thoughts with the large group.

Ask the participants to look at the asset measurements graphed on the “Fast Facts” page in each chapter (or using local data, if available). Do any of these measurements surprise anyone?



How Can We Improve? (15 minutes)

Ask the group members to think about the survey results as they skim through the “Exploring Ideas” sections in Chapters 6 and 7.

Ask some of these questions to guide your discussion:

- What specific things can we do individually or collectively to support and encourage our young people to commit to learning and positive values?
- What strengths can we build upon?
- What things make it difficult to be a role model and guide in these areas?
- Are there specific areas of concern that warrant more attention than others? Are we placing our energy and resources in the areas with the most importance?
- Are there specific suggestions in the Action and Reflection Workbook that really fit you?



What Can I Do Personally? (10 minutes)

Comment that all our work boils down to “ME” and what each of us can do personally to guide the young people in our families, neighborhood, or organization.

Allow a few minutes for participants to fill out the “Looking Forward” pages in Chapters 6 and 7. Encourage them to share key thoughts with a partner.



Closing (5 minutes)

Restate the purpose of this session and ask participants to show how well they feel they accomplished this by raising a number of fingers on one hand—one for “I don’t think we even came close” to five for “I feel like we were right on target.”

Ask group members to read and complete the “Looking Back” sections in Chapters 8 and 9 before you meet next time.

Invite each person to share one new thought and an action step he or she will leave with after this session. Allow people to pass, but use this as a means of summarizing the work done throughout the session.

Thank the participants for their contributions, and express appreciation to the host.

Please everyone by ending the session on time!

SESSION 5

Skills for Growing and Living/Power, Purpose, and Promise

(For use with Chapters 8 and 9 of the Action and Reflection Workbook.)



Purpose of Session 5

Participants will examine the skills needed for a young person to be socially competent and to possess a positive self-identity. Equally as important, they'll explore the role adults play in positively influencing these two asset categories for young people.

As a result of this session, they will know and understand new things to do and say to develop in young people their social competencies and a positive self-image.



Goals for Session 5

During this session, participants will:

- Practice skills related to cultural competence, resistance to negative pressure, and interpersonal relationships.
- Create representations of the social-competencies and positive- identity assets that young people need to thrive.
- Identify specific actions to take to build these assets in children and youth they know.



About Your Participants

This is the fifth session and the last one focusing on asset categories. Some members of the group are probably more than ready to move on to

action. Offering a little variety in your routine at this point in the program is healthy and probably welcomed, even if it is just encouraging people to sit in new seats around the room.

Participants most likely will want to get into the heart of the discussion earlier in the session. Be careful not to “overfacilitate.” Prime the discussion and then let it go with its own momentum. Be prepared to redirect the discussion if it stalls out.



Preparation

Read Chapters 8 and 9 in the Action and Reflection Workbook. Complete the “Looking Back” pages in each chapter.

The session is planned for 90 minutes. If you will have a shorter time, mark which sections you will shorten by reducing the time for discussion. Feel free to eliminate or modify some questions or activities to help you do this.

Gather name tags, pens or pencils, and a few additional copies of *Taking Asset Building Personally: An Action and Reflection Workbook* available for participants who forget theirs.

Set up the room with comfortable chairs and adequate lighting. Make sure all participants will be able to see and hear each other.

You also will need five dice.

Have available several sheets of newsprint (or other large paper), several colors of markers, and masking tape.



Agenda

- Getting Started (15 minutes)
- Skill Building: Petals around the Roses (15 minutes)
- Personalizing the Need: The Well-Equipped Child (15 minutes)
- How Are We Doing? (15 minutes)
- How Can We Improve? (15 minutes)
- What Can I Do Personally? (10 minutes)
- Closing (5 minutes)



Getting Started (15 Minutes)

Welcome the group and invite the host to do the same. Ask the host to review any housekeeping items such as bathroom locations, treats, or location of phones.

Introduce the person who has volunteered to provide the opening thought for the day.

Thank her or him when completed, and solicit a volunteer to provide an opening thought for the next session. Remind her or him that an opening thought could be a story, poem, reading, song, or some other means of sharing with the group something special about young people.

Have participants refer back to “Looking Forward” in Chapter 1 of the Action and Reflection Workbook. Ask:

- What worries and hopes did you have about the study at that point?
- Would your list be different today?
- What hopes do you have for your last two sessions? (Other groups have named hopes such as: Hope that we find ways to extend a hand to hard-to-reach families, hope that we commit ourselves to listening to what young people have to say, hope that action results from our work.)

Make a commitment to each other to keep these hopes in mind as you work together.

Remind the group that the last time they met, they discussed the asset categories of commitment to learning and positive values. They also explored how we are all role models for each other. Ask if the session made them more aware of how their actions influence others. For the sake of time, be careful not to reopen the discussion, but simply invite people to share any stories that may have occurred as a result of the last session.

Proceed with group introductions and ask people to share their name and one key insight they had while doing the “Looking Back” section in either Chapter 8 or Chapter 9.

Share with the group the purpose of this session as it is stated on the first page of this session plan.



Skill Building: Petals around the Roses (15 minutes)

This segment is an experiential exercise designed to help participants feel how hard it can be when one does not have the skills, information, and support of caring people when facing difficult challenges. It also encourages thought about the difference between “doing for people” and supporting people as they “do for themselves.” This exercise has several names. Sometimes it’s called “Petals around the Rose.” Alaskans call it “Polar Bears around a Fishing Hole,” and in New Mexico, it’s called “Coyotes around a Campfire.”

Begin by assuring participants that this exercise will not involve any strenuous movement and that everyone can participate safely.

Position yourself in the middle of the group, either sitting at a table or sitting on the floor.

Participants should gather around so that all can clearly see the dice as they are being rolled.

Tell participants the many names for this exercise. Explain that the object of the exercise is for them to determine how many petals there are around the rose. Once they figure it out, they are not to help others unless you tell them to do so.

As facilitator, you will roll all five dice at once. The answer to the question of “how many petals are around the rose?” is determined by counting the number of dots on each die that surround a dot in the middle and then totaling the count for all five dice. For example, a die with three dots counts for two “petals” because there is one dot in the middle and two other dots surrounding that dot. A die with five dots counts for four “petals” because there is one dot in the middle surrounded by four other dots. Dice rolled as 1, 2, 4, or 6 do not have any petals surrounding the rose because there is no center dot.

Begin by asking, “So, how many petals are around the rose?” as you roll all five dice at once.

Pause to calculate the correct answer and for participants to attempt the answer. When participants have had ample time to answer, tell them the correct count.

Repeat these steps several times. The only clue you may give is repeating the various names given to the exercise.

Once a few people have figured it out, tell them that they may give non-verbal clues to their colleagues, but that they must not give the numerical answer.

Play until all have figured out the scheme, or until time demands that you stop. Ask participants to return to their seats.

Guide the discussion with these questions (as needed):

- What was your experience?
- Who had a similar experience?
- Who had a different experience?
- What was it like not to be able to figure out the puzzle?
- What was it like once you figured it out?
- What was it like not to be able to help your friends?
- Why do you think this exercise was chosen for our session today on social competencies and positive identity?
- How does this exercise relate to your own experiences with children or young people?



Personalizing the Need: The Well-Equipped Child (15 minutes)

Ask participants to get into groups of two or three. Give each group a sheet of newsprint (or other available paper, preferably large). Give each group a variety of colored markers to use.

Have each group draw a picture of “The Well-Equipped Child,” focusing on the kinds of social competencies and positive identity they need to thrive. Encourage people to be creative and imaginative—and to have fun. They may want to refer to the specific assets in the categories (see Chapters 8 and 9), or they can just take it wherever they want. Encourage them to use symbols, labels, and other devices to get their points across.

Allow 6 minutes for groups to complete their drawings. Then have each group post the pictures and tell the full group about it.

Encourage a brief conversation about each depiction. Then ask:

- What are things that help children and youth develop these qualities?
- What roles can we play?



How Are We Doing? (15 minutes)

Ask the participants to work in the same groups of three to read and respond to the “Looking Around” sections of Chapter 8 and Chapter 9. Ask each group to pick out one or two points about how your community is excelling and one or two areas where your community is not excelling.

Ask small groups to report their key points to the large group. Discuss any discrepancies among the points reported by the small groups.

Point out the “Fast Facts” section in each chapter. Share the results for these assets from the youth survey in your community, if this is available.

Ask:

- Do any of these measurements surprise you?
- What do you think that these measures mean for us?



How Can We Improve? (15 minutes)

Pause for a few minutes while participants skim the “Exploring Ideas” and “Building Assets through the Years” sections of Chapters 8 and 9.

Guide the discussion about what needs to be done individually and collectively by asking these questions:

- How can we individually do a better job of equipping young people to build the skills and identity they need to thrive?
- Are there things we currently are doing, either intentionally or inadvertently, that get in the way of young people developing these assets?
- What things do we do—or know about—that really make a positive difference in these areas?



What Can I Do Personally? (10 minutes)

Ask participants to work individually to fill out the “Looking Forward” pages in Chapter 8 and Chapter 9.

Invite them to share a key thought or two with the person sitting next to them.



Closing (5 minutes)

Restate the purpose of this session and ask participants to show how well they feel they accomplished this by raising a number of fingers on one hand—one for “I don’t think we even came close” to five for “I feel like we were right on target.”

Ask group members to read and complete the “Looking Around” section in Chapter 10 before you meet next time.

Invite each person to share one new thought and an action step he or she will leave with after this session. Allow people to pass, but use this as a means of summarizing the work done throughout the session.

Thank the participants for their contributions, and express appreciation to the host.

Be sure to end the session on time!

SESSION 6

Asset Building: Taking the Next Step

(For use with Chapter 10 of the Action and Reflection Workbook.)



Purpose of Session 6

Participants will examine the skills needed for neighbors and organization members to work together to increase their sense of community and to invite others to participate in asset-building activities.

As a result of this session, they will know and understand new things to do and say to enhance a sense of community and to motivate others to be a part of their asset-building work.



Goals for Session 6

During this session, participants will:

- Practice skills related to developing a network of support for asset building.
- Explore what they can do to be more effective asset builders.
- Learn more about supporting other asset builders.
- Identify specific actions that their community can take to improve the quality of life for children and youth.



About Your Participants

This final session in the series doesn't deal with specific asset categories. The focus is on creating a sense of community and building relationships for support. The group will be ready for closure and reflection. Build upon the learnings of the previous sessions and focus on action and application.

Set a tone of celebration, perhaps with a special treat.



Preparation

Read Chapter 10 in the Action and Reflection Workbook.
Complete the “Looking Around” page in this chapter.

The session is planned for 90 minutes. If you will have a shorter time, mark which sections you will shorten by reducing the time for discussion. Feel free to eliminate or modify some questions or activities to help you do this.

Gather name tags, pens or pencils, and a few additional copies of *Taking Asset Building Personally: An Action and Reflection Workbook* available for participants who forget theirs.

Set up the room with comfortable chairs and adequate lighting. Make sure all participants will be able to see and hear each other.

For this session, you will need an open area at least 10 feet x 10 feet for the experiential activity.

You also will need one large index card for each participant, a roll of masking tape, a roll of crepe paper streamer, and 10 balloons.

Inflate the balloons (*not* with helium) to represent different numbers of assets. Inflate one balloon completely, tie off, and label with a marker to say “31–40.” Inflate three balloons to three-fourths full, tie off, and label each with a marker to say “21–30.” Inflate four balloons to one-half full, tie off, and label each with a marker to say “11–20.” Inflate two balloons to one-quarter full, tie off, and label each with a marker to say “0–10.”

Have copies of the series evaluation form for everyone to complete.



Agenda

- Getting Started (15 minutes)
- Skill Building: Supportive Statements (15 minutes)
- Personalizing the Need: Web of Support (15 minutes)
- How Are We Doing? (10 minutes)
- How Can We Improve? (10 minutes)
- What Can I Do Personally? (10 minutes)
- Evaluation and Closing (15 minutes)



Getting Started (15 Minutes)

Welcome the group and invite the host to do the same. Ask the host to review any housekeeping items such as bathroom locations, treats, or location of phones. Introduce the person who has volunteered to provide the opening thought for the day. Thank her or him when completed.

Remind participants that the last time they met, they discussed the topics of nurturing social competencies and positive identity in young people. Ask if anyone has said or thought something in a different way as a result of the last session. For the sake of time, be careful not to reopen the discussion, but simply invite people to share any changes that may have occurred as a result of the last session.

Proceed with group introductions and ask people to share their name and one key insight they had while doing the “Looking Around” section in Chapter 10.

Share with the group the purpose of this session as it is stated on the first page of this session plan.



Skill Building: Supportive Statements (15 minutes)

This segment is an experiential exercise designed to help participants feel the message of how powerful—and sometimes difficult—it is to give and receive supportive statements in a positive way. It is meant to be a fun and energizing activity.

Open by stating that this exercise will involve only walking and writing. Give a large index card to each participant, along with a piece of masking tape. Make sure each participant has a marker or pencil.

Ask the participants to find a partner, preferably someone they have not had a chance to work with yet. The first task is to tape a notecard to each person’s back.

Ask the entire group to stand up and move chairs to make it easy to move around the space. Now, have participants move around, writing descriptive, supportive words or phrases on the cards taped to the back of each person. At the end of the exercise, each should have written at least one word or phrase on the back of each other participant. Allow 4 minutes for this.

When the time is up, have each pair of participants take the cards from each other's backs. Then have them sit facing each other. Without interruption, each partner reads to each other what is written on her or his card. When both are done, have the partners give each other their own cards.

Ask the group the following questions:

- What was your experience?
- Who had a similar experience?
- Who had a different experience?
- How does it feel to see the kinds of things people wrote on your card?
- How do these statements encourage you in your asset-building efforts?



Personalizing the Need: Web of Support (15 minutes)

This segment is an experiential exercise designed to help participants sense the power of community and the power of individuals in building assets. Assure group members that the exercise will not involve any strenuous activity and that all can participate safely.

Gather all participants in a circle, standing close together.

Begin by holding the roll of crepe paper streamer and saying that you are going to build a community web of asset builders. Explain that each person will tell one role that he or she plays as an asset builder (parent, grandparent, friend, teacher, mentor, neighbor, teammate, uncle, neighbor, and so on). Tell an asset-building role you fill, hold on to the end of the streamer, and pass the streamer roll to someone across the circle from you. That person then states a role, hangs on to the streamer, and passes the streamer roll across the circle to another person. Continue until all have had a chance to join the crepe paper web. If your group is small, give each person a second turn.

Challenge the group to tighten up and adjust the web to make it as strong as possible. Compliment yourselves on having a good web of support in your community.

Tell how there are 10 young people in your community and that you really want all of them to stay inside the web of support.

Point out that of these 10 young persons, 1 has over 30 assets. Toss the 31–40 balloon onto the web, telling participants to work to keep it in the web. Next toss the 21–30 balloons onto the web (three of these youth have 21–30 assets). Next toss the 11–20 balloons onto the web (four of these young

people have 11–20 assets). Finally, toss on the 0–10 balloons (two of the youth have 0–10 assets). It will be very difficult—if not impossible—to keep all the balloons on the web.

Ask for initial reactions: How can we keep all the young people in the web? (Answers may include more people in the web, more flexibility, more assets in the youth.)

Now, choose three participants. Tell them, “Thanks for building assets this month. You don’t have to do that anymore, so go ahead and sit down.” These three should drop their piece of the web and go back to their seats.

Ask for reactions to what happened to the web and the balloons.

Now ask all to return to their seats. Guide a discussion of this exercise, asking questions such as:

- What was your experience?
- Who had a similar experience?
- Who had a different experience?
- What parallels do you see between this activity and taking the next step in asset building?
- What messages does this activity have for us as we end this discussion series on *Taking Asset Building Personally*?



How Are We Doing? (10 minutes)

Allow a few minutes for participants to skim “Exploring Ideas” in Chapter 10.

Ask half the group to list ways they are feeling equipped and ready to build assets. Ask the other half to list areas where they feel unsure of themselves or where to start.

Have both groups report back. Ask people to add anything they’d like to see on the other group’s list.



How Can We Improve? (10 minutes)

Ask group members to brainstorm what kinds of things might help overcome some of the tougher areas for getting started. Talk together about who could follow through to address some of the challenges.

If you're part of an asset-building initiative, assure participants that you'll share their ideas with leaders of that initiative.



What Can I Do Personally? (10 minutes)

Pause for a few minutes to allow participants to complete "Looking Forward" in Chapter 10.

- Ask participants to share the people or organizations they named as the connecting joints on their puzzle pieces.
- Encourage each person to share what he or she wrote in the center of their puzzle piece in "Looking Forward." Thank each one for sharing.
- Ask how people want to support and encourage each other as they move forward and take the asset-building message to others.



Evaluation and Closing (15 minutes)

Say that you'd like to take a few more minutes this time in evaluation. Distribute the *Taking Asset Building Personally* evaluation form. Give people time to complete it. Collect the forms.

Ask everyone to answer these questions:

- If you were to encourage someone to participate in these discussion groups, what would be the best thing about the group that you would tell them about?
- If you could change one thing about this small-group study, what would you change?

If your organization or community is looking for more people to facilitate these discussions with other groups, take time to explain the roles and responsibilities. Invite people who are interested to talk with you after the session.

Thank the participants for their contributions, and express appreciation to the host. Express your optimism for the future of your organization or neighborhood with all the newly energized asset builders at work.

Maintain your good record as facilitator and end the session on time!

SERIES EVALUATION

Taking Asset Building Personally

We are very interested in hearing about your experiences in your small group. Please complete this brief survey, which will help us as we plan for the future.

Your facilitator's name: _____

When your group met: _____

1. How well did this series help you . . .

	A lot	Some	Not much
a. Grow in your own commitment to make a difference in the lives of children and youth?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Understand developmental assets?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Understand your own responsibility, ability, and opportunities to build assets?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Develop new skills that will help you be more comfortable and effective in building assets?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. What did you find to be most helpful or meaningful about your participation in this discussion group?

3. What suggestions do you have for improving future series?

4. What is something you plan to do to build assets as a result of participating in this series?

5. Would you be interested in being trained to be a facilitator for other *Taking Asset Building Personally* groups? If so, please write your name and phone number here.

6. Is there another way you would like to be involved in asset building in this organization or community? If so, please write your name and phone number so that we can contact you.

Thank you for completing the evaluation. Please turn in your completed form to your group facilitator.



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