

The Adding Assets Series for Kids

Making Choices and Making Friends



The Social Competencies Assets

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free spirit
PUBLISHING®

by Pamela Espeland
and Elizabeth Verdick

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What
are assets,
anyway?

Yeah,
and why do they
matter?





Introduction

If you knew ways to make your life better, right now and for the future, would you try them?

We're guessing you would, and that's why we wrote this book. It's part of a series of eight books called the **Adding Assets Series for Kids**.

What Are Assets, Anyway?

When we use the word **assets**, we mean good things you need in your life and yourself.

We don't mean houses, cars, property, and jewelry—assets whose value is measured in money. We mean **Developmental Assets** that help you to be and become your best. Things like a close, loving family. A neighborhood where you feel safe. Adults you look up to and respect. And (sorry!) doing your homework.

There are 40 Developmental Assets in all. This book is about adding five of them to your life. They're called the **Social Competencies Assets**. "Competencies" is a big word for "skills" or "know-how." Social competencies help you make plans, choices, and friends. They help you get along with all kinds of people, even when you're different or you disagree. They help you resolve conflicts in a peaceful way so no one gets hurt. When

you have social competencies, you feel comfortable around other people and good about yourself.

The Social Competencies Assets

Asset Name

what it means

Planning and Decision Making

You think about the choices you make, and you're usually happy with your decisions. You know how to plan ahead.

Interpersonal Competence

You care about other people and their feelings. You enjoy making friends. When you feel angry or frustrated, you try to calm yourself down.

Cultural Competence

You know and are comfortable with people of different races, ethnic backgrounds, and cultures. You're also comfortable with your own cultural identity.

Resistance Skills

You stay away from people who could get you into trouble. You can say no to doing things that are dangerous or wrong.

Peaceful Conflict Resolution

You try to resolve conflicts in a peaceful way, without using harsh words or violent actions.

Other books in the series are about the other 35 assets.* That may seem like a lot, but don't worry. You don't have to add them all at once. You don't have to

* If you're curious to know what the other assets are, you can read the whole list on pages 80–81.

add them in any particular order. But the sooner you can add them to your life, the better.

Why You Need Assets

An organization called Search Institute surveyed hundreds of thousands of kids and teens across the United States. Their researchers found that some kids have a fairly easy time growing up, while others don't. Some kids get involved in harmful behaviors or dangerous activities, while others don't.

What makes the difference? Developmental Assets! Kids who have them are more likely to do well. Kids who don't have them are less likely to do well.

Maybe you're thinking, "Why should I have to add my own assets? I'm just a kid!" Because kids have the power to make choices in their lives. You can choose to sit back and wait for other people to help you, or you can choose to help yourself. You can also work with other people who care about you and want to help.



Many of the ideas in this book involve working with other people—like your parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and other family grown-ups. And your teachers, neighbors, coaches, Scout leaders, and religious leaders. They can all help add assets for you and with you.

It's likely that many of the adults in your life are already helping. In fact, an adult probably gave you this book to read.

How to Use This Book

Start by choosing **one** asset to add. Read the stories at the beginning and end of that chapter. The stories are examples of the assets in everyday life. Then pick **one** idea and try it. See how it goes. After that, try another idea, or move on to another asset.



Don't worry about being perfect or getting it right. Know that by trying, you're doing something great for yourself.

The more assets you add, the better you'll feel about yourself and your future. Soon you won't be a kid anymore. You'll be a teenager. Because you have assets, you'll feel and be a lot more sure of yourself. You'll make better decisions. You'll have a head start on success.

We wish you the very best as you add assets to your life.

Pamela Espeland and Elizabeth Verdick
Minneapolis, MN

A Few Words About Families

Kids today live in many different kinds of families.

Maybe you live with one or both of your parents. Maybe you live with other adult relatives—aunts and uncles, grandparents, grown-up brothers or sisters or cousins.

Maybe you live with a stepparent, foster parent, or guardian. Maybe you live with one of your parents and his or her life partner.

In this series, we use the word **parents** to describe the adults who care for you in your home. We also use **family adults**, **family grown-ups**, and **adults at home**. When you see any of these words, think of your own family, whatever kind it is.



Planning and Decision Making

What it means: You think about the choices you make, and you're usually happy with your decisions. You know how to plan ahead.

GRAHAM & LEON'S STORY

"This is so cool, doing our report together," says Graham.

"Yeah, ours is going to be the *best*," his friend Leon replies.

They bend their heads over their desks to start planning. Their report on bones is due Friday, which means they have four days to complete the work.

"How should we divide things up?" Graham asks.

"Easy. You draw the cover 'cause you're good at art. We'll both do our own paragraphs, like we're supposed to. Then I'll type it all up on my dad's computer and print it out."

After school, Graham tells his grandma about the bones project. She helps him find black construction paper and white paint. "I'll do the cover first," he says, painting a large skull. He leaves black spaces for eye sockets, nose holes, and a wide grin.



“Impressive,” says his grandma.

“Wait until you see the lettering I’m doing for the title,” Graham answers. He chooses a small paintbrush to spell out “BONES” in bone-shaped letters. When he’s finished, he hangs it on the fridge with magnets to dry.

The next day at school, Graham tells Leon about the cover.

“Awesome!” says Leon.

“Did you work on your part?” Graham asks him.

“Not yet, but I’ll get to it,” Leon replies.

That evening, Graham reviews his worksheets about bones so he can write one of the paragraphs he's required to do. He carefully prints, "If people didn't have bones, they would fall to the floor like a puddle of skin and muscles." He adds facts and then checks the spelling of bone names like *patella*, which is the knee bone. "Tomorrow I'll work on the second paragraph," he tells himself.

Graham sticks to his plan and finishes the second paragraph the next night. He's proud of himself, but something's bothering him. Leon had admitted at recess that he still hadn't started his part of the project. "What if he doesn't get it done?" Graham worries. "What if he ruins everything?"



Graham has the *Planning and Decision Making* asset, but he's not sure his project partner does.

Think about your own life. Are you good at planning ahead? Do you think about the choices and decisions you make? Are you happy with most of your choices and decisions?

If **YES**, keep reading to learn ways to make this asset even stronger.

If **NO**, keep reading to learn ways to add this asset to your life.

You can also use these ideas to help add this asset for other people—like your friends, family members, neighbors, and kids at school.

Facts!

Kids with the Planning and Decision Making asset:

- ✓ get better grades in school
- ✓ feel more independent
- ✓ are less likely to use cigarettes, alcohol, and other drugs

ways to Add This Asset



AT HOME

Be a Planner. Some kids think, “*Planning*—that’s for grown-ups.” But the truth is you get further in life if you have an idea of where you’re going and what

you want to do. You can start small by simply thinking of your plans for today. What do you have to do at school? After school? During sports or your club? Make a to-do list. Check off items (including chores and homework) as you complete them. You'll feel a sense of satisfaction when you look at what you've checked off.

A message for you

To be a planner, get a planner. Maybe your school has a certain kind of planner you're supposed to use. If not, you can find day planners at any office supplies store. It's possible that someone at home has an extra planner you can use so you won't have to buy one. Ask a grown-up to help you learn how to use it. On school mornings, put your planner in your backpack, then remember to bring it home at the end of the day. That way, you'll always know what comes next and what you need to accomplish. This is a guaranteed way to get more organized, which helps you feel more in control of your time and your life.

Be a Goal Setter. Don't think "Goals, who needs them?" because *everyone* does. Goals give life meaning and purpose. Think of something you *really* want

to do. Maybe you'd like to buy your own camera, score higher on your next math test, or finish a book you're reading. Maybe you're thinking further ahead—something like “I want to be a veterinarian.” Guess what? You have a goal!

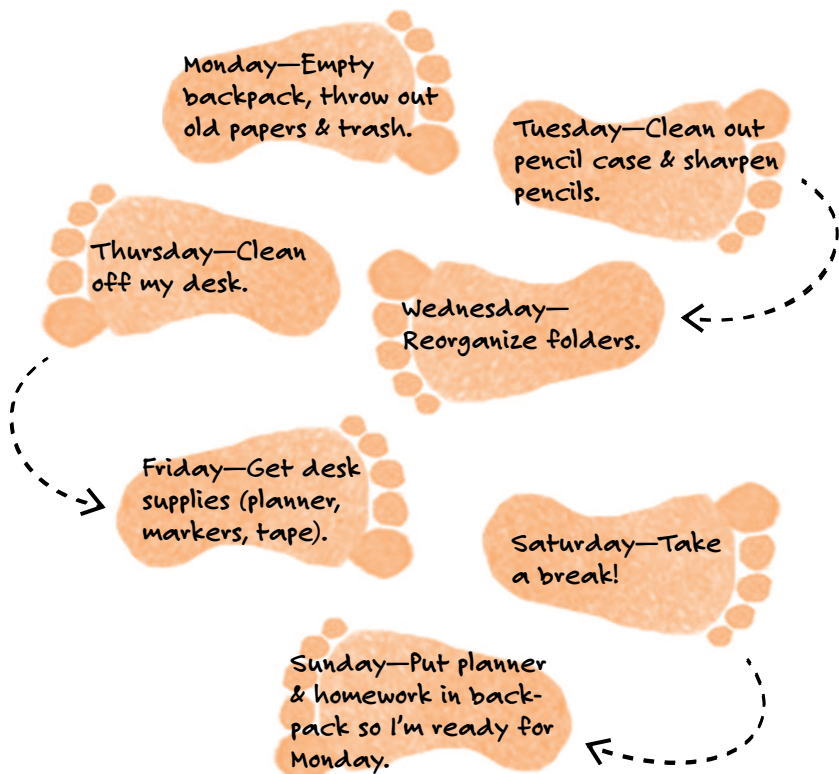
Set a Smart Goal. There are smart goals and not-so-smart goals. Smart goals are within your reach—maybe not today or tomorrow, but someday. They help you feel excited and inspired. To set a smart goal, make it (1) positive, (2) specific, and (3) realistic.

Examples: “Study between 6:00 and 7:00 p.m. three evenings this week so I’m ready for my spelling test.” “Save three-quarters of my allowance for six months to put toward the bike I want.” Not-so-smart goals are unrealistic. They set you up for disappointment and make you feel like a failure. **Example:** “I want to wake up tomorrow and be a famous actor or rock star.”

Write It Down. Planners and goal-setters have something in common: They write things down. Writing your plans and goals on paper (or on the computer to print out) gives you something to look at, touch, and strive for. Now that you've thought of a goal, it's time to put it into words. Write your goal in positive, specific language. You can start off with “I will . . .” or “I want to . . .” Make sure it's something you *really* want to do—and something that's possible for you to do.

Plan Your Steps. If you've written down your goal and you're excited to get going, you're ready to plan the steps you need to take. This isn't always easy, so ask a family grown-up to help you. Any goal needs a timeline—you can't do it all in one day. For fun, you can draw footprints and write your steps in them.

Example: MY GOAL: "I will organize my backpack and my desk at home so I'll feel more prepared at school."



Practice Making Good Decisions. When you're faced with a decision, what do you do? The first thing that comes into your head? That's called a "snap decision." Or maybe you procrastinate and don't decide at all. The next time you have an important decision to make, try this instead: Get a piece of paper and divide it into two columns. Write "Pros" at the top of the left-hand column, "Cons" at the top of the right-hand column. Then list all the pros (good things) and cons (not-so-good things) about your decision. If the Pros list is longer or stronger, you're doing the right thing. If the Cons list is longer or stronger, re-think your decision.

TIP: You won't always have time to think things through so carefully. When you have to make a quick decision, base it on your values—the guiding beliefs you've learned from your parents and other family adults, your faith community, and your role models.



AT SCHOOL

- ★ Look around at the successful students in your school. Chances are, they know how to plan ahead. Do they use student planners or to-do lists? Do they

turn in their homework on time? Are they usually prepared for classes and tests? See what you can learn from them.

- ★ Don't let long-term projects get the best of you. Divide and conquer! Break a big, scary project into small, doable steps. Write them down. Check them off as you complete them.

Tip: Need help figuring out the steps? Ask a teacher. Almost any teacher would rather help kids plan for long-term projects than hear excuses about why they will be late.



IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

- ★ Volunteer to help plan a neighborhood event. Can you go door-to-door with a grown-up and hand out flyers about a block party? Can you organize a day of games for little kids? What about a neighborhood clean-up day?
- ★ Talk with neighbors you look up to and admire. Ask them about their goals in life. What were their goals when they were your age? What was the first big goal they can remember reaching? How have goals

helped them get where they are today? Do they have any tips they can share with you?



IN YOUR FAITH COMMUNITY

- ★ Talk with your religion class or youth group about how your values affect your decisions. Have you ever made a decision that went against your values? How did you feel about that?



WITH YOUR FRIENDS

- ★ When friends have important decisions to make, they usually talk to each other. They get each other's opinions before deciding what to do. Make a pact with your friends to help each other make good decisions.
- ★ Plan a surprise party for another friend. This could be a birthday party, a congratulations party, or a just-because-we-like-you party.

