



Building Life Skills

March Positive Identity

Young people have a strong sense of their own power, purpose, worth, and promise.



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40 Key Building Blocks to Help Kids Succeed

Search Institute has identified 40 building blocks of healthy development that help young people grow up healthy, caring and responsible. These building blocks are referred to as "assets." Local schools have united in identifying monthly "asset" themes for schools and communities to help kids reach their potential.

Identifying signs of severe depression in kids

Creating Awareness, Encouraging Positive Identity/Self-Esteem, Knowing the Red Flags

All of us have times when we don't feel good about ourselves, but usually that feeling will pass over time. These feelings can be especially hard for children who might react more intensely to failures and disappointments. During those times, it is important for friends and other caring individuals to be supportive and know when there might be signs of severe depression.

It takes a community to know the Red Flags and create an environment where children can feel supported, embraced and encouraged to get the help they need to have and keep a positive identity.

Red Flags began in 1992 when Penny Frese's daughter, Claire, then 11 years old, lay in bed so worried about her friends that she started to cry.

She had been diagnosed with depression a year before, and was doing much better, but she told her mom, "There are so many kids just like me, and no one is helping them. We have to do something."

Three years later, with the help of her family, Kent State University and Mental Health America of Summit County, Claire finished the video Claire's Story: A Child's Perspective on Childhood Depression. And Red Flags, a framework and toolkit for mental health education was born.

Over the years, Red Flags and its materials were developed and refined by counselors, school nurses, administrators and teachers who were using it. This has made it one of the best, most complete, and simplest programs available. A new video, Thick 'n Thin, and an updated cur-

riculum were produced in 2008. Covering much of the same material as Claire's Story, the new video emphasizes the importance of friendship, and how to seek help for a friend. Thousands of children and adults nationwide have received the informational booklet, Red Flags in Children's Behavior.

Red Flags mental health education materials now have a new home with a new look and updated materials: Red Flags National, a newly established non-profit organization committed to assisting schools incorporate mental health as an integral part of their educational infrastructure. The organization is committed to making Red Flags materials available to all schools throughout Ohio and nationwide.

A Message for Kids:

Since tweens and teens often rely on their friends more than their parents or other adults in their lives, you may be the only person that someone feels they can talk to about their feelings. If your friend seems sad, angry, lonely or bored all the time there may be things you can do to help:

- Talk to your friend about depression by saying: "You seem real down lately, and not yourself. I want to help. Is there anything I can do?"
- You do not have to have the answers. Your friend needs someone to listen and be supportive. By listening and responding in a non-judgmental and reassuring manner, you are helping.
- Tell an adult if your friend is suicidal. If your friend is joking or talking about suicide, giving things away, or saying goodbye, tell a trusted adult immediately. Your responsibility is to get your friend

help, and get it fast! Some Mental Health Tips for Teens When you're feeling down, try a few these quick pick-me-ups.

Exercise

Exercise releases chemical in the brain called endorphins. Endorphins lift your mood, energize you, and may help you sleep better at night. The more you exercise, the better you will feel!

- Take a brisk walk
- Go on a bike ride with a friend
- Dance to five of your favorite songs
- Go swimming or play ball with friends

Laugh

Laughing increases your breathing rate, muscular activity, heart rate and other body functions. When you laugh you feel better.

- Read a funny book or the comics in your local newspaper
- Watch a funny movie with a friend

Breathe

Take several slow, deep breaths. This can lower your heart rate, calm you and give you perspective.

Eat Healthy

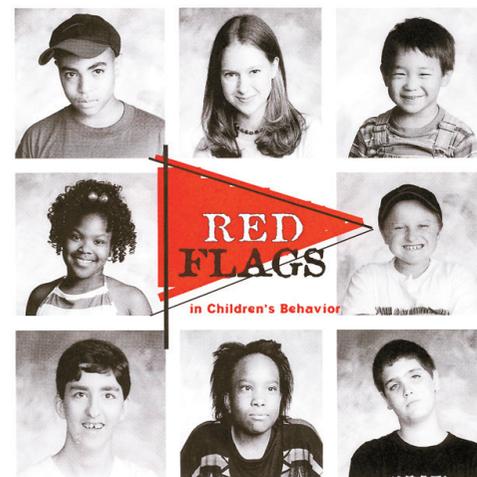
Good nutrition is important. Eat a variety of low-fat, healthy foods from each of the basic food groups.

Rest

The average teenager needs around 9.5 hours of sleep, according to the American Sleep Disorders Association.

- Establish a reasonable and consistent time to wake up and go to sleep.
- Establish a bedtime routine.
- Keep caffeine intake in check.

Five Rock Bottom Principles



- No one is perfect, but we all have gifts. Don't be afraid to embrace yours.
- Everyone makes mistakes, the truly wise treasure their mistakes as opportunities for growth.
- While we may not always be able to control the circumstances of our lives, we can control our response to them.
- Asking for help is not a sign of weakness. It is an essential part of taking control of our lives.
- You are responsible for your life.

Whether your circumstances are favorable or unfavorable, whether you were dealt a poor hand or a good one, the choices you make are your responsibility. You cannot give the responsibility for your life to anyone else, nor can they take it. However, there are many who will be willing to walk beside you, if you are willing to look for them.

Learn about Red Flags, pass the information on and help to create a community of caring where all children can get the help they need, become more resilient, feel good about themselves and build positive identity/self-esteem. For more information about Red Flags, including information for parents, students and teachers visit www.redflags.org.