



Other Caring, Responsible Adults

In many cultures, communities and individual families, children have close, nurturing relationships with a number of adults-aunts, uncles, grandparents, neighbours and other respected elders in the community. These caring adults help to teach, guide and even discipline young children. Parents are no less important because of this extended family; they just simply have the support of others who care about their children.

For others, though families are separate, somewhat lonely units, with relatively little support from other sources. Yet imagine how much richer children's lives might be if there were other trusted adults to whom they could turn to for support and encouragement. And what a relief for parents or guardians to know that other people can provide some of what their adolescents need. We may not be able to create an entire extended family for them, but if we can help our children establish two or three friendships with other caring adults, we can be sure that their lives-and our own-will be much richer.

The [40 Developmental Assets](#) are positive qualities, experiences, and skills that children need to grow up healthy and responsible. Anyone can use these assets as a framework to help them think through the new experiences they're encountering with their children. When dealing with the issue of living together in harmony, the assets you may want to consider looking at for guidance are Peaceful Conflict Resolution, Family Support, Positive Family communication, Family boundaries, Other Adult Relationships, High Expectations and Self-Esteem.

Here are some action tips to help along the way.

- Get to know your neighbours, and encourage your children to do the same. The effort you put into creating a caring atmosphere in your neighbourhood will make it stronger, more vibrant community and will benefit everyone who lives there. ([Path to Neighbourhood Connection](#), [Block Parties](#))
- Learn about events and programs in your community that offer young people the opportunity to meet caring adults. ([Community Events Calendar](#))
- Encourage your child to get involved in youth programs that are supervised by caring adults, such as supportive coaches, instructors or youth group leaders ([BAM](#), [Soaring](#))
- Spend time as a family talking about the importance of friendship in our lives.
- See if a mentoring program is available through your child's school or other community organization. ([Sidekicks Mentoring Program](#) [BAM](#))
- Reach out to people in your faith community who have shown an interest in your child.
- Encourage your children to make a habit of helping people around the neighbourhood, without expecting payment.
- Connect your child with other adults who share his or her interests. This is one way you don't have to do activities you don't like or do well, and your child can still share them with someone special.