

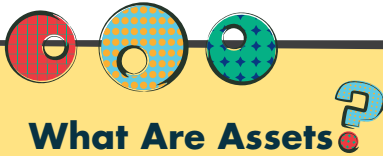


Ideas for Educators

42 Ready-to-Use Newsletters for School Success

31. RESTRAINT

Young person believes it is important not to be sexually active or to use alcohol or other drugs.



What Are Assets?

Assets are 40 values, experiences, and qualities that help kids succeed.

Restraint is one of six positive-values assets.

45% of youth surveyed have this asset in their lives.*

*Based on Search Institute surveys of 148,189 6th- to 12th-grade youth throughout the United States in 2003.

- Find your comfort level with this topic, but don't shy away from it.
- Always strive for honest discussions.
- Teach responsibility.
- Address the underlying factors that cause poor choices in these areas.

Sensitive Topics

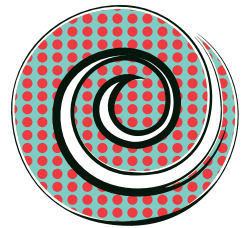
Grit your teeth for some hard discussions with this subject. Very few people relish the idea of trying to discuss some of the most taboo subjects in our culture with a group of embarrassed, squirmy students who may personally know more about the subject than you could ever want them to. But as

teachers, if we are interested in helping our students become whole people, this is one area that needs to be addressed.

These issues, of course, touch some serious nerves. Some parents want to guide these discussions in their own homes, while others prefer they be addressed by the school. Either way, you should always encourage honesty at the heart of those conversations.

It is only in the context of honesty that these discussions can accomplish anything. Students must feel comfortable being able to ask earnest questions, and teachers must be able to answer them. If you're not comfortable guiding in-depth discussions about the pitfalls of sex and drugs, then scale back to talking about restraint and self-respect in broader terms. But always make a commitment to discussing these ideals.

Oftentimes, rather than encouraging them to "Just Say No," we need to think about the underlying issues that cause students to make poor choices. Students are bombarded with glamorous but false messages about sex and drugs. Be honest about how false those messages are. In an increasingly anxiety-ridden culture, doing drugs (including



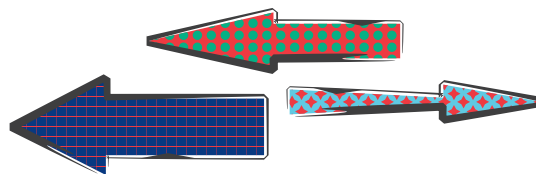
alcohol) seems an alluring way to self-medicate. Be honest about these issues and present healthy alternatives to relieving stress and depression.

This is not to suggest that you need to take charge of the abstinence program at your school. But do take opportunities when they present themselves to have good, open discussions with students about these issues. A casual, comfortable conversation often achieves far more than a formal, academic program ever hopes to.

Sometimes, Just Say No

Because you are a teacher, much is asked of you. There is an almost limitless opportunity to be involved in the life of your school, community, and your students. Whether it's taking on new leadership roles in the school, volunteering outside of school, assisting students in their personal or academic affairs, or offering help to your colleagues, your opportunities to say "yes" are seemingly endless. But of course, you can't say yes to everyone all the time every day—even when you want to.

So for you, restraint is self-discipline and self-respect: the ability to say no to something that you know you will be unable to sustain or that you



are ill-equipped to handle. Ask yourself about the things you've already said "yes" to in your work life:

- ⦿ What roles other than your primary role are you presently playing in your school life?
- ⦿ Besides your primary duties, what other duties and activities are your responsibility?
- ⦿ What are the "unofficial" roles you presently play for colleagues and students?
- ⦿ What issues or conflicts have you taken on as your own?

You don't have to say "no" for the sake of saying "no." Instead, be aware of your own capacity to serve others and still remain engaged and energized in your work. Restraint allows you to give more of yourself to the things and people that really matter to you.