



RAISING HIGHLY
**CAPABLE
KIDS™**

Communities Empowering
Families for Success

LEADER'S
GUIDE

***Raising Highly Capable Kids
Leader's Guide***

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Author: Randy Southern
Design: Do More Good | CSK
Original Illustrations: Jeremy Grant

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WELCOME!

Raising kids can be tough—but learning about it doesn't have to be. In fact, you'll find this course easy-to-use, to-the-point—even fun.

At the heart of each session is a digital slide presentation in Microsoft® PowerPoint® format featuring the 40 Developmental Assets®. These building blocks of development, identified by the Search Institute® (www.search-institute.org), help young people grow up healthy, caring, and responsible.

Then there's the Participant's Guide—which each of your group members will need to make the course personal.

Finally, there's the Leader's Guide—the resource you're holding right now. It's designed to help you turn the digital slide presentation and Participant's Guide into a lively group experience in which parents learn and support each other.

PREPARING FOR THE SESSION

Before each meeting, review the session plan in this book. Look at the corresponding chapter in the Participant's Guide. Preview the digital slide presentation if you can.

For most sessions, you'll need pens or pencils. For some, if your group is large, you may want to use a display surface and writing tool (white board and marker, chalkboard and chalk, etc.). You may also need to gather a few other easy-to-find materials, listed in "Get Ready" at the start of each session.

LEADING THE SESSION

You'll find the session plans easy to follow. Instructions to you (including answers to questions) are in regular type; things you might say to the group are in bold type.

There's another tool that you will find quite helpful as you prepare to lead each Session. As you will notice throughout the Leader's Guide, two gray lines will periodically be displayed on the left side of highlighted text boxes (see example of page 9 to the right). When you see these lines, we are alerting you to the fact that this information appears in the exact same format within each Participant's Guide. In addition, the small box in the upper right corner of each gray box will alert you to the corresponding page number in the Participant's Guide.

Each session, designed to last about an hour, includes five steps:

STEP 1 JOIN THE CLUB (10 minutes)

Using a game or other "icebreaker" activity, you'll grab the group's interest and build



a sense of community. This step is optional; if your group members need help getting acquainted, or if they just like to have a good time, it can be especially valuable.

STEP 2 ADD TO YOUR ASSETS *(20 minutes)*

Here's where you display and narrate your digital slides, sometimes pausing to read a related story or get input from the group.

STEP 3 REACTION TIME *(10 minutes)*

With a few key questions you'll spark discussion of the digital slide presentation.

STEP 4 WORTH A TRY *(15 minutes)*

It's time for practical application, as parents use the corresponding section of the Participant's Guide to come up with action plans for their own families.

STEP 5 NEXT STEP *(5 minutes)*

Wrap up the session with a simple suggestion for following through on what group members have learned.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

- If your group is like most, you often run out of time before you run out of discussion questions and activities. What to do? Simply choose the questions in each step that you think will be most helpful to your group and concentrate on those.
- Invite discussion, but don't be surprised if some group members are reluctant to share personal information. If people want to reflect silently on a probing question, encourage them to do so. Some leaders find any silence awkward and rush to fill it up, but sometimes it really is golden. If you're afraid a few moments of quiet will make it look like you're "bombing" as a leader, explain early on that understanding and applying a principle can happen without a sound.
- Married parents will benefit if both spouses attend your sessions. Single parents will also appreciate the interactions of the whole group, so be sure to facilitate this. Instead of having spouses discuss a question, for example, you may want to form subgroups of three to five—or simply skip questions that would be too personal for individuals to discuss with anyone other than a mate.
- If possible, each group member—not just each couple—should have a Participant's Guide in order to respond individually to surveys and other activities. It's a good idea to have a few extra copies of the Participant's Guide on hand, too, so that latecomers, visitors, and those who forgot their books can take part.
- Refreshments can go a long way toward creating an inviting, informal atmosphere—and building a sense of community. To share the expense and effort, you may want to have group members sign up to bring food and beverages to a particular meeting; others could volunteer for cleanup duty.

- To minimize interruptions, some groups find it useful to ask parents to turn off their cell phones during the meeting. If parents feel the need to stay connected with babysitters, you might take a brief break at “halftime” for moms and dads to phone home—or suggest an out-of-earshot area where calls can be made anytime.
- Don’t encourage laughter at anyone’s expense. If some of the discussion questions seem likely to cause embarrassment, feel free to omit them; if they would be more appropriately answered in private, encourage group members to do so later as a couple or with a friend.
- Speaking of confidentiality, be aware that it has limits. For example, you may be legally required to report it if you discover that a participant or another person is being hurt, is in danger of being hurt, or wants to hurt himself or herself or someone else. Since rules vary from state to state, ask your school district office or other sponsor of the course for more information.
- If you don’t have an answer to every question, don’t worry! It’s okay to say, “I don’t know.” Ask group members to help out by sharing wisdom from their experience.
- Have a good time! Parenting may be serious business, but most of your group members probably appreciate a light touch as they learn. Let your group be a place where moms and dads can laugh together and gain perspective on their challenges.
- To enhance any of the sessions, think of people in your community who could speak about an issue/Asset or show a video from the “Optional Video Ideas” pdf found on your Leader USB.

Ready to have a lasting, positive impact on the families represented in your group? Thanks for taking the lead!

Note: Many issues addressed in this course are difficult ones. Some parents may need to address them in greater detail and depth. The materials are intended as general advice only, and not to replace clinical counseling, medical treatment, or legal counsel.

To talk to a counselor or get a referral to a counselor in your area, call 1-800-A-FAMILY (232-6459) and ask for the counseling department. Bilingual counselors are available.

SESSION 1

We're All in This Together



GET READY

For this session, you'll need

- Index cards, prepared according to instructions (Step 1)
- Computer, projector, and screen for digital slide presentation (Step 2)
- JENGA® prepared according to instructions (Step 4 optional)

AIM

To encourage participants to feel comfortable talking about their parenting challenges, and to open their minds to new ways of helping their kids succeed.

1 | STEP 1

JOIN THE CLUB *(about 10 minutes)*

While you're waiting for the meeting to begin, encourage group members to read the brief introduction to the session in Step 1 ("Join the Club") of the Participant's Guide.

The moment your child is born, you're expected to be an expert in medicine, education, psychology, economics, justice, and nutrition—not to mention waste disposal.

PAGE
4

Worse, people expect you to raise the next generation—one that's supposed to clean up after your own, right the wrongs, preserve the best, and support you when you run out of steam—which will probably happen sooner than later, given how hard it is to be a parent.

You, meanwhile, probably have one wish: that your kids will turn out happy, strong, successful, and holding to the values that are most important to you. It's just one wish, but it's an enormous one.

So how do you make it happen? What does it take for children to grow into healthy, caring, responsible members of society? Is it money? Vitamins? Is there a secret formula?

Not exactly. But research has identified **forty ingredients kids need to succeed**.

In this course, you'll discover the recipe. Better yet, you'll discover it with fellow parents who love their children as much as you love yours, and can stand with you as you begin to apply what you've learned.

They can, that is, if you're willing to admit you're not perfect and willing to benefit from their mistakes and victories. That's the best place to begin, and why it's the starting point for this session.

Try starting your session with an icebreaker. Ask for two or three volunteers. Hand each one an index card with an instruction written on it. Here are some sample instructions:

- Convince someone in the group to open (or close) the door.
- Convince someone in the group to switch seats with you.
- Convince someone in the group to give you a tissue.

The catch: Volunteers may not speak. They must do their convincing nonverbally. They may point, nod, or pantomime, but can't say anything. (To raise the stakes, set a 30-second time limit for each person.)

After watching the attempts and applauding your contestants, use the following questions to guide your discussion of the activity.

How often do you communicate nonverbally to your kids? Encourage volunteers to talk about the facial expressions and gestures they use to let their kids know how they're feeling.

What nonverbal clues do you wish people would pick up on? You might talk about the eye rolls we give to people who are talking too loudly on their cell phones or the palms-to-the-sky, "What in the world are you doing?" gesture we sometimes give to clueless drivers.

What are some things you'd like to talk to other people about, but don't? If no one else mentions it, suggest that many parents probably would like to compare experiences with other parents, or share their struggles and concerns, or perhaps get advice about a problem in their family—but choose to stay silent.

In ten words or less, what do you think would happen if more moms and dads talked openly and honestly with each other about parenting? You may hear things like, "We wouldn't feel so alone," or "We'd learn from each other's mistakes."

Make the transition to your digital slide presentation by saying something like this:

The responsibilities of parenting can do a number on a person's confidence. Being a parent often takes us out of our comfort zone. It puts us in situations that make us feel unprepared and unqualified. Sometimes it makes us feel isolated. But it doesn't have to be that way.

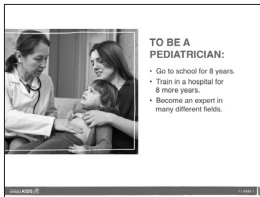


1 | STEP 2

ADD TO YOUR ASSETS *(about 20 minutes)*

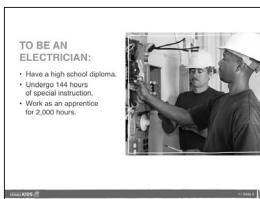


Start your digital slide presentation. Use the following narration—in your own words, if you prefer—along with included questions to guide your discussion.



SLIDE 1

A person who wants to become a pediatrician must excel throughout four years of undergraduate school and four years of medical school. She must train in a hospital for up to eight more years after that. She must become an expert in biology, chemistry, physics and mathematics. Then—and only then—is she allowed to treat children.



SLIDE 2

A person who wants to become a professional electrician must be a high school graduate. He must have at least 144 hours of classroom instruction. He must work as an apprentice with a fully licensed electrician for over 2,000 hours. He must become an expert in mathematics, blueprint reading, code rules, and safety procedures. He must pass extremely difficult tests to earn his license. Then—and only then—is he allowed to do the work of an electrician.



SLIDE 3

A person who wants to drive a car legally must prove her eyesight is good. She must pass a written test on the rules of the road. She must pass a driving test with an instructor to prove she can handle a vehicle. Then—and only then—is she allowed to drive legally.



SLIDE 4

To be a parent . . . to play the biggest role in a child's life . . . to influence everything a child thinks or believes . . . to be responsible for a child's well-being twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week . . .



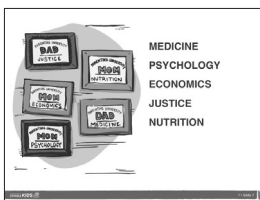
SLIDE 5

All you have to do is have a kid. Period. One birth makes you a parent.



SLIDE 6

As soon as the doctor or nurse places the baby in your arms in the hospital, you're on the job.

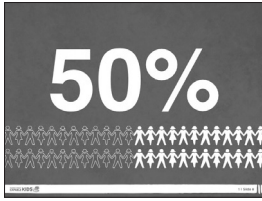


SLIDE 7

Suddenly you have to be an expert in . . .

- Medicine, making sure your kids have all the vaccinations, checkups, treatments, and emergency care they need.
- Psychology, figuring out what's *really* going on in your kids' heads.
- Economics, knowing how to stretch your budget to cover the countless expenses kids bring.
- Justice, setting fair rules and penalties.
- Nutrition, serving food that makes them happy *and* healthy . . .

As well as countless other fields.



SLIDE 8

Is it any wonder that nearly half of all parents report that raising children is harder than they thought it would be?¹



SLIDE 9

This is Esther, the woman from the story on page 5 of your Participant's Guide. Esther definitely falls into the harder-than-they-thought category. Give group members a minute or so to read this brief story silently.

PAGE
5

Esther has a standard response for people who ask her what it's like to be a single parent: "Harder than you can imagine." She doesn't usually say it out loud, of course.

She loves her son more than life itself, but an eight year old is a handful under the best of circumstances. And Esther hasn't experienced the best of circumstances in a long time.

She thought that moving to a new city would give her a fresh start, putting distance between her and certain people she needed to get away from. Now she's questioning her decision. She feels alone, overwhelmed. And she doesn't know where to turn.

She needs to talk to someone. But who can she trust?

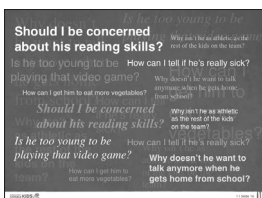
How can she weed out people who are bad for her and her son to find those who are genuinely helpful and caring?

How can she make sure she doesn't unwittingly invite an abuser or predator into her life?

And how can she believe anyone she connects with on social media Web sites—her main source of interpersonal communication these days?

Esther has nearly reached the end of her rope. She realizes she can't do it alone anymore. She needs to find people who can help, encourage, and support her.

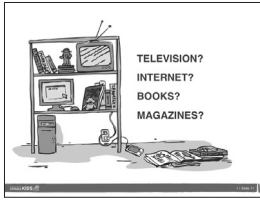
What do we know about Esther? Supplement participants' responses with the following information as needed. Esther is the mother of an 8-year-old boy. She feels alone in her new home. She feels overwhelmed by her parenting responsibilities, but doesn't know where to turn.



SLIDE 10

Like most parents, Esther has a lot of questions and concerns.

¹ <http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/national/parents-feel-stress-of-raising-their-children/story-fndo471r-1226479471584>



SLIDE 11

Where can she turn for advice or reassurance? Discuss briefly the drawbacks of various information sources. For example, there's no way to check the credentials of people who post things online. You don't know who you're taking advice from.



SLIDE 12

What about a group like ours? What would you like to hear from the rest of us during the next 13 weeks? If group members aren't ready to list their expectations, ask how Esther might benefit if she met regularly with other parents in a group like yours.

What do you think would make Esther feel comfortable and safe in a group like this? What would make you feel the same way? Use this time to establish group norms or rules to be followed during every session. Please make sure group members explain their suggestions. If group members are having trouble coming up with ideas or don't mention confidentiality, respect, and encouragement, offer these suggestions.

1 | STEP 3

REACTION TIME *(about 10 minutes)*

Ask a couple of volunteers to share and briefly explain their responses to the "Reaction Time" statements on page 6 of the Participant's Guide.

Fill in the circle to indicate how well you relate to the following statements:

PAGE
6

I feel competitive with other parents.

☐ Never ☐ Rarely ☐ Sometimes ☐ Frequently

I feel I should be self-sufficient as a parent and not rely on others.

☐ Never ☐ Rarely ☐ Sometimes ☐ Frequently

I have trouble talking about my parenting questions and concerns.

☐ Never ☐ Rarely ☐ Sometimes ☐ Frequently

I try to give the impression that everything is under control in my family, even when it's not.

☐ Never ☐ Rarely ☐ Sometimes ☐ Frequently

Suggest that your participants' interest in the group shows that they love and care about their children—and that they're not too proud to admit they need help. That's the kind of

common bond Esther is looking for. Point out, too, that in order to benefit from the group, participants need to be willing to share their struggles, concerns, and questions—something that was difficult for Esther.

What might keep parents from talking openly about the pain and difficulties and fears of parenthood? What might keep them from asking for help when they need it?

As needed, note the following:

- Some people allow competition or pride to get in the way. They want to maintain the impression that they have everything under control.
- Some feel they should be self-sufficient, that they shouldn't need input from others.
- Some simply don't know how to put their concerns into words.

What are the rewards of swallowing your pride or getting past your doubts and opening up in a group like this? If no one else mentions it, point out that it allows you to draw on a variety of experiences and to tap into other sources of creativity and wisdom. As an illustration of this, try the following activity before you wrap up the session.

1 | STEP 4

WORTH A TRY *(about 15 minutes)*



Divide the groups into teams of three or four. Have them look over the following list found on page 7 of the Participant's Guide.

40 DEVELOPMENTAL ASSETS®

PAGE 7

The Search Institute has identified the following building blocks of development that help young people grow up healthy, caring, and responsible.

External Assets

Support

- 1 Family Support:** Family life provides high levels of love and support.
- 2 Positive Family Communication:** Young person and parents communicate positively. Young person is willing to seek advice and counsel from parents.
- 3 Other Adult Relationships:** Young person receives support from three or more nonparent adults.
- 4 Caring Neighborhood:** Young person experiences caring neighbors.
- 5 Caring School Climate:** School provides a caring, encouraging environment.
- 6 Parent Involvement in Schooling:** Parent(s) are actively involved in helping young person succeed in school.

Empowerment

- 7 Community Values Youth:** Young person perceives that adults in the community value youth.
- 8 Youth as Resources:** Young people are given useful roles in the community.
- 9 Service to Others:** Young person serves in the community one hour or more per week.
- 10 Safety:** Young person feels safe at home, school, and in the neighborhood.

Boundaries and Expectations

- 11 Family Boundaries:** Family has clear rules and consequences and monitors the young person's whereabouts.
- 12 School Boundaries:** School provides clear rules and consequences.
- 13 Neighborhood Boundaries:** Neighbors take responsibility for monitoring young people's behavior.
- 14 Adult Role Models:** Parent(s) and other adults model positive, responsible behavior.
- 15 Positive Peer Influence:** Young person's best friends model responsible behavior.
- 16 High Expectations:** Both parent(s) and teachers encourage the young person to do well.

Constructive Use of Time

- 17 Creative Activities:** Young person spends three or more hours per week in lessons or practice in music, theater, or other arts.
- 18 Youth Programs:** Young person spends three or more hours per week in sports, clubs, or organizations at school or in the community.
- 19 Religious Community:** Young person spends one or more hours per week in activities in a religious institution.
- 20 Time at Home:** Young person is out with friends with nothing special to do two or fewer nights per week.

Internal Assets

Commitment to Learning

- 21 Achievement Motivation:** Young person is motivated to do well in school.
- 22 School Engagement:** Young person is actively engaged in learning.
- 23 Homework:** Young person reports doing at least one hour of homework every school day.
- 24 Bonding to School:** Young person cares about his or her school.
- 25 Reading for Pleasure:** Young person reads for pleasure three or more hours per week.

Positive Values

- 26 Caring:** Young person places high value on helping other people.
- 27 Equality and Social Justice:** Young person places high value on promoting equality and reducing hunger and poverty.
- 28 Integrity:** Young person acts on convictions and stands up for his or her beliefs.
- 29 Honesty:** Young person tells the truth even when it's not easy.
- 30 Responsibility:** Young person accepts and takes personal responsibility.
- 31 Restraint:** Young person believes it is important not to be sexually active or to use alcohol or other drugs.

Social Competence

- 32 Planning and Decision Making:** Young person knows how to plan ahead and make choices.
- 33 Interpersonal Competence:** Young person has empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills.
- 34 Cultural Competence:** Young person has knowledge of and comfort with people of different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds.
- 35 Resistance Skills:** Young person can resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations.
- 36 Peaceful Conflict Resolution:** Young person seeks to resolve conflict nonviolently.

Positive Identity

- 37 Personal Power:** Young person feels he or she has control over things that happen to him or her.
- 38 Self-Esteem:** Young person reports having high self-esteem.
- 39 Sense of Purpose:** Young person reports that his or her life has a purpose.
- 40 Positive View of Personal Future:** Young person is optimistic about his or her personal future.

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Rather than taking the time to read the list, let group members look it over for a minute or so. Summarize it as follows:

- An organization called the Search Institute identified these 40 building blocks as vital for the healthy development of children.
- These building blocks—or “Assets”—are the basis of this 13-week course.
- The list of Assets is based on careful research. Founded in 1958, the Search Institute has surveyed more than four million young people in thousands of North American communities to find out what they need to thrive. The more Assets a child has, the more likely he or she is to avoid dangerous behavior and display positive attitudes and actions.
- “External Assets” are developed by constructive experiences provided by people and institutions. “Internal Assets” result from cultivating personal qualities that guide choices and lend a sense of centeredness, purpose, and focus.
- Over the next several weeks we’ll explore the eight categories of Assets, one at a time, along with the building blocks in each category. We won’t spend equal time on each one, but will start with the ones our families may need most.

Option 1

Ask each group to choose one building block from the list—perhaps one that would have been helpful to them as kids or one they’d especially like for their kids. Have each group come up with two situations based on the Asset it chose. The first situation should involve a child who has that building block in his or her life; the second should involve a child who doesn’t have the building block.

To give participants an idea of what you’re looking for, point them to page 10 of the Participant’s Guide, where the following two examples based on Asset #37—Personal Power—appear.

Situation 1

Miguel, a fourth grader, has always been taught that he has power over things that happen to him. So when a bully named Vincent snatched food from his lunch tray and refused to give it back, Miguel took action. First, he called the lunch monitor over and told her what Vincent had done. She made Vincent return the food. Then Miguel told his homeroom teacher about the incident. She promised to keep an eye on Vincent. When he got home, he told his parents what had happened. His parents called the principal to make sure the bullying stopped before it really got started. The next day, Vincent gave Miguel some dirty looks, but he didn’t bother him again.

Situation 2

Daniel, a fifth grader, comes from a home where confrontation is avoided at all costs. The unspoken rule is that if you have a problem with someone, you keep it to yourself and move on. Unfortunately, guys like Stephen make that hard. Stephen is Daniel’s soccer teammate. At every practice, whenever the team lines up for drills, Stephen makes a point of tripping Daniel—no one else, just Daniel. The coach sees it happening, but doesn’t say anything. Daniel tries to avoid Stephen, but it’s impossible. Daniel used to love soccer, but now he feels sick to his stomach every day before practice. He just wants the season to be over.

PAGE
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Or Option 2

Before this session begins, purchase a Jenga® game and number the blocks from 1 to 40. Since there are more than 40 blocks in the game, you will have to start from 1 again until all the blocks are numbered. Set the game up in the front of the class and ask for a volunteer to take a block from the stack (not from the top). Ask the volunteer to read the number written on the block. Now ask the group to locate the asset that corresponds with that number. Have someone read the asset aloud. Then ask the group what a child's life would be like if that asset was (and wasn't) present in his or her life.

Play the game until the inevitable happens—the tower of blocks crash. Use this vivid example to explain that our children are like the tower: the fewer assets they have, the more fragile their life becomes.

1 | STEP 5

NEXT STEP *(about 5 minutes)*



Wrap up with comments like these:

As you can see from these situations, building these Assets in our kids can make a big difference in their present as well as their future. That's why the next 13 weeks are so important, and why I'm so glad we'll spend this time learning together.

Encourage participants to look over the 40 Assets list at home. Ask them to think about the Assets that might have made a difference in their lives when they were kids, as well as the Assets they want to build in their own children.

If time allows, suggest that parents read the brief, encouraging advice in Step 5 ("Next Step") of the Participant's Guide before leaving your meeting place. If not, suggest that they read it when they get home.

As you discover the 40 Assets in this course, don't lose sight of another "asset" that may prove just as valuable to you and your family.

PAGE
10

The relationships you form with other parents in your group may go a long way toward easing some of your uncertainties about parenthood. One of the surest ways to come to grips with your anxieties is to get to know people who are experiencing similar feelings. At the very least, it's a relief to know there are others in the same boat.

Such relationships can't be forced, and they may take time to develop. But the fact that you've all chosen to take this course is a great start. It shows that you love and care deeply for your children. It shows you're not too proud to admit that you don't have all the answers—and that you know common ground is a great place to build a friendship.

Finding others to laugh, cry, and commiserate with is the secret to success (and sanity) for parents. So try to surround yourself with people who'll give you—and good-naturedly receive from you—support, encouragement, a listening ear, and an occasional kick in the pants.

If you seek out others who understand the challenges and rewards of parenting, and who are willing to take the journey with you, you'll find it pays dividends—now and in the future.