

In today's world we all experience science and its effect in our lives. There are times when we argue with and do not like the science we see. But there are times when science tells us what we knew all the time. This is one of those times. After much work and high science we now know something that my mother knew many years ago. As I remember my mother would tell me, "you need to read a book", "you can't go to that part of town", "play nice", "wash your hands before supper", etc. What do you remember?

Well, these words of advice from our mothers would now be considered *assets* that we benefited from as children. According to a 1999 survey by a group called "Assets for Youth," there are forty assets every child needs in their life in order to thrive. There are *external assets* like positive support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations, and opportunities for constructive use of time. And there are *internal assets* that develop a strong commitment to learning, positive values, good social competencies, and a positive identity in young people. Those young people that have more assets in their lives are involved in thriving behaviors; those young people who have fewer of these assets in their lives are more likely to be involved in high-risk behaviors. For more detail about this, you can call Assets for Youth in Colorado Springs at 635-8300. They also have a web site at www.csay.org. Get more information.

There is also a new book; Daniel Goleman's Working with Emotional Intelligence that gives us some more scientific information to think about. In his book he shows us that 80-90% of the decisions in our lives are made with our *Emotional Intelligence*, not with our IQ. He explains that a higher level of emotional maturity helps people make better decisions. Again I hear my mother say, "That was not a very smart thing to do", "you know better than that", etc. Read the book.

Now you are saying "That is nice but what does that have to do with The Arc?" Mom would say "Get to the Point!" These ideas, the forty assets and emotional intelligence, were gathered based on research done on average people; but I think they are ideas that make sense for us at The Arc. In twenty-five years of parenting Janice and thirty-five years of doing Occupational Therapy, I have seen many people with cognitive problems and other disabilities who live lives as independent as any of us. They were mature and had the family and community assets that made their life independent. That makes them active members of the community and their families feel secure in that.

But I have seen others who should be living on their own but are too immature and will make poor decisions in their lives. They have stories of not getting a chance, of not being let out of the house and having fun with others. People thought because of their "IQ" they would be expected to live with a lot of support. People think that "IQ" is what makes the person. But I think we all know each person is his or her own individual and that maturity makes the person not the "IQ".

As parents and as a community, we need to think about what we can do to develop children so they can live in our communities just as anyone else. We need to think about the assets that need to be in the lives of those with disabilities. We need to talk about what will develop mature young people that our community will put to work and accept into each neighborhood.

Well this thinking and talking will start now and in March of 2005, The Arc will sponsor Ric Carrasco, PHD, OTR/L, FAOTA to do a workshop on these issues, *Looking at the Flip Side of Disability*. Ric is an old personal friend of mine who is a nationally known expert on these issues. He has created a 40 Assets Model for people with developmental disabilities and is applying the model with success in his work in Florida. He is always a great speaker and will teach us what we need to know to make our community a place where emotional maturity can be factored into our decision making processes.

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