**Studies of Teens Challenge Us to Keep Learning**

Five 2013 studies that ask important questions about youth development.

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Thousands of research studies are published each year that increase our [understanding](https://www.psychologytoday.com/basics/empathy) of how teens overcome challenges and develop into happy, healthy adults. 2013 was no exception. Yet most studies never make their way from academia to the people who benefit most from them – [parents](https://www.psychologytoday.com/basics/parenting), teachers, and others who support youth.

Of the many studies that came to my attention last year, here are five that keep me focused on the goal of bringing research to more public eyes. Each of the studies challenges us to keep learning about ourselves and our children. They also help us ask new questions that matter to the [happiness](https://www.psychologytoday.com/basics/happiness) and [health](https://www.psychologytoday.com/basics/health) of our youth.

**1. Communities Play Vital Roles in Developing Youth**

There is a large body of research that has examined negative community factors that contribute to [crime](https://www.psychologytoday.com/basics/law-and-crime) and delinquency. But what community assets actually support the healthy development of youth?

In a study published by [*Youth & Society* (link is external)](http://yas.sagepub.com/content/early/2013/06/18/0044118X13491581.abstract), Smith, Faulk, & Sizer reported three factors that improve positive outcomes for teens: 1) Community networks and support for families, 2) Connections that link teens to resources such as [mentoring and positive role models](http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-moment-youth/201301/mentoring-youth-matters), 3) Peer relationships that provide teens with a sense of confidence and interdependence.

This study makes us ask important questions, including the following.

* How do communities nurture the positive foundations of youth development, not just react to negative factors and current problems?
* How do communities effectively connect youth to resources that help them thrive?
* How do communities nurture a strong [Internal Compass (link is external)](http://www.rootsofaction.com/explore/) in children that fosters positive peer relationships and the abilities to succeed in life?