Peer Leadership

PEER PRESSURE & BULLYING

✓ It’s hard to say “no”
✓ Questions for discussion
✓ Peer Pressure Quiz
✓ Put a Positive Spin on Peer Pressure
✓ Friendships, Peer Influence, and Peer Pressure During the Teen Years
✓ Feeling Peer Pressure
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✓ Top 10 Refusal skills for teens
✓ Definition: School Bully
✓ Bullying is an Adult Problem
✓ My Heart Feels Your Pain (teaching empathy)
✓ IT'S HARD TO SAY "NO"

Objectives:

1. To look at a common problem that people face from childhood to adulthood.
2. To better understand what makes it so difficult to say no.
3. To look at acceptable ways to say “no”

Directions:

1. First, discuss what situations we all face where it’s hard to say “no” (sharing, homework, studying vs. being with friends, going farther sexually than is comfortable, drinking in social situations, borrowing clothes, iPods, etc.)
2. Then, select one of these situations and frame a role-play with one person pressuring, several friends pressuring, and then someone of the opposite sex pressuring.
3. Discuss the role-play.

Discussion questions:

1. What was the hardest thing about saying “no”
2. Which ways to say “no” are acceptable and make people want to back off?
3. What are we afraid of if we say “no” to our friends?
4. How do we feel about our friends who pressure us?
5. When are we most vulnerable to this kind of pressure? (when we are depressed? Low self-esteem? Need to be liked? Etc.)
6. When do our parents have trouble saying “no”?
7. How do we feel when we ask for a favor or want a friend to do something with us and he/she says “no”?
8. Share experiences where we did or didn’t say “no” and what it felt like. (Look at feelings of guilt, regret, hurt, anger, as a result of not saying “no” in some situations).
9. Is not saying "no" habit forming?
QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Is it possible to have friends that are very different from me – different backgrounds, races, personality, interests, and values? What can make this difficult?

Have I ever experienced rejection? How do I handle being ignored, left out, or rejected? Do I ignore or reject others?

Describe circumstances where we have felt left out or different from others, i.e., in the classroom, at lunch, in the halls at school, at a party, shopping in town, at a restaurant ...

When you perceive that someone is in a *group*, what effect does that have on your attitude about that person?

What kinds of *groups* are there at our school? How comfortable do we feel in these different groups? What are the positive effects of groups? What are the negative effects?

Are there groups of people who feel invisible in this society? Can anything be done about this?

When have we been in situations where we wanted to say or do something but we didn’t? What has stopped us?
Peer Pressure Quiz

http://library.thinkquest.org/C0117922/activities/peerpressurequiz.htm

1. You're at the mall and you see one of your friends slip a pack of gum into his pocket. You:
   A) Decide that since he didn't get caught, what's the harm in stealing one for yourself?
   B) Pretend you didn't see him.
   C) Tell him that stealing is wrong and he should go put it back.

2. You're having a huge sleepover with a bunch of friends. While playing truth-or-dare, you are dared to drink a can of beer. You:
   A) Go for it! You can't back down from a dare.
   B) Open the can but at the last minute you decide to say no.
   C) Say no and try to change the activity.

3. While sitting at your lunch table, everyone starts making fun of one of your friends. You:
   A) Join in. Your friend won't find out and you might be mad fun of if you don't.
   B) Sit there and eat your lunch.
   C) Stick up for your friend. How would you feel if your friends made fun of you?

4. You really want to go to a party at your crush's house. Your parents said "NO WAY." Your best friend says she will help you sneak out. What do you do?
   A) Accept and start getting ready. What an awesome friend!
   B) End up staying home but fight with your parents the whole time.
   C) Stay home and make the best of it. Who knew you could have fun with your parents?

5. You're skating with some friends when one of them lights a cigarette. Do you:
   A) Ask him for one- It looks cool.
   B) Decline the offer. You don't need to smoke to have fun.
   C) Give him a look of disgust as you go find other people to skate with.

6. Have you ever given in to a peer-pressure situation?
   A) Yes
   B) Maybe
   C) No
7. Would you ever drink before the age of 21?
A) Yes-I already have.
B) Maybe.
C) Definitely not.

8. It's Friday night. All of your friends are going to a party but you promised your dorky cousin you would go to a movie with her. You:
A) Ditch your cousin- You want to have fun!
B) Go to the movie but meet up with your friends later.
C) Tell your friends a promise is a promise and go with your cousin.

9. Someone offers you weed. Your first reaction is to:
A) Say, "Sure!"
B) Shrug and say, "I don't know."
C) Say, "Absolutely not."

10. In history class, Jamie wants to look off your test. You:
A) Let him, because someday you might want to look off his.
B) Let him, but tell the teacher after class.
C) Cover your paper so he can't see it.

Peer Pressure Scoring

Mostly A's
You have not learned to stand up to peer pressure. You continually make bad decisions because of other people's influence on you. You need to decide who you really are. Don't just go along with the crowd.

Mostly B's
You are still learning. Sometimes you make your own choices, but sometimes you still let other people pressure you. Instead of just letting an issue pass by, try taking a stand and tell everyone how you feel. You will go a lot farther if you stand up for what you believe in.

Mostly C's
You know how to resist peer pressure. You are comfortable with what you believe and don't mind being different and not following what is popular. Keep your strong morals and your good choices. You will need them as you continue through life.
Put a Positive Spin on Peer Pressure

Where there are people, there will be peer pressure. And your classroom is no exception. However, while we're used to thinking of peer pressure as something negative, it often has the potential to be a powerfully positive force.

By leading students through some self-awareness activities, you can help create a group of peers who value individualism, practice it in their own lives, and encourage it in others.

Peer pressure awareness activities

1. Define it *
   Write the following definition on the board and then ask students to expand it by sharing their personal experiences. Jot brief notes on the board that capture the students' examples.

   Peer pressure: social pressure from members of your group to accept certain beliefs or act in certain ways in order to be accepted.

2. Brainstorm it
   Write the following questions as column headers on the board. Ask students to brainstorm answers to each question. In the spirit of the subject (peer pressure), make it clear that all answers are acceptable – students are not allowed to laugh or make negative responses to others' answers.

   - What evidence of peer pressure exists in this classroom? Possible answers might include the way kids dress, the kinds of backpacks or notebooks they carry, where kids sit, or hairstyles.
   - How do kids communicate messages of peer pressure? Possible answers might include giggling, talking about other kids, using put-downs, ganging up on someone, starting rumors, leaving kids out, or laughing at someone.
   - How can peer pressure get kids into trouble? Possible answers might include by forcing kids to do something they shouldn't just to be accepted, by excluding kids who may have good things to contribute, or by setting up situations of "them vs. us" instead of teamwork or community.
   - When is peer pressure a good thing? Possible answers might include when it keeps kids out of trouble, when it encourages kids to participate in healthy activities, or when it works toward unification instead of divisiveness.

3. Summarize it
   Based on the activities above, ask students to summarize peer pressure by completing the following sentences. Write the sentences and students' answers on the board.

   - Peer pressure is POSITIVE when...
     (Possible answers: it encourages kids to have healthy values, positive attitudes and actions, a spirit of supportive teamwork, etc.)
   - Peer pressure is NEGATIVE when...
     (Possible answers: it encourages kids to get into trouble, have bad attitudes, alienate other kids, etc.)

Friendships, Peer Influence, and Peer Pressure During the Teen Years

Friendships are very much an important aspect of the teen years. Understanding the nature of peer influence can help support youth as they enter into this period and follow the path towards close friendships that are hallmarks of adolescence.

Maria R. T. de Guzman, Extension Adolescent Specialist

- Facts About Friendships, Peers, and Adolescence
- Effective Strategies for Coping with Peer Pressure
- Summary
- Selected References
- Acknowledgment

Adolescence is a time when peers play an increasingly important role in the lives of youth. Teens begin to develop friendships that are more intimate, exclusive, and more constant than in earlier years. In many ways, these friendships are an essential component of development. They provide safe venues where youth can explore their identities, where they can feel accepted and where they can develop a sense of belongingness. Friendships also allow youth to practice and foster social skills necessary for future success.

Nonetheless, parents and other adults can become concerned when they see their teens becoming preoccupied with their friends. Many parents worry that their teens might fall under negative peer influence or reject their families’ values and beliefs, as well as be pressured to engage in high-risk and other negative behaviors.

In actuality, peer influence is more complex than our stereotype of the negative influences from friends. First, peer influence can be both positive and negative. While we tend to think that peer influence leads teens to engage in unhealthy and unsafe behaviors, it can actually motivate youth to study harder in school, volunteer for community and social services, and participate in sports and other productive endeavors. In fact, most teens report that their peers pressure them not to engage in drug use and sexual activity.

Second, peer influence is not a simple process where youth are passive recipients of influence from others. In fact, peers who become friends tend to already have a lot of things in common. Peers with similar interests, similar academic standing, and enjoy doing the same things tend to gravitate towards each other. So while it seems that teens and their friends become very similar to each other through peer influence, much of that similarity was present to begin with.
Facts About Friendships, Peers, and Adolescence

Friendships that emerge during adolescence tend to be more complex, more exclusive, and more consistent than during earlier childhood. New types (e.g., opposite sex, romantic ties) and levels (e.g., best friends, cliques, and “crowds”) of relationships emerge, and teens begin to develop the capacity for very close, intimate, and deep friendships.

The adult perception of peers as having one culture or a unified front of dangerous influence is inaccurate. More often than not, peers reinforce family values, but they have the potential to encourage problem behaviors as well. Although the negative peer influence is overemphasized, more can be done to help teenagers experience the family and the peer group as mutually constructive environments.

Facts about the teen-parent relationship during the teen years:

- **Parent relationships are not necessarily undermined by peer relationships.** During adolescence, relationships between parents and teens are more often re-negotiated rather than rejected. During adolescence, teens become increasingly autonomous and take on more adult roles. They also develop their own ideas and start mapping their own lives. They begin to spend more time with and value their friends more than they used to. Thus, it might seem as if they are starting to cut ties with parents and reject their ideals. In fact, rather than cutting off ties, teens are just renegotiating the parent-child relationship. What this means is that they are beginning to shift the relationship to incorporate their increasing independence and maturity. As teens become more mature, the type of relationship they have with their parents naturally begin to shift as the teen begins to mature.

- **While it seems that teens are influenced by their peers, parents continue to be the most influential factor in their lives.** Despite fears parents have about their teens rejecting their values and beliefs, parents continue to be of significant influence. Teens report having political, religious, and general beliefs similar to their parents, and consider their parents as being highly significant and influential in their lives. Positive relationships between parents and teens also equip youth to have healthy relationships with friends. Teens who have high quality relationships with parents also report having a positive relationship with their peers.

- **Parent-adolescent conflict increases between childhood and early adolescence; although in most families, its frequency and intensity remain low.** Typically, conflicts are the result of relationship negotiation and continuing attempts by parents to socialize their adolescents, and do not signal the breakdown of parent-adolescent relations. Parents need to include adolescents in decision-making and rule-setting that affects their lives.

- **Parents who continue to communicate with their teens, even when there are conflicts, actually maintain closer relationships.** While it might seem futile to talk to teens when it leads to conflicts and disagreements, most teens continue to report having a close relationship with their parents, and as mentioned earlier, they still report parents as being a significant influence on their lives. So parents need to continue talking to their teens and maintaining an open line of communication, rather than simply trying to avoid disagreements.
Facts about peer friendships:

- **Teens often have multiple layers and groups of friendships.** Unlike in childhood, when friendships usually meant two or more close friends, teens often have multiple friends and belong to multiple groups. They might have intimate and close relationships with one or a handful of individuals, and might also belong to one or more ‘cliques’ or groups of friends that have similar demographics (sex, race, socioeconomic status), orientation towards school, and other interests.

- **Peer friendships are dynamic.** This simply means that peer friendships may change. For instance, while teens can have friendships that are long term, they often move from one clique to another, and they might develop new friendships and lose others.

- **Peers tend to choose those who are similar to themselves.** Whether it is gender, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, or interests, teens tend to gravitate towards those who are more similar to them.

- **Peer friendships can be a healthy venue for positive youth development.** Peer friendships can be a safe place for youth to explore their identity, learn about social norms, and practice their autonomy. Healthy friendships provide youth with social support for dealing with some of the challenges of adolescence, and can also provide youth with some of the most positive experiences during those years. Many teens report having some of the happiest and most fun moments with their peers, likely due to shared interests as well close relationships.

**Effective Strategies for Coping with Peer Pressure**

While the point has been made here that peer influence and peer pressure do not necessarily have to be negative, peer pressure can lead youth towards unhealthy and unsafe behaviors. To minimize the negative effects of peer pressure, youth, parents, school and community leaders must come together to establish workable and effective strategies to guide teen behavior and to support their transition from children to mature, responsible adults. Here are several strategies to consider (partly based on Brown, 1990):

1. **Nurture teens’ abilities and self-esteem so that they are equipped to foster positive peer relationships and deflect negative pressures.** Adolescents with positive self-concept and self-worth will be less likely to be easily swayed to follow others’ negative influences. It is essential that these aspects of positive development should be encouraged in youth.

2. **Encourage positive relationships between significant adults and teens.** Parents, teachers, school counselors, other relatives and professionals should try to have constructive and positive relationships with teens. These can serve as good models for healthy relationships, and can be a venue through which the teens can feel valued and where they can develop positive views about themselves. Youth should know that they can go to these caring adults for help or advice about their peer relationships.

3. **Encourage diverse relationships.** Parents, teachers, community leaders, and clergy can model appreciation for ethnic, gender, socioeconomic status, religious, and other differences and support cross-group friendships. Schools and youth organizations can assist by encouraging youth from diverse backgrounds to work and play together.
4. **Support parent education programs for families with teenagers.** Parents need to be better informed about the dynamics of adolescent peer groups and the demands and expectations teenagers face in peer relationships. Information is available through various sources including books, some parenting magazines, and other publications such as this one. Keep your eye out for programs particularly targeted towards families and teen issues that might be available. Seeking information is not a sign of weakness, and showing interest in these issues might actually show your teens that you are concerned about them.

5. **Equip youth with the skills necessary to resist negative behaviors, as well as to make good decisions.** Teens will inevitably be confronted with situations where they will have to make a decision whether or not to engage in certain behaviors, whether to give in to peer pressure, and also to make other difficult decisions. It is essential that youth are given the necessary skills to analyze the situation and make the appropriate decision. This includes helping youth develop the skills for ‘costs vs. benefits’ analysis — teaching them to look at both the negative and positive sides to making a decision. For instance, if being pressured to smoke, the teen should be able to think about what the possible desired outcomes are (e.g., peer acceptance, looking “cool,” feeling excitement about trying something new) with the possible undesirable outcomes (e.g., becoming hooked, the health issues, smelling bad, the financial costs).

6. **Teaching youth exit strategies or ways to say ‘no’ to negative pressures.** It is best to try to deal with peer pressure before it even happens. Talk to youth about potential scenarios, and think through strategies together on how to deal with those scenarios if they arise. This could be done by discussing hypothetical scenarios or even role-playing. It is helpful to think about these things ahead of time rather than dealing with situations as they occur or trying to recover after they happen.

**Summary**

During adolescence, peers play a large part in a young person’s life even while the family continues to be significant. In general, peer friendships offer youth with many positive opportunities despite the negative connotations that peer relationships have to many of us. Peer relationships are actually important for healthy development and essential for youth to develop into healthy adults.

Nonetheless, peer relationships also have the potential to encourage problem behaviors. Although the negative influence of peers is often over-emphasized, more can be done to help teenagers experience the family and the peer group as mutually constructive environments. To accomplish this, families, communities, churches, schools, 4-H and other youth groups can all contribute to helping youth develop positive peer relationships, and deflect negative peer pressures and influences.

http://www.ianrpubs.unl.edu/epublic/pages/publicationD.jsp?publicationId=837
Feeling Peer Pressure

Lesson Objectives:
Students will be able to identify the aspects of peer pressure to which they may be most susceptible.

Grade Level and Subject Area:
9-12: Health Education.

Materials:
Masking tape

Activities and Strategies:

- Make a long line on the floor out of masking tape. Put a sign on one end that says "10: Feel strongly for the issue" and a sign on the opposite end saying, "1: Feel strongly against the issue." You may also want to put a sign with "5" on it in the middle of the line.
- Explain to the class the sometimes it takes a strong will and a lot of courage to go against one's peers.
- Ask for a volunteer to "take a stand" on a controversial issue. For example:
  
  "The school should allow students to leave during lunch."
  "A woman should be able to hold down ANY job a man can hold down in the work place."
  "This school should have uniforms."
  "Teens shouldn't need their parents permission to buy CD's with explicit lyrics on them."

- Have the volunteer stand at the point on the line that indicates his/her position on the issue.
- Have the rest of the class try to pressure the volunteer into moving by making compelling arguments for or against the issue. Encourage them to be persistent. Let them make promises, etc.
- After a few minutes, stop the class and discuss the activity.
  o How did the volunteer change his/her mind?
  o How did it feel to be under so much pressure?
  o How did it feel to give the pressure?
  o What arguments would convince you to move? Why?

This activity should be followed by information about decision-making and coping skills.

http://www.drugstats.org/tt/v3i3/peerpress.html
PEER PRESSURE BAG OF TRICKS

*Don’t fall for one of these* ...

**Rejection:** Threatening to end a friendship or a relationship. This pressure can be hard to resist because nobody wants to lose friends. Some examples of pressure by rejection are:

- Who needs you as a friend any way?
- If you don't drink we won't hang out any more.
- Why don't you leave if you don't want to drink with us?

**Put Downs:** Insulting or calling a person names to make them feel bad. Some examples of put downs are:

- You're never any fun.
- You're such a baby.
- You're such a wimp.
- You're so uncool.

**Reasoning:** Telling a person reasons why they should try something or why it would be OK if they did. (Nobody said these were good reasons.) Some examples of pressure by reasoning are:

- It won't hurt you.
- Your parents will never find out.
- You'll have more fun.

**Unspoken Pressure:** This is something you feel without anyone saying anything to you. You feel unspoken pressure if you want to do the same things others doing. Some unspoken pressure tricks are:

- **The Huddle:** A group of kids standing together in which everyone is talking and maybe looking at something you can't see, laughing and joking.
- **The Look:** Kids who think they're cool give you a certain look that means we're cool and you're not.
- **The Example:** A group of popular kids decide to get the same backpack and you want one too.

http://www.thecoolspot.gov/peer_pressure5.asp
Top Ten Refusal Skills for Teens
Teaching Kids to Respond Assertively to Peer Pressure

Teens face many situations where others are encouraging them to do something risky, illegal, or unhealthy. How can teens develop the ability to stand up for themselves?

Unfortunately, many teens wind up “going along” not because they want to, but simply because they don’t know how to respond in these situations. They are afraid of losing a friend, looking uncool, or being left out of the crowd. The trick is to get kids to practice “saying no” in a variety of ways and in a variety of situations, so they are prepared for anything.

Here are ten ways kids can reply to peer pressure. By learning a range of possible responses, kids are more likely to be able to come up with one that fits the situation when the time arises. Role play some typical situations with teens, and have them practice using each one. You will help kids develop assertiveness skills as well as confidence.

1. **Make a joke.** Sometimes humor is the best way to respond to a situation, as it can lighten a serious mood. It can also divert attention away from you and onto something else.
2. **Give a reason why it’s a bad idea.** Maybe you can’t smoke because you want to be able to run the mile for the track team. Maybe you don’t want to drink because you know someone who is an alcoholic and you can see how drinking has messed up their life. Backing up your refusal with evidence gives it more power.
3. **Make an excuse why you can’t.** Maybe you have something else to do that will interfere. Or you have to be somewhere at a specific time. Or your mom will kill you. Whatever. But say it and stick to it.
4. **Just say no, plainly and firmly.** In some situations, just saying no without a lot of arguing and explaining is the best response. Just make sure you’re “no” is a strong and determined one.
5. **Suggest an alternative activity.** Lots of kids wind up doing stuff they shouldn’t because they lack other options. They’re bored. By thinking of something better to do, you’re offering everyone an “out.” You just might be surprised who might take you up on it.
6. **Ignore the suggestion.** Pretend you didn’t hear it, and change the topic to something else. Act like you don’t think the idea was even worth discussing.
7. **Repeat yourself if necessary.** Sometimes it takes more than once, on more than one occasion. Just because someone asks more than once, that doesn’t mean you have to cave.
8. **Leave the situation.** If you don’t like where things are headed, you can take off. It might seem risky, but with you leading the way, other kids who really don’t want to do it either just may follow you.
9. **Thanks, but no thanks.** You can be polite, but you still aren’t interested. It just isn’t something you’re into.
10. **The power of numbers.** Make a pact with your friends to stick to your guns. Often, knowing that your friends will back you up can help you feel more comfortable being assertive. Sometimes “we” feels stronger than “I”.

http://www.suite101.com/content/top-ten-refusal-skills-for-teens-a29626
Definition: SCHOOL BULLY
Refusal (not inability) to think rationally about themselves and others; Small scale Terrorist, with behavior mostly taking place during school time; Justifies terrorist activities towards his/her targets or victims with self-psychological excuses ("I want to appear tough and in control");
Enjoys enforcing power on others and causing extreme fear;
Over-bearing person who tyrannizes the non-violent and physically less strong;

To rule by intimidation, terror;

Threatens or acts violence on others; Calls an assault a "fight," "disagreement" or "justice."

New Legal Definition in NJ
http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/2010/Bills/A3500/3466_R1.HTM

A definition of harassment, intimidation, or bullying that at a minimum includes any gesture, any written, verbal or physical act, or any electronic communication, whether it be a single incident or a series of incidents, that is reasonably perceived as being motivated either by any actual or perceived characteristic, such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, or a mental, physical or sensory disability, or by any other distinguishing characteristic, that takes place on the property of the institution of higher education or at any function sponsored by the institution of higher education, that substantially disrupts or interferes with the orderly operation of the institution or the rights of other students.
In our Schools…

**Bullying is an Adult Problem**

There Must be an Attitude of Change

By Brenda High, Director, Bully Police USA

Contrary to what many people believe, bullying is an adult problem, not a child’s problem. Adults are entirely to blame for bullying in our schools because they do not stop it. Bullies bully because they can, and because they can get away with it and adults decide when, and who will get away with bullying.

Bullying is not a “part of growing up” or even “boys will be boys” problem. Bullying is an adult believing that its “part of growing up” and an adult believing “that boys will be boys”.

Adults who did not experience severe bullying may excuse a bully by saying, “Back in my day, bullying was just something we all had to go through to make us tougher.” These adults show a lazy or uneducated attitude towards bullying. The children under their care are living in a risky and unsafe environment where bullying will be excused and tolerated.

Some others might say, “Back in my day, bullying wasn’t that bad.” There is some merit to this belief. Thirty-five years ago, we did not have “classes” on how to bully, by way of violent television and movies, raunchy comedy, sexually degrading pornography, violent video games and cyberbullying on the internet.

We adults need to change our attitudes about bullying. Whatever is unacceptable behavior in the adult world is unacceptable behavior in a child’s world. If an adult were bullied at work, for example, there could be repercussions for that type of behavior, which may include the bully being fired, disciplined, or even a lawsuit. In addition, if the bullied worker chooses not to do anything, they could leave their job and go to work somewhere else. Under the same conditions, could a bullied child have his or her bully fired or easily decide to leave school? This has proven to be unlikely.

At some time in our life, we will all be touched by an act of bullying or the aftereffects of bullying. Suicide, (“bullycide”), depression, anxiety, Post Traumatic Stress Disorders, serious emotional and physical illnesses; these are just some of the things that can be caused from bullying. Bullying is leaving a wake of victims, (who become bullying survivors), all over the country. In addition, many of these survivors will suffer the emotional consequences of bullying all their lives.

Bullying and abuse in our schools will only be removed from our schools by the combined effort of many concerned and compassionate individuals, through parental teachings, social education (inside the classroom) and financial means.

Education is the key to every successful action we achieve in our individual lives, but when a group is educated, they gain synergy in a powerful movement. Communities, teachers, parents and students must build a consistent, planned program to educate schools and classrooms about the dangers of bullying because all children deserve to go to school to learn in a peaceful and safe environment.

Some of the things we must do as educators and parents are to:

- Have a plan of action to educate students and communities about bullying
- Select programs to teach about the consequences of bullying
- Prepare students to react and take action when they see bullying
- Focus attention on good behavior – Seize the teaching moments
- Teach that bullying will not be tolerated
- Be consistent, persistent and diligent in the resolve to stop bullying
• Teach victims of bullying that they have the power to empower themselves, and
• Teach bullies that they have the power to change, thus empowering themselves