



Combating Conflict with Character

HANDLING PEER PRESSURE

Introduction

This guide provides information to help you get the most out of *Handling Peer Pressure*. The contents of this guide will help you get your students to think about the topic before viewing the video, while also providing follow-up discussion questions and activities to reinforce and expand upon the program's key learning points.

The teen years are a time of experimenting with identity, but along with that search for self comes major decisions about what groups to fit into — and how to fit into them. This video explores peer group influences; how they can cause young people to change their attitudes, values, or behaviors in order to conform; and what can be done to avoid their pitfalls. Topics include positive, negative, direct, and indirect peer pressure; cultural forces, especially media-driven ones, that push the desire to be a star instead of making a journey of self-discovery; and media stereotypes of what it means to be attractive, smart, or successful. The program also looks at how friendship groups can become cliques, how low self-esteem leads some people to manipulate or intimidate others, and how peer pressure, as pervasive as it is, can be countered with honesty, self-expression, and self-knowledge.

Learning Objectives

After viewing the program, students will be able to:

- Identify positive and negative, direct and indirect peer pressure.
- Consider how his or her personal values, morals, and beliefs can guide choices and behavior when faced with peer pressure.
- Practice effective, assertive techniques to overcome negative peer pressure.
- Explain that, despite pressure to fit in and be accepted, each individual is personally responsible for his or her actions.

Program Overview

How do you do what you want and not what someone else wants? How do you stay true to yourself? Resisting negative peer pressure means being true to your self, your values, morals and beliefs, and can help you avoid dangerous or harmful behavior. What can you do to cope with peer pressure?

In this program, teens talk about peer pressure, what it means, and how it has affected them. Groups reenact situations involving negative peer pressure to illustrate how it happens, potential consequences, and strategies for effectively handling difficult situations.

Main Topics

Topic 1: Handling Peer Pressure

This section defines positive and negative peer pressure. Examples of direct and indirect peer pressure, including media influences, are discussed.

Topic 2: Dealing with Direct Peer Pressure

This section uncovers what happens when direct peer pressure occurs. Here, the victim has to consider “What will happen if I do this, and what will happen if I don’t?” Coping with peer pressure involves stopping and thinking about your actions, your alternatives, and the consequences.

Topic 3: When Peer Pressure Turns Dangerous

This section discusses situations where negative peer pressure may result in dangerous behavior. Teens discuss the pressure to fit into a popular group or clique and go along with everyone else. Coping techniques such as thinking out loud are illustrated.

Topic 4: The Sixth Sense — Having True Character

This section talks about the importance of being true to your values, morals, and beliefs. If your instincts are telling you it’s wrong, stop and think, and stay true to your core self.

Fast Facts

- According to the Kaiser Family Foundation report, people 8-18 years of age are exposed to nearly eight hours of media every day from print advertising, the Internet, and other sources.
- Thirty-two percent of American adolescents take their first drink before the age of 13.
- Approximately 30% of young Americans are given, offered, or sold drugs in high school and middle school.
- Strategies for overcoming peer pressure include taking a time out, checking in with yourself, figuring out how you feel, and being true to your values.
- Twenty-five percent of American 17- and 18-year-olds smoke regularly.

- Research on teens with alcohol disorders shows that heavy drinking in the teen years can cause long-lasting harm to thinking abilities.
- “Group think” is going along with what the group wants whether it’s right or wrong.
- According to a 2009 national survey, 28% of students in 9th-12th grade rode in a car with a driver who had been drinking alcohol one or more times in the 30 days prior to the survey.
- According to a study done by The National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), “Persons reporting first use of alcohol before age 15 were more than five times as likely to report past year alcohol dependence or abuse than persons who first used alcohol at age 21 or older.”

Vocabulary Terms

character: Moral or ethical strength.

clique: A narrow, exclusive group of people.

direct peer pressure: Pressure imposed on others to conform, or to meet imaginary standards.

identity crisis: A state of confusion occurring as a result of conflicting internal and external experiences, pressures, and expectations, often producing acute anxiety.

indirect peer pressure: Internal pressure put on oneself to conform, or to meet imaginary standards.

manipulate: To control or persuade another person through enticing but harmful means.

mentor: A trusted counselor or coach.

negative peer pressure: The pressure imposed on a person to change his or her attitudes, values, or behavior in order to conform to group norms.

peers: People of similar age, abilities, background, qualifications, or social status.

positive peer pressure: Encouragement to do things that one might enjoy or want to accomplish.

self-esteem: A confidence and satisfaction in oneself

stereotype: A standardized mental picture that is held in common by members of a group and that represents an oversimplified opinion, prejudiced attitude, or uncritical judgment.

Pre-Program Discussion Questions

1. What does the term “peer pressure” mean to you?
2. What kinds of peer pressure are you aware of?
3. What are some of the reasons teens give in to peer pressure?
4. Who is susceptible to peer pressure?
5. What can you do to prepare yourself to deal with peer pressure when it happens?

Post Program Discussion Questions

1. What may be the long term effects of peer pressure?
2. How does the “boss” benefit from pressuring others?
3. Without naming names, describe a situation where you or someone you know experienced and gave in to peer pressure. What were the long and short term effects? What could have been done differently?
4. Without naming names, describe a situation where you or someone you know experienced and effectively handled peer pressure.
5. As a bystander, what can you do to help a friend effectively handle peer pressure?

Group Activities

- **Be Assertive:** Brainstorm ways to effectively handle peer pressure. Identify the pros and cons of different approaches including passive, evasive, aggressive, and assertive. With the teacher acting as the pressuring person (boss), pairs of student volunteers role-play the various approaches to illustrate the effectiveness of each. Discuss how body language impacts the effectiveness of the approach, for example, one student standing close to the other or putting an arm around the other to show support. Which behaviors convey strong versus weak conviction?
- **NO!:** Work in teams to write and then film a 2-3 minute video scenario illustrating peer pressure. Each team member should assume a role in the video. Each team should also develop 3-5 discussion questions that relate to their scenario. The teams will then play their video for the larger group and facilitate a group discussion using their questions.
- **PeerSong:** Work in small groups to rewrite the lyrics to a song to reflect what you've learned about peer pressure. The lyrics should have a positive message and provide tips on handling peer pressure.

Individual Student Projects

- **Choices:** Write a fictitious scene incorporating at least three characters and involving peer pressure. Stop the scene at the first circumstance where peer pressure comes into play. Then, create a branching diagram to illustrate different choices that the characters might make, what they might say or do, and possible ways the situation could play out. Develop at least three divisions and at least four possible final outcomes. At least one path in the branching diagram must illustrate assertive behavior and a positive outcome.
- **Character Statement:** Write a personal character statement that describes your morals, values, and beliefs. Consider potential situations where you might encounter peer pressure and identify your boundaries and limits. Taking the time to think through where you stand on various issues can help you stay focused and maintain integrity under pressure.

Internet Activities

- **Interpreting Impact:** Use the internet to research a local or national news event or series of related events involving peer pressure. Write a one page opinion editorial to explain what happened and include personal thoughts, ideas, or perspectives.

Assessment Questions

Q1: True or False: Media images, music, and advertisements can all create direct peer pressure.

- a) True
- b) False

Q2: Which of the following is an example of positive peer pressure?

- a) A friend has started smoking and tells you it's "no big deal." He invites you to come along to a party, but he thinks you'll feel out of place if you're not smoking too.
- b) You're nervous about attending a large social event. Your neighbor has a bottle of vodka and suggests you come over to have some with her beforehand.
- c) A group of friends is going to do a community service project and have repeatedly asked you to go along.
- d) At a sleepover party, two friends ask you to show them how to use a software program so that they can alter a picture of a girl you don't know very well so that they can email it to their friends for a laugh.

Q3: What percentage of American adolescents take their first drink before age 13?

- a) 12%
- b) 26%
- c) 32%
- d) 48%

Q4: What is a clique?

- a) A close personal friend
- b) A means for keeping people together
- c) A club that anyone can join
- d) A narrow exclusive circle or group of people

Q5: Which type of behavior is most effective in resisting peer pressure?

- a) Assertive
- b) Passive
- c) Aggressive
- d) Evasive

Q6: Eric offers John and Derek marijuana at a party. John isn't really interested, but Derek thinks it's no worse than alcohol, so John goes along with it and tries it himself. Who is responsible for John's decision?

- a) John
- b) Derek
- c) The person who sold them the marijuana
- d) John's parents

Q7: Participating in drinking alcohol with a group of friends in order to feel included is an example of _____.

- a) stereotypes
- b) group think
- c) self-esteem
- d) character

Q8: Strategies for overcoming peer pressure include _____.

- a) taking time to figure out how you feel
- b) being true to your values and beliefs
- c) Both a and b
- d) None of the above

Q9: Peers are _____.

- a) people of similar age
- b) people older than you
- c) people younger than you
- d) All of the above

Q10: True or False: Peer pressure is always harmful and intentional.

- a) True
- b) False

Assessment Questions Answer Key

Q1: True or False: Media images, music, and advertisements can all create direct peer pressure.

- a) True
- b) False

A1: b)

Feedback: Pressure from the media culture to be a star and to fit into media stereotypes of what is considered attractive and successful is *indirect* peer pressure. *Direct* peer pressure is caused by real world circumstances, when someone influences you directly.

Q2: Which of the following is an example of positive peer pressure?

- a) A friend has started smoking and tells you it's "no big deal." He invites you to come along to a party, but he thinks you'll feel out of place if you're not smoking too.
- b) You're nervous about attending a large social event. Your neighbor has a bottle of vodka and suggests you come over to have some with her beforehand.
- c) A group of friends is going to do a community service project and have repeatedly asked you to go along.
- d) At a sleepover party, two friends ask you to show them how to use a software program so that they can alter a picture of a girl you don't know very well so that they can email it to their friends for a laugh.

A2: c)

Feedback: Positive peer pressure can encourage you to do things that are good for you or that help you accomplish a constructive goal.

Q3: What percentage of American adolescents take their first drink before age 13?

- a) 12%
- b) 26%
- c) 32%
- d) 48%

A3: c)

Feedback: According to a study done by The National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), "Persons reporting first use of alcohol before age 15 were more than five times as likely to report past year alcohol dependence or abuse than persons who first used alcohol at age 21 or older."

Q4: What is a clique?

- a) A close personal friend
- b) A means for keeping people together
- c) A club that anyone can join
- d) A narrow exclusive circle or group of people

A4: d)

Feedback: Cliques are a narrow, exclusive group of people. Cliques can create an environment where the members feel they need to go along with what the other members think and do in order to remain in the group.

Q5: Which type of behavior is most effective in resisting peer pressure?

- a) Assertive
- b) Passive
- c) Aggressive
- d) Evasive

A5: a)

Feedback: Assertive language and behavior, characterized by confidence, high self-esteem, and clear and direct communication, is the most effective way to resist peer pressure.

Q6: Eric offers John and Derek marijuana at a party. John isn't really interested, but Derek thinks it's no worse than alcohol, so John goes along with it and tries it himself. Who is responsible for John's decision?

- a) John
- b) Derek
- c) The person who sold them the marijuana
- d) John's parents

A6: a)

Feedback: Positive self-esteem includes understanding that you alone are responsible for your decisions and actions.

Q7: Participating in drinking alcohol with a group of friends in order to feel included is an example of _____.

- a) stereotypes
- b) group think
- c) self-esteem
- d) character

A7: b)

Feedback: "Group think" is going along with what the group wants whether it's right or wrong.

Q8: Strategies for overcoming peer pressure include _____.

- a) taking time to figure out how you feel
- b) being true to your values and beliefs
- c) Both a and b
- d) None of the above

A8: c)

Feedback: Strategies for overcoming peer pressure include taking a time out, checking in with yourself, figuring out how you feel, and being true to your values.

Q9: Peers are _____.

- a) people of similar age
- b) people older than you
- c) people younger than you
- d) All of the above

A9: a)

Feedback: Peers are people similar in age (or background, abilities, qualifications, etc.) to you, and may include friends, neighbors, and classmates.

Q10: True or False: Peer pressure is always harmful and intentional.

- a) True
- b) False

A10: b)

Feedback: Peer pressure is not always purposeful. It can occur in a variety of ways, both positive and negative, and can occur among friends. It's important to be aware of how your actions might influence another person, good or bad.

Additional Resources

American Psychological Association

www.apa.org

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

www.cdc.gov

Nemours Foundation TeensHealth.org

www.kidshealth.org

StopHazing.org

www.stophazing.org

Teen Help.com

www.teenhelp.com

The Cool Spot

www.thecoolspot.gov

Order from www.CambridgeEducational.com • 1-800-257-5126

3 girls i know: intimate stories of personal responsibility

Adolescence—it's all about peer pressure and hormones, with self-control rarely entering the picture. This poignant documentary follows three teenage girls from varied ethnic backgrounds through explorations of sexuality, relationships, and HIV/AIDS. Frankly discussing their fears, their sexual identities, and the consequences of their choices—among them, pregnancy and testing HIV-positive—the girls promote personal responsibility and the need for greater sex education and AIDS awareness. The result is an ideal springboard for open discussions about an extremely vulnerable phase of life. A viewable/printable instructor's guide is available online. Not available for preview. (54 minutes) © 2004

Taking a Stand: The Bullying Prevention Series

No longer a simple matter of schoolyard scuffles and “boys will be boys,” bullying is now recognized as a major threat to the education of America's young people. Research shows that intimidation and humiliation among students involve both genders, affect young people of every background, and have become even more widespread with the help of digital technology. This three-part series helps students and teachers identify bullying activity, confront the instigators of it, and assist the victims—with the ultimate goal of preventing bullying in all its forms. Behavior and tactics specific to boy bullies, girl bullies, and cyberbullies are discussed at length in each of the respective videos, addressing the complexity of the issues with dramatized scenarios and peer discussions. Includes a 15-minute bonus video, A Teacher's Guide to Bullying Prevention, that will help educators implement the overall program. Viewable/printable instructor's guides are also available online. A Meridian Production. (3-part series, 18-20 minutes each.) © 2006

Character: Self-Esteem Basics

How we see ourselves influences who we are. In this video, a student named McKenna helps viewers understand why good self-esteem is so important and what they can do to improve their own. Interviews with a developmental psychology expert and a high school basketball player reinforce why good self-esteem is a such valuable thing to have. Viewable/printable educational resources are available online. (12 minutes) © 2009