



LESSON ON PEER PRESSURE, AND WHAT YOU CAN DO ABOUT IT

Designed for Students in 3rd through 5th Grades
By Michelle Bolinger

What is Peer Pressure?



- People who are your age, like your classmates, are called **peers**.
- When they try to influence how you act, to get you to do something, it's called **peer pressure**.
- As you grow older, you'll be faced with some challenging decisions. Some don't have a clear right or wrong answer — like should you play soccer or field hockey? Other decisions involve serious moral questions, like whether to cut class, try cigarettes, or lie to your parents.
- Making decisions on your own is hard enough, but when other people get involved and try to pressure you one way or another it can be even harder.

Why are Peers Important?



- Peers influence your life, even if you don't realize it, just by spending time with you.
- It's only human nature to listen to and learn from other people in your age group.
- Peers can have a positive influence on each other.
 - Helping each other learn new things.
 - Encouraging one another to do our best!
 - Teaching each other new skills.
- Sometimes, however, peers influence each other in negative ways.



Negative Peer Pressure Might Sound Like:



“Hey, we are going to tell the teacher we are sick so we don't have to take the math test; YOU SHOULD TOO!”

“We aren't going to play with Jimmy anymore, you shouldn't play with him either!”

“We are all going to smoke some cigarettes I found, you should come too...unless you don't want to be cool....”

“You should tell your parents we are going to the movies, but we are really going to the concert in the park!”

Why Do People Give in to Peer Pressure?

- Some kids give in to peer pressure because:
 - They want to be liked.
 - They want to fit in.
 - They worry that other kids might make fun of them if they don't go along with the group.
 - They are curious, and want to try something new.



“Everyone else is doing, so why aren't you?!?!?!?”

“You want to be cool, right?!?”

“If you want to hang out with us, you really need to do this!”

What Can You Do About Peer Pressure?

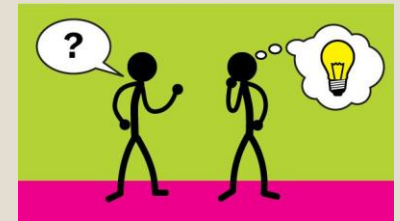
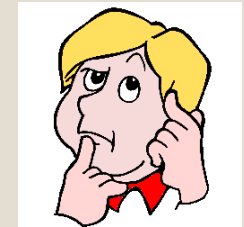
- Paying attention to your own feelings and beliefs about what is right and wrong can help you know the right thing to do.
- Inner strength and self-confidence can help you stand firm, walk away, and resist doing something when you know better.
- It can really help to have at least one other peer, or friend, who is willing to say "no," too. This takes a lot of the power out of peer pressure and makes it much easier to resist.
- If you choose friends who don't use drugs, cut class, smoke cigarettes, or lie to their parents, then you probably won't do these things either, even if other kids do.



Use the Five Step Plan



- 1. Take a deep breath:** When a friend suggests you do something you're uncomfortable with, or you know might be bad for you or for others, you do **not** need to answer or *do anything* right away. Instead, take a breath and think about what the person has suggested.
- 2. Find the words:** After you've taken a breath, give words to what your friend is suggesting you do. If you're being told to bully or jump off a high wall or shoplift, name the action: "That's mean." "That's dangerous." "That's stealing." "That's against the rules."
- 3. Think it through:** Take each risky behavior and list what might happen if you take that step. For example:
 - Being mean to another child: Will make that child sad, hurt, or even become self-destructive.
 - Ganging up and bullying another child: Might make your child feel "cool" in the moment, but can make your child feel bad afterwards when other kids and teachers see him as one of the "mean" kids.
 - Breaking the rules or misbehaving in class: Your child could get sent to the principal's office and even sent home from school. He could also lose privileges and face other consequences at home.
 - Shoplifting: He could get caught and be taken to the police station.
 - Doing something dangerous (jumping skateboards off a wall): He could get hurt or damage public property and be fined or taken to the police station.
- 4. Ask, "What could we do instead?":** Suggest another activity that you could do instead!
- 5. Walk away:** If you find that your friend is determined to do something risky or mean, you're going to have to learn to walk away. There's a right way and a wrong way to do this. Instead of saying something angry (which can start a fight), you can say "Okay, well, I'm going to go skateboard in the park. If you change your mind, come on over." Or, instead of shoplifting say, "I'm going to go ask my mom to give me my allowance and take me to the mall. Do you want to come?" If the peer pressure happens in class or somewhere else at school, you may need to move away and sit or work some where else (or ask a teacher to help you make the move). In this case, you can say "I'm going to get in trouble if I don't finish this reading, so I'm going to go sit over there."



What Else Can You Do?

- Try to help a friend who's having trouble resisting peer pressure. It can be powerful for one kid to join another by simply saying, "I'm with you — let's go."
- Talk to someone you trust.
- Don't feel guilty if you've made a mistake or two, the key is to **KEEP ON TRYING!!**

