

HANDLING PEER PRESSURE



AGENDA

- Starter
- How Hard Is It?
- But I...
- Deal with It
- Conclusion
- Student Assessment

Objectives

Students will discuss peer pressure in their lives.

Students will define the concept of peer pressure.

Students will recognize the importance of staying focused on personal values, beliefs, and goals.

Students will create solutions to a dilemma that involves peer pressure.

Materials Needed

- Five small paper cups and one piece of wrapped candy (Starter)
- One copy of the “True or False” activity sheet for each student (Part I)

Starter (3 minutes)

Before class, number the bottoms of five small paper cups from one to five. Place the cups upside down in numerical order on a desk. Hide a small prize, such as a piece of wrapped candy, under one of the cups.

To begin class, explain that there is a prize under one of the cups. Ask a volunteer to come to the front of the room. Tell the volunteer that at your signal, they are to pick up the cup that they think is concealing the prize. Tell the rest of the class that they should feel free to call out what they think the volunteer should do.

Allow some time for everyone to call out their advice before having the volunteer begin. After the volunteer has chosen a cup, ask, "Why did you choose that one?"

Without making a comment, allow the volunteer to respond. Then, say, "Today we're going to talk about how hard it can be to stay focused on what you want to do when everyone else is telling you what they want you to do."

Part I How Hard Is It? (15 minutes)

Purpose: Students discuss peer pressure in their lives.

1. Students fill out a questionnaire regarding peer pressure.

Distribute copies of the "True or False" activity sheet. Explain that students are to read each statement, and then check whether the statement is true or false for them. Point out that when they have finished, they are to look back over the statements and circle ones that they think are difficult for teenagers to live by.

2. Students respond to individual statements.

When students have finished, begin a discussion about the statements on the activity sheet by asking for a show of hands from students who circled number one. If some have circled it, ask volunteers to explain why they think this can be difficult to do.

Proceed in a similar manner with the other statements, making note of and writing on the board recurring responses that indicate students' unwillingness to go against their peers, stand out, or sacrifice popularity.

Part II But I... (15 minutes)

Purpose: Students define the concept of peer pressure and recognize the importance of staying focused on personal goals and values.

1. Students define “peer pressure.”

Write the words “peer pressure” on the board. Ask volunteers to explain what these words mean. Through questions and comments, guide students to understand that peers are friends and other people their own age, and that pressure is an influence or force to make someone do something. Therefore, peer pressure is the influence students feel from others their own age to act a certain way.

2. Students identify examples of peer pressure.

Refer to the list of responses on the board from Part I, and ask students if they think these responses reflect peer pressure. Encourage volunteers to explain their answers; suggest that they use examples from the completed activity sheets to support their opinions.

Ask students if they think that peer pressure is positive or negative. Challenge students to give examples of negative peer pressure, and then challenge them to give examples of positive peer pressure. (Students might provide the following positive examples: studying rather than cheating; staying away from drugs; working out problems rather than giving up; trying new things; joining a new group; being fair; resolving conflicts without violence; playing by the rules.)

Point out that peer pressure is only a problem when it is negative. Say, “Peer pressure becomes negative when it threatens or conflicts with your values, beliefs, or goals. It produces conflict within you and can make you feel powerless and stressed. This conflict is between what others think you should do, and what you know you should do.”

3. Students consider ways to deal with negative peer pressure.

Point out that dealing with negative peer pressure can be very difficult. Ask students if they have any ideas about what they can do when confronted with negative peer pressure. Through discussion, guide students to identify the following tips:

- Keep your personal values and beliefs in mind.
- Stay focused on making decisions that are based on those values and beliefs.
- You alone have the power to make decisions.
- Keep your personal goals in mind.
- Stay focused on making decisions that will help you reach your goals.
- You alone have the power to control your words and actions.

Acknowledge that students deal with peer pressure every day, and that this will continue to be an issue throughout their school years and beyond. Emphasize that learning to recognize negative peer pressure and staying focused on their values and goals will help them overcome negative influences in their lives.

Part III Deal with It (15 minutes)

Purpose: Students create solutions to a dilemma that involves peer pressure.

1. Students consider a dilemma.

Divide the class into four groups. Ask everyone to listen carefully as you present the following dilemma:

Tatiana invites Lisa, a new friend, home after school. Nobody else is home. They decide to play some games on the computer, which is okay, but Tatiana is not supposed to use the internet without permission. If she does, she will lose computer privileges and probably get grounded. Lisa wants to visit some websites. Tatiana says, "Nah, let's play some more." But Lisa says, "So what's the big deal? Everybody does it. My other friends and I do it all the time." What happens next?

2. Students create endings for the dilemma.

Explain that groups one and two will work out endings to this dilemma that result in negative consequences for Tatiana. Groups three and four will work out positive endings.

Tell students that they will have five minutes to create endings within their groups. Explain that they will share their endings with the class, and can either appoint a spokesperson to read their endings or have students role-play them.

3. Students share their endings with the class.

Invite representatives from each group to read or perform their endings. When all groups are finished, begin a discussion by asking questions such as the following:

- Who had to deal with peer pressure in this dilemma? What was the pressure?
- What conflict did this cause in Tatiana?
- How were the endings presented by groups one and two similar?
- How were they different?
- How were the endings presented by groups three and four similar?
- How were they different?
- If you had been Tatiana, what would you have done?

Conclusion *(2 minutes)*

Ask students if they think they have a responsibility to avoid placing negative peer pressure on others. Encourage a few volunteers to explain their answers. Elicit from students the following **key points** that were taught in this lesson:

- Peer pressure can be both positive and negative.
- Peer pressure becomes negative when it conflicts with what you know you should do.
- Overcome negative peer pressure in your life by staying focused on your personal goals and values.

Student Assessment

1. Define “peer pressure.”
2. Describe a situation in which you gave in to negative peer pressure.
3. List three examples of positive peer pressure and three examples of negative peer pressure.
4. Why is it important to stay focused on your goals and values?

LESSON EXTENSIONS

Using Quotations

“The best years of your life are the ones in which you decide your problems are your own. You realize that you control your own destiny.”

As a class, discuss the importance of making your own decisions and how this can impact your quality of life (e.g., more confidence, happiness).

Addressing Multiple Learning Styles

Have students create collages showing things they value. To make their collages, have them select pictures that represent what they believe and value.

Have students share their work with the class.

Writing in Your Journal

Have students describe a time when peer pressure affected them in a negative way and a time when it affected them in a positive way.

Have students identify which values they compromised when they were affected by negative peer pressure and which values they hold as a result of the positive effects of peer pressure.

Using Technology

Have students research websites that are devoted to answering young people’s questions and helping them deal with peer pressure.

Have students write a review of the site they enjoyed the most and create a guide to finding advice on the internet.

Homework

Have students reflect on a time when they felt peer pressure to do something that conflicted with their values. Have students illustrate the internal conflict that they experienced.

Have students present their illustrations to the class.

Additional Resources

Have students read *The Little Prince* by Antoine de Saint-Exupery.

Ask students to summarize the values described in the book. Have students explain how the prince was able to stick to his beliefs.

TRUE OR FALSE

Check whether each statement is true or false for you.

	TRUE	FALSE
1. I would participate in an activity that involved people I didn't know.		
2. I would not cheat on a test, even if everyone else was doing it.		
3. I sometimes think people who are unpopular are nice.		
4. I would speak out about something, even if I thought others would disagree.		
5. I would help someone if they needed it, even if this person wasn't a friend.		
6. I like to meet people who are different from me.		
7. If two of my friends aren't speaking to each other, I can still be friends with both of them.		
8. I would wear a favorite shirt to school, even if nobody else wears shirts like this.		
9. I would join a popular group, even if they did things I don't agree with.		
10. I would not lie for a friend, even if he or she wanted me to.		
TOTAL		

Now, go back and circle the statements that you feel are the hardest ones for people your age to do.