

Ways to Counter-Act Peer Pressure

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Peer pressure is certainly something that should be talked about. How to counter it is equally important to discuss. It is consistently the case that persons diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) are bullied at higher rates in schools compared to neurotypical peers. As a result, they are far more likely to experience higher rates of peer pressure. This is also the case in general for persons with disabilities. Over the years, I've accumulated several tips for standing up for yourself, almost entirely from personal experience.

1. **Politeness usually wins.** Politely decline what you are being pressured to do. Say "No thanks" or "Maybe some other time". You can end up looking like the polite one in the social situation you're in while those doing the pressuring can look like the pushy jerks.
2. **Turn the pressure around by playing the "I'm uncomfortable" social card.** These days, consent in a lot of social actions is integral. If you're, for example, dating someone and they are pushing for a new level in your relationship which you are not comfortable with while they are saying that they love you, you turn their pushiness back on them by saying, "If you love me, you wouldn't be pressuring me into something I'm not comfortable with." No one has the right to make you feel uncomfortable.

3. **Workplace Situations.** In the case of issues pertaining to workplace situations such as employment agreements, be familiar with workplace protections in your province and your particular work environment so that you have some legal backing behind you. Also, look carefully at your employment contract and retain it.
4. **Continually Pressured.** If you are continually being pressured to do something after politely declining something, you can ask, "Why do you care so much if I ____? (e.g. smoke, take a drug such as marijuana). Mind you, this would be a last resort measure.

Remember, you are not the one who has to always submit to what others want. By all means, learn to compromise, be nice to others and take an interest in what they do but that does not mean you have to keep diminishing your wants and needs in favour of others' wants and needs.

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