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A college success blog by Dr. Michael W. Kirst (<https://collegepuzzle.stanford.edu/>)

5 Tips to Deal with Peer Pressure in College

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BY LAURA BUCKLER

College is a great time where you get to experience plenty of new things for the first time. Moving out of home and into your own place can get daunting, and as an idealistic and young person, we often latch onto the next best safety blanket, a support group or network of peers.

While this is perfectly normal, these relationships can also become toxic, if we aren't careful. Being in a new environment where we want to fit in can push us to do things for the approval of others that we might actually be uncomfortable doing.

What's the best way to establish healthy connections with like-minded individuals, while maintaining our independence over our personal choices? Here's an ultimate guide to dealing with peer pressure in college:

1. Choose Your Friends Wisely

Being in a toxic peer network can be difficult to get out of if you're not too confident in your own skin yet. That said, choosing a group of friends who are supportive and kind definitely boosts your morale.

Gaining new acquaintances to leverage your career or school life in the long run is never a problem – just remember that there's a definite difference between *real* friends, and people who you just talk to.

2. Don't Depend on One Friend Group

Having just one set of friends can increase the pressure to fit in. At the same time, whenever your friends are busy doing other things, it can get lonely if you have no one else to talk to. Learn to diversify your range of friends.

Go to events, volunteer, or simply let yourself be introduced to a new person. You never know who you might meet along the way. If anything, this only shows that you're expanding your network and meeting plenty of cool new people.

3. Seek Advice from Others

If you feel yourself being pressured by your friends, but you aren't sure on how to act on it, seek advice from other people. This is preferably an older adult whom you trust, like your parent, older sibling, or a guidance counselor. However, it's understandable that someone coming out into their own, you won't want to rely on these authority figures to make your decisions for you.

When push comes to shove, look to your other friends for help. Call them up and talk them through what you're experiencing. The support and advice they give will definitely lift your mood.

4. Engage in Activities that will Give You More Self-Confidence

The pressure of belonging, even at the expense of doing something we're uncomfortable with, often stems from a lack of self-esteem that we believe being in a large group could fix. It's just so *safe*. You can break free from this misleading idea by engaging in activities that will boost your confidence.

Start a new sport or hobby, study a new language, find some part-time job, for example writing for coursework service, where you can meet new people and grow your skill set to make you see that you have worth outside other people's validations.

5. Accept Occasional Loneliness

Sometimes, the best company is ourselves. Learning to step back from a crowd and really being in tune with your inner self helps you strengthen your self-esteem. It also builds your resolve against outside forces that put you down by pushing you to do things you don't want to do.

Accepting loneliness isn't always a bad thing. After all, the best way to learn to interact and love other people is by first learning to appreciate yourself for who you are, and college is the perfect time for that self-discovery.

BIO

Laura Buckler is freelance writer and journalist. She believes that everything in our life is simple and achievable and tries to help people recognize their own potential. Personal motivation is her main driving force.

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