In “Peers,” the author outlines how “people of a similar age or level, such as children in the same group, students in the same class, or workers in the same position” can influence individual members of said groups. While this influence, or “peer pressure,” can be negative, for example when pressuring people to act illegally or join a gang, it can also be positive, for example when handling conflicts or when introducing individuals to new experiences.

In my own life, I have experienced both the negative and positive aspects of peer influence. As a child in middle school, I was often bullied for my choice of dress. I used to wear a necklace with a gem shaped like a heart because I thought it was beautiful. At the time, I had no comprehension that I might not be masculine enough to fit into the standard at the time, but I was called derogatory names, and at one point, even became embroiled in a physical altercation.

Fortunately, I have also been lucky enough to benefit from many positive peer interactions. I joined “marching” band in high school, which turned out to shield me from the very same bullying I experienced in middle school. I spent a lot of time with the band, and my peers were incredibly supportive. They loved my necklace, and other outfits that I would wear. If there was ever any negative commentary from my classmates, they would come to my defense. They gave me the confidence to be myself in school and in life, and have had a lasting effect.

Now, I work around professionals who have Master’s degrees and PhDs. Every day I learn how to think about and approach complex problems and answer client questions using a range of quantitative techniques and qualitative language to translate data into short, comprehensible takeaways. I would be less well equipped or skilled if I did not have the mentorship of my colleagues. In this way, my peers have benefited me and my career growth.