

# PEER PRESSURE.

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Peer pressure is the act of being pressed to do what other people in one's age group or peers are doing. It can also be defined as the influence you feel from a person or group of people to do something you might not otherwise consider doing.

Peer pressure is a normal factor in the process of growing up. However, sometimes we can be pressured to do things against our will. This can happen especially among teenagers: saying yes to something seems to be the easier way to fit in, even when you don't feel like doing what you're asked to.

Peer Pressure is very real for teens and adults alike. Teens are even more vulnerable to peer pressure than adults as they find their self-identity, and it can get to the point where some teens are driven to the point of trying drugs and alcohol or other unhealthy habits because of it.

In a school situation, the learners are more or less of the same age and hence they tend to emulate the habits of their peers irrespective of whether the habits are right or wrong.

Peer pressure is a source of indiscipline because the learners do things collectively without considering the degree of indiscipline in any of the acts they are involved in. For instance, a person may smoke because his/her fellow friends are smoking without consideration of one's moral values. The person does not scrutinize the dangers of smoking individually but does it on the ground that the friends are doing it.

In my observation peer pressure ruins the lives of many because the groupings are broken now and again as the social settings are changed. One time you are in school and the next moment you are out, and the peer groupings change now and again.

Learning from this proverb “**Show me your friends and I will tell you what kind of a person you are.**” Then it is clear that one may be influenced in one way or the other in any relationship one is involved in. So it is important to choose your friends wisely who will not influence you to bad character.

# AVOIDING NEGATIVE PEER PRESSURE.

There are many ways you can recognize Peer pressure, avoid situations where this might happen or say no without making it sound awkward or judgmental.

- a) **Identify direct and indirect pressure.** Peer pressure can be both direct, when someone tells you to do something or offer you something, or indirect, if you feel pressured to do something by a certain environment or situation. If you're at a party where everyone drinks, you might feel you have to do it too in order to fit in, even if no one asks you to. In the first case, you'll have to learn how to say no politely but firmly.

In the case of indirect peer pressure, you might not find yourself in a situation where you have to say no. However, you'll still have to develop a strategy of self-control to stick to your principles and habits and do only what you're comfortable with.

- b) **Be prepared.** Learn to identify those situations where unwanted offers or behaviours are most likely to happen. Plan ahead what you'd say or how you'd act to turn down an offer.

Being prepared will allow you to face these situations more open-mindedly. It's okay to hang out with people who have different habits from yours. Knowing what to expect will help you respect their decisions as well as stand by yours.

- c) **Avoid situations that can lead to negative peer pressure.** You're probably the best one to know which environments or places are likely to lead to an unwanted situation. If you're not confident, the best option is probably to avoid these places outright.

Depending on what you're trying to avoid, these might include:

- Environments where you'll feel uncomfortable or out of place.
- Parties or clubs where most people will be drinking and smoking.
- Private meetings with someone you don't feel secure with.

- d) **Act like a leader.** It's much easier to say yes to anything; even if it's something we don't want to do. However, showing that you're in control of your life will get you much more respect from your peers in the long run. It's not the easiest

course of action, but it ultimately pays off and helps you be surrounded only by those who truly care about you.

For example, show your friends you feel confident about your lifestyle and personal tastes. Don't copycat what they do, but stick to what you like and pursue it.

Be proactive in suggesting activities and taking care of their organization. If you come up with fun ideas, others will look for you when they want to have a good time and follow your lead, rather than the opposite.

Keep in mind that being a leader is not the same as being patronizing towards your friends: to lead means to guide, not to act bossy or domineering.

- e) **Be selective in choosing your friends.** Since peer pressure comes from people, avoiding hanging out with those who are most likely to pressure you into unwanted behaviour is the safest choice. Surrounding yourself with friends who share your views and lifestyle will decrease the chances of having to deal with uncomfortable situations.

Remember that real friends won't ask you to do anything you don't want to do as a way to prove your courage or friendship. If someone expects this from you or makes fun of your choices, it's probably not worth hanging out with.

## **SAYING NO TO A DIRECT QUESTION.**

- 1) **Just say no.** In most cases, "No, thanks" is enough as an answer. Don't feel like you have to provide an explanation if you're not asked to. This will make you sound defensive, while your goal is to show you don't have to justify yourself. In most cases, the explanation is implicit.

This is the best course of action when you're offered something you don't want to, like a drink, a cigarette or even drugs.

Try not to sound rude. If your friend is simply suggesting you do something you don't want to, as bad as it may seem, being polite will make it easier to move on and change the subject. Just add a "thanks" after your "no" and smile.

- 2) **Say no and state why.** Make your explanation short without making a big deal about it. If someone offers you a cigarette, you can simply say “No, thanks, I don’t smoke”: that is a good enough explanation. This strategy works very well when you’re asked to do something you don’t want to, or when you want to avoid a specific situation.

For example, if someone ask you to go to a party where drugs are involved, you can say “I’m not going, sorry, I know there’ll be drugs and I don’t want to find myself in that situation,” or “I’m not going, sorry, I don’t like the people who’ll be there.”

You can also make up an excuse if providing the real explanation can make things awkward: “I’m not going, sorry, I already have plans for today.”

Do your best to make your statement as positive as possible. Try not to sound condescending or judgmental. You might not agree with someone’s actions or habits but respecting their decisions will make them respect yours.

- 3) **Say no and make a joke.** Humor is often best way to get out of an awkward situation and helps release the tension.

A good way to do this is by exaggerating the consequences of the action. If you’re offered a drug, possible jokes can be “No thanks, you don’t want to see me naked jumping around the room!”

Another option is to give a sarcastic explanation. If you’re offered a cigarette, you can say “No thanks, I’ve had five cigars already,” or “No thanks, I’d rather smoke my pipe.”

- 4) **Say no and quickly change the subject.** Again, this works better when you want to turn something down. Changing the subject will not only give little importance to your rejection, but also to the action itself.

For example, if someone offers you a cigarette, you can say “No, thanks. Did I tell what happened today?” or “No thanks, what are you doing tonight?” By starting a brand new conversation that doesn’t involve cigarettes, both your friend’s smoking and your choice not to smoke won’t look like a big deal.

- 5) **Say no and suggest an alternative idea.** This works best when what you’re being asked to do is an action that takes longer time, like smoking pot, getting drunk at home or having sex. In this case, you can simply suggest an alternative activity; your “no” will be implicit.

Possible suggestions could be “Why don’t we go to the movies instead?” “I’d rather go shopping,” or “I think we’d better focus on our final exams preparations.”

Whatever you suggest, make sure to be specific. Avoid generic statements like “Let’s do something different”; suggesting an alternative that your friend might actually like better will make it easier and faster to get past the situation.

## MORE WAYS TO AVOID NEGATIVE PEER PRESSURE.

1. **Ask 101 questions.** For example, if a friend pressures you to smoke, ask him why he smokes, how long he has smoked, if he minds having ash tray breathe,etc.
2. **Say “No” like you mean it.** Make eye contact, and then say “No” forcefully, with authority. The more certain you are in your refusal, the less people will coerce you.
3. **Back-up a NO with a positive statement.** For example, if you’re turning down an offer to smoke, say something like, “I like my brain the way it is, thanks.”
4. **Be repetitive.** Don’t hesitate to state your position over and over again.
5. **Practice saying NO.** Practice saying ‘NO’ so that when confronted with a situation you will have to say NO, you will do it naturally without stress.
6. **Get away from the pressure zone.** Leave the scene... make your exit.
7. **Avoid stressful situations in the first place.** If you know there’s going to be alcohol or drugs at a party, make other plans. Or, if you’re going out with a guy, avoid being alone with him... anywhere he might pressure you to get more physical than you want to be.
8. **Use the buddy system.** Find a friend who shares your values and back each other up.
9. **Confront the leader of the pack.** The best way to handle a peer pressure bully is to nab him (or her) when the two of you are alone and explain how you’re feeling and ask him/her to get off your case.

10. **Consider the results of giving in.** Take a moment to think about the consequences of your actions.
11. **Look for positive role models.** Ever notice that the real popular and successful teens at your school are the ones who weren't afraid to say what they like and don't like?
12. **Don't buy the line that everyone's doing it.** The truth is everyone's NOT doing it.
13. **Seek support.** Talk out any peer pressure you're experiencing with other friends who are also feeling the squeeze. It can be reassuring to know that you're not the only one.
14. **Be your own best friend.** Remind yourself every now and then that you're special and wipe out any negative statements.
15. **Find ways to excel.** Challenge yourself to do your best. Focus your attention on following your personal goals instead of the goals of the group.
16. **Don't pressure others.** Watch out for any subtle forms of pressure you may be exerting.
17. **Watch your moods.** Be aware that your moods can affect your sensibility.
18. **Evaluate your friendships.** If your friends are always bugging you to do something you're not comfortable with, remember that true friends like you for who you are, not who they want you to be.
19. **Find new friends.** If you've decided that your friends don't have your best interests at heart, search out new friends who share your values and interests.