

Positive and Negative Peer Pressure

Directions Read the information about peer pressure. Then fill in the chart below, which lists examples of peer pressure. Place check marks (✓) in the columns to show whether you think the pressure is *most likely* negative, neutral, or positive. After you complete the chart, compare results with other students and discuss differences of opinion.

About Peer Pressure

People’s actions, beliefs, and values are commonly influenced by those around them through words and examples. Parents, teachers, other adult leaders, and peers probably all influence you. When you are encouraged to act in healthy ways consistent with your values, the influence is positive. If you are pushed to do things that are harmful or break the law, the influence is negative. Much peer pressure is neutral. For example, following a particular fashion in haircuts is not typically good or bad.

Sometimes the same pressure helps one person and harms another. For example, adding an after-school activity could be positive unless it adds stress to a full schedule. Positive peer pressure respects a person’s right to decide what is best. Negative peer pressure may lead someone to act against better judgment.

Examples of Peer Pressure		Negative	Neutral	Positive
1	Many students plan to wear cutoff jeans to the school picnic.			
2	Several students have started teasing a younger student who acts like a clown much of the time.			
3	Enrico asks a friend to buy a few frozen pizzas for his team’s fundraiser.			
4	Becky tells Imelda that she should not spend time with Maddie.			
5	Megan’s two best friends have shown her their expensive new cell phones.			
6	Cindy is crying and asks Sophie to skip school with her.			
7	Many students have begun playing a new computer game.			
8	Tim’s friends talk him out of quitting the soccer team.			
9	Fred asks his older cousin Josh to buy him a pack of cigarettes.			
10	Anna whispers an urgent message to Jane while the teacher is talking.			

Bullies

Directions Read the information about bullies. Then on separate paper write a plan of action for responding to each of the numbered bullying situations.

How to Deal with a Bully

A bully is someone who is hurtful or mean toward others. Bullies may threaten, use physical force, or put others down with negative words or behavior. Bullying can cause serious harm. There is no excuse for being a bully. To deal with a bully, try one or more of these tactics:

- **Act confident.** Bullies most often pick on people they see as weak or fearful.
- **Ignore it.** Bullies are trying to get a reaction. If they do not get one, it spoils their fun.
- **Do not fight back.** Do not respond physically or with taunts. It makes the situation worse.
- **Speak up.** You can tell a bully to stop bullying someone and then walk away together.
- **Pair up.** Two or three people walking together are less likely to be bullied than one person alone.
- **Tell an adult.** It is a sign of strength, not weakness, to get help when needed. Go to a teacher or parent.

What is Your Plan of Action?

1. Suppose you walk home from school alone by the same route each day. At the last corner before you get home, a group of older teens is usually standing around. As you approach, they start making remarks about you and laughing. Sometimes they comment on things you are carrying. You are afraid that one of these days they will take something from you by force.
2. The new student in your class came from another country and speaks English with an accent. Several students make fun of the new student at every opportunity. The new student is bewildered and does not understand what is going on. The new student asks you what to do.
3. Two of your friends have stopped talking to you without giving any reason. If you approach while they are talking to each other, they suddenly stop talking and turn away. When you ask what they were talking about, they tell you not to be nosy. You learn that they have been spreading some untrue and hurtful gossip about you.

The Courage to Say No

Directions Read the information about saying no. Then read the situations that follow and describe what each teen should do and say.

How to Say No

Saying no to someone is not always easy. Can you say no to friends without feeling guilty and without putting them down? Although some situations require a polite no, others need a stronger response. These suggestions can help you handle those times when you need to say no.

- **Have a Plan** Anticipate when saying no might be necessary, and decide what you will say ahead of time. By planning, you will not be caught off guard. You will also gain a sense of confidence and control.
- **Be friendly yet firm.** People respect those who stand by their convictions without being rude. Your friendliness and confidence may convince other less confident bystanders to say no as well.
- **Speak up when no one else will.** Some peer pressure is helpful. You can be the one who influences others to do the right thing when they can not say no themselves. Often other people feel the same way you do, but they do not have the courage to say so.
- **Affirm the person but reject the action.** When friends pressure you, let them know you value them and their company. Tell them you want to spend time with them but not when they are doing something that you feel is wrong.
- **Appeal to laws and rules.** If someone wants you to break the law or to break the rules of your school, home, or job, do not feel guilty about saying no. Simply say that you would rather stick by the rules and avoid unpleasant consequences.
- **Appeal to possible consequences.** Sometimes you may need to remind friends of how they or others might pay for their actions. Letting your friends know that you are not willing to accept the consequences of poor choices might help them make better choices too.

1. **Skipping School** Two of Andy’s friends plan to skip school to go to a ball game. They want Andy and Brett to come along. Andy knows this is wrong, and he is also concerned about whether he would be kicked off the soccer team if they got caught. Brett seems interested in going, or at least he does not want to say no. *What should Andy do and say?*

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The Courage to Say No (Continued)

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2. **No License** Maurita has her learner’s permit, but she is not a licensed driver. She tells Brynn that she is going to borrow her parents’ car so she can drive the two of them to the mall. She assures Brynn that nothing will happen and that she is a good driver. Brynn is convinced that Maurita’s plan is not a good idea and wants to put a stop to it. *What should Brynn do and say?*

3. **Telling a Lie** Several friends plan to lie to their parents about where they are spending the night so that they can stay out all night. They want Max to join them. The thought of lying to his parents bothers Max. Besides that, if his parents found out, he would have to face some serious consequences. *What should Max do and say?*

4. **Underage Drinking** Haley and her friend Emma, both age sixteen, have heard about a party coming up on the weekend. Emma wants to go even though beer will be available and many of the people there will be underage. Haley does not want to drink and knows she can have a good time without doing so. She realizes what could happen if she attends a party where illegal underage drinking is going on. *What should Haley do and say?*

What Do You Want in a Friend?

Directions Think about the traits you care about most in a friend. For each of the numbered traits, place a mark somewhere on the scale between “Unimportant” to “Important.” Do not mark “Important” for everything. Analyze them to see which ones you value more than others.

1. We enjoy similar activities.
Unimportant _____ *Important*
2. We share the same values.
Unimportant _____ *Important*
3. We spend a lot of time together.
Unimportant _____ *Important*
4. We talk about personal concerns and feelings.
Unimportant _____ *Important*
5. We work together as a team.
Unimportant _____ *Important*
6. My friend accepts me as I am.
Unimportant _____ *Important*
7. My friend understands my emotions.
Unimportant _____ *Important*
8. My friend introduces me to new ideas or activities.
Unimportant _____ *Important*
9. My friend makes me laugh.
Unimportant _____ *Important*
10. My friend speaks to me directly to resolve misunderstandings.
Unimportant _____ *Important*
11. My friend encourages me to be the best I can be.
Unimportant _____ *Important*

Can Opposites Be Friends?

Directions Friendships can benefit from both similarities and differences. It is easy to see why two similar people might become friends. However, you can learn a lot from friends who are different from you. As long as two people share basic values and respect each other's differences, such friendships can be rewarding. Read each friendship situation and answer the questions that follow.

Automatic Togetherness Parker's and Lauren's parents are friends, so their families get together often. Parker and Lauren are the same age but have very different interests. Lauren likes to play games on her handheld computer. Parker enjoys playing the guitar while others sing along.

1. Why might Parker and Lauren tend to be friends? _____

2. What might strain their friendship? _____

3. Would a friendship between the teens be good for them? Explain. _____

Different Personalities Tanya is very shy. Grace is outgoing, popular, and "the life of the party." Tanya is surprised when Grace suggests they get together after school.

4. Why might Grace and Tanya like to be friends? _____

5. What might strain their friendship? _____

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Can Opposites Be Friends? (Continued)

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6. Would a friendship between the teens be good for them? Explain. _____

Mixed Interests Jeannie is very interested in science. She avoids playing sports because she feels she has no talent for sports. She tends to be rather serious and likes to explore new ideas. Hannah enjoys being physically active. She does not like science because she finds it difficult. She has a lively sense of humor. Because Jeannie and Hannah live near each other, they often walk home from school together.

7. Why might each teen like to be friends with the other? _____

8. What might strain their friendship? _____

9. Would a friendship between the teens be good for them? Explain. _____

Motive Check Daryl and his friends drink, smoke, and party. Pascal does not. Daryl sits down by Pascal in the lunch room.

10. Why might each teen be interested in friendship with the other? _____

11. What might strain their friendship? _____

12. Would a friendship between the teens be good for them? Explain. _____

Making Friends

Directions The chart lists tips for making friends. People do not need many close friends, but most would like to have at least one. To analyze how your behavior may affect making friends, place check marks (✓) in the appropriate columns. Based on the chart, what could you do in order to make friends more easily?

	With strangers and people I do not know well, I behave this way:	Rarely or Never	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always
1	Smile				
2	Say hello				
3	Greet people by name (if name is known)				
4	Start conversations				
5	Avoid personal questions				
6	Avoid gossip and criticizing others				
7	Avoid arguments				
8	Keep an open mind				
9	Stand up for the underdog				
10	Am honest and respectful				
11	Stay open to differences				
12	Show genuine interest in others				
13	Get them talking about what interests them				
14	Invite them to join a group activity				
15	Help out; lend a hand				
16	Stay true to myself and my values				
17	Avoid assuming people are stuck-up (they may just be shy)				
18	Am flexible				
19	Avoid taking rejection personally				
20	Join a group, club, or team				
21	Volunteer				
22	Find ways to meet people with the same hobby				
23	Avoid making big demands on a new friend's time or attention				
24	Go slow; let friendship develop gradually				

When Friendships End

Directions Pretend that you write an advice column for the school newspaper. The topic of this week’s column is “When Friendships End.” Write a short reply to each of the letters below.

1. *Dear Advisor:* My best friend moved to another town. Although I have phoned several times and sent a few email messages, she does not seem interested in keeping in touch. She is always too busy to talk and she does not answer my emails. What can I do to keep this friendship alive?
Jenna

Dear Jenna: _____

2. *Dear Advisor:* My friend and I used to hang around together after school, but now he is just interested in girls. I’m not interested in girls yet. It hurts my feelings that he does not want to spend time with me. What should I do? *Timothy*

Dear Timothy: _____

3. *Dear Advisor:* My friend wants me to do everything just with her and nobody else. What do you recommend? *Maria*

Dear Maria: _____

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When Friendships End (Continued)

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4. *Dear Advisor:* Ted and I became friends when we both played in the band. We still like each other, but we are no longer in the same activities. I play in the orchestra, and he is active in the drama club. We have talked about finding ways to spend time together, but neither of us has time to spare beyond our current activities. How should we handle this? *Dennis*

Dear Dennis: _____

5. *Dear Advisor:* Debbie, my best friend, hangs out in the mall all the time now. She says that if I were really her friend, I would go there with her. I do not really enjoy the mall very much, and I do not have much money to spend. I have asked her to do other things, but she does not want to do anything else. What do you advise? *LeAnne*

Dear LeAnne: _____

6. *Dear Advisor:* My friend has always been a lot of fun to be with, but recently he started making nasty jokes about other students and some of our teachers. I do not like it. I tried telling him that it bothered me and he just said, “What is the matter? No sense of humor? Or have you turned into a goody-goody?” Nothing has changed. What should I do? *Wally*

Dear Wally: _____

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Getting Along with Teachers

Directions Getting along with teachers is useful. Students who get along enjoy school more, learn more, and are less likely to get into trouble. They are more willing to ask questions and go to a teacher for help. Having good relationships with teachers makes it easier to talk to them if personal problems at home or in school are affecting schoolwork. Remember that teachers are people too. They teach because they want to help students learn. How you relate to teachers affects your experiences in school. Answer the questions below and discuss them in class to explore relationships with teachers.

1. If you were a teacher, what three traits or behaviors would you most want from students?

A. _____

B. _____

C. _____

2. Some teachers have a reputation for being tough. Why do they act in ways that some students call tough?

3. If you have a personality conflict with a teacher, examine why. Talk to a parent or guidance counselor. Sometimes a conversation with the teacher clears up misunderstandings and shows that you are trying. Whether or not you like a teacher, you can usually find ways to get along. What might you say to start a conversation with a teacher about tensions between you?

4. How does getting along with all sorts of teachers compare to what you will face at work someday?

