

May 25, 2008

Dealing with Peer Pressure

Making decisions on your own is hard enough, but when other people get involved and try to pressure you one way or another it can be even harder. People who are your age, like your classmates, are called peers. When they try to influence how you act, to get you to do something, it's called **peer pressure**. It's something everyone has to deal with - even adults. Let's talk about how to handle it.

Defining Peer Pressure

Peers influence your life, even if you don't realize it, just by spending time with you. You learn from them, and they learn from you. It's only human nature to listen to and learn from other people in your age group. Peers can have a positive influence on each other. Maybe you got others excited about your new favorite book, and now everyone's reading it. These are examples of how peers positively influence each other every day.

Why Do People Give in to Peer Pressure?

Some kids give in to peer pressure because they want to be liked, to fit in, or because they worry that other kids may make fun of them if they don't go along with the group. Others may go along because they are curious to try something new that others are doing.

How to Walk Away From Peer Pressure

1. Paying attention to your own feelings and beliefs about what is right and wrong can help you know the right thing to do.
2. Inner strength and self-confidence can help you stand firm, walk away, and resist doing something when you know better.
3. You've probably had a parent or teacher advice you to "choose your friends wisely." Peer pressure is a big reason why they say this. If you continue to face peer pressure and you're finding it difficult to handle, **talk** to someone you trust.

Peer pressure is not always a bad thing. For example, positive peer pressure can be used to pressure **bullies** into acting better toward other kids. If enough kids get together, peers can pressure each other into doing what's right!

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Getting along with your parents

Mom and dad — there are the two most important people in your life. You probably see at least one of them every day. It's a parent's job to love and guide kids — and most parents will do this as long as they live — even when the "kids" are grown up and have children of their own.

Five ways you can stay close, get along, and build a strong relationship with your parents:

1. **Spend time together** - It might be easy to be physically in the same place as your mom or dad (like at home — it's where you both live, after all.) But how much time do you spend just enjoying each other's company? Instead of playing a computer game or watching TV, maybe ask your mom and dad to play with you.
1. **Share your feelings and ask for help** - Many kids say they'd like their parents to help them when they're upset. But your mom or dad might not know that you're having a problem. Tell a parent if you're sad or struggling with something. If you don't usually do this, it can feel funny at first. Try it and you'll be glad you did.
2. **Be kind** - Little things might mean a lot to your mom or dad. You can brighten a parent's day with a hug, it's also lovely when a kid offers to help fold the laundry or cleans up his or her room without being asked. Try not to fight with your brothers or sisters.
3. **Show you care** - Some families are always kissing, hugging, and saying "I love you." Other families aren't as lovey-dovey. But it's important to show that you care for each other. In addition to kisses and hugs, kids and parents show their love by respecting each other, being caring, polite, and thoughtful.
4. **Do your best at whatever you do** - You don't have to be perfect, but when you do your best, you make your parents proud. It makes them happy to see how you're turning into such a great kid. It lets them know they're doing a good job.