

#peerpressure
#publichealth5-19service



PEER PRESSURE FACTSHEET

This factsheet will provide you with information and top tips about how to handle peer pressure and links to helpful websites.

“My friends all go up town on Saturdays and think it’s cool to shoplift. I don’t want to do it but I’m scared if I don’t do the same things that they do, they won’t let me hang around with them.”

Peer pressure is feeling like you have to do something just because all of your friends are doing it. Growing up today there is a lot of pressure to ‘fit in’, wear the same clothes as everyone else and do what they are doing.

Will I be left out if I don’t do what my friends are doing?

Not necessarily. People should like you for who you are and respect your decisions. If they don’t, they are not really true friends. It might feel like everyone else is doing things that you don’t want to do, but maybe they don’t want to do it either... they might feel pushed into it in order to fit in too! Sometimes, people might say they do things, but they don’t really. They only say it to impress everyone else and look cool.

How does peer pressure affect me?

If you are doing things that your mates are doing in order to fit in then you are being affected by peer pressure.

Pressure to look right

Many young people feel pressured to look or dress a certain way to be accepted by a group of friends. If you feel like you don’t fit in, it can affect your confidence and self-esteem, and this can affect your mood, eating patterns and sleep.

Pressure to experiment

This could be pressure to try smoking, drinking or taking drugs. You may also feel under pressure to have sex as you might feel that this is what everyone is doing. The truth is, they probably aren’t! But talking about it makes them look cool and be accepted as part of the group. These things can be hard for a teenager to resist. If you can resist these things and say no, you are a very strong person.

“I have tried to say no when they ask me to try smoking but it’s hard. Sometimes I do it and sometimes I don’t, but if I don’t I feel like I don’t fit in. It makes me feel very confused and unhappy most of the time.”

Other negative effects of peer pressure include truanting from school and changing your group of friends because others don't like them.

Can peer pressure be positive?

Friends can have a positive influence on others. This includes:

- setting a positive example and encouraging their friends to do the same things
- giving positive feedback and advice to friends to strengthen their self-esteem and confidence
- giving encouragement to complete an activity or try new things.

“I don't think I am very good at school but I am trying to keep up with the work so I can stay in the same class as my friends.”

TOP TIPS TO HANDLE NEGATIVE PEER PRESSURE

Tip 1: If you don't want to do something your friends are doing, it can be hard to stand up to them and say no. But if they are truly your friends they should respect your decision and not force you into doing something you don't want to do.

“I find it really hard to stand up to my friends if they are smoking and I don't want to do it. They never force me to do it, but sometimes I don't feel like I'm part of the group. I know it is not good for me because my uncle died of lung cancer so I am not going to do it!”

Tip 2: Listen to your own feelings – if you feel uncomfortable about a situation then talk to an adult or someone that you trust. This is about growing up and learning about who you are and what you should and shouldn't be doing.

Tip 3: Plan for possible situations – if you are going to a party and know that your friends are all going to be drinking or smoking, plan how you are going to handle this before going so you feel more confident if this situation arises.

It's OK to say no! If your friends are good friends they should respect your wishes and like you for who you are.

Tip 4: Find someone you are comfortable talking to. This may be a family member, friend, teacher or other member of staff at school or youth group. Sometimes, it can feel like all these emotions are getting on top of us, and stopping us getting on with our everyday lives. This can be scary, but you're not alone.

VISIT THESE USEFUL WEBSITES:

www.kooth.com

Free online counselling and support

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/cbbc/watch/coping-with-peer-pressure>

BBC webpage about how to cope with peer pressure

www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/friends-relationships-sex/friends/peer-pressure/

Information & advice on Childline webpage

www.riseabove.org.uk/topic/friends/

Information and resources for young people about health related topics