

PEER PRESSURE

Peers have a strong influence on the hearts and minds of children and young people

Frequently peer influence is positive however the influence of friends and acquaintances is not always in a child's best interests.



Peers generally have a extremely positive impact on a child. Positive peer influence can impact on learning, character development and a child's interests.

However for a child or young person, resisting negative peer influence can mean isolation or instant ostracism, so it sometimes takes great strength of will to refuse to follow the crowd.

DEALING WITH NEGATIVE PEER PRESSURE

SOME IDEAS TO HELP CHILDREN COPE WITH AND BE LESS SUSCEPTIBLE TO PEER PRESSURE:

1. Help children say no – and still save face.

Ask them how they would refuse an offer of a cigarette, an illegal substance or an invitation to behave in a way that they felt uncomfortable with. How could they say no? What words could they use? How could they react if they were pestered? How can they refuse and still be 'cool' and accepted by others? Be upfront with them; after all their peers will be.

2. Encourage them to gain some thinking time.

If they feel uncomfortable with a peer's insistent request, but find it difficult to refuse, then encourage them to gain some reflection time by saying something like 'No thanks, not now.'

3. Invite children to think through the consequences of their decisions.

When they are put on the spot they should think about the risk factors involved and err on the side of caution. Encourage them to think 'Is this

behaviour smart? Is it in my best interests?'

4. Talk about peer influence with your children.

Be open and frank about the subject, letting them know that while much of the influence of their friends is positive, some is not in their best interests.

5. Give kids a scapegoat.

Keeping face is important for many young people so they can maintain their status among their friends. Encourage them to blame you for not letting them do something they don't feel comfortable with but can't admit to.

6. Avoid making kids rely on the approval of others,

including parents, for their self-esteem. Allow them to feel comfortable holding opinions and views that are different to yours.



Parenting *ideas*
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