

Section 5.

How to handle peer pressure

What is 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. You might admire a friend who is always easy to get along with and try to be more like him or her. But, sometimes peers influence each other in negative ways. For example, a few students in your class might try to get you to skip class with them, your teammate might try to convince you to be mean to another player and never pass her the ball, or a friend at a party might ask you to vape with them.

Why do we give in to peer pressure?

Some youth give in to peer pressure because they want to be liked, to fit in, or because they worry that their friends might make fun of them if they don't go along with the group. Others are curious to try something new that people around them are doing. The idea that "everyone's doing it" can influence some children to leave their common sense, behind.

Walking away from peer pressure

It's tough to be the only one who says "no" to peer pressure, but paying attention to your own feelings and beliefs about what is right and wrong can help you know the right thing to do. Inner strength and self-confidence can help you stand firm, walk away, and resist doing something when you know better.

It can really help to have at least one other friend who is willing to say "no," too. This takes a lot of the power out of peer pressure and makes it much easier to resist. It's great to have friends with values similar to yours who will back you up when you don't want to do something.

If you choose friends who don't vape or smoke cigarettes, then you probably won't do these things either, even if other youth do. Try to help a friend who's having trouble resisting peer pressure. It can be powerful for one person to join another by simply saying, "I'm with you — let's go."

Even if you're faced with peer pressure to vape or smoke while you're alone, there are still things you can do. You can simply stay away from peers who pressure you to do stuff you know is wrong. You can tell them "no" and walk away. Better yet, find other friends and classmates to hang around with.

If you continue to face peer pressure and you're finding it difficult to handle, talk to someone you trust. Don't feel guilty if you've made a mistake or two. Talking to a parent, teacher, or school counsellor can help you feel much better and prepare you for the next time you face peer pressure.

