

## Dealing with Peer Pressure

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### Abstract

#### **“Peer Pressure is the influence by other people to act in a certain way”**

Peer pressure is a very real issue that affects many of the teenagers of the world today. It is a normal part of growing up. Peer Pressure is basically a social pressure. This can be from family members, friends or those persons who work together. When we think of the words ‘peer pressure’, what is the first thing that comes to mind? Majority of us would say that peer pressure is an influence from friends or classmates to do something we normally do not follow as a routine. Peer pressure is the direct influence on people by peers who get encouraged to follow their peers by changing their habits, values and behavior. The ‘teenage’ is the age when peer pressure plays a vital role. Peer pressure can be both positive as well as negative. Its upto the individual to make best out of every situation. Peer pressure may always be there-we have to use it wisely as we navigate through life.

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#### **Who are Peers**

The word peer comes from the Latin word *par* which means equal. When we are at par with someone, we are their peer. Peers are those people who are our friend or family members or somebody who we want in an event with us. Who go to school with us and work with us. Besides close friends, the peers include other kids you know who are the same age — like people in same grade, church, sports team, or community. These peers also influence us by the way they dress and act, things they're involved in, and the attitudes they show. As we become more independent, our peers naturally play a greater role in our life. As school and other activities take us away from home, we may spend more time with peers than we do with our parents and siblings. We'll probably develop close friendships with some of our peers, and we may feel so connected to them that they are like an extended family.

#### **What is peer pressure**

Peers influence everyone's life, even if someone doesn't realize it, just by spending time with anybody. People learn from them, and they learn from their peers. It's only human nature to listen to and learn from other people in one's age group. Due to peer pressure one must do the same things as other people of one's age and social group in order to be liked or respected by them. e.g. – a child may start drinking in high school because of peer pressure.

Sometimes, though, the stresses in our life can actually come from our peers. They may pressure us into doing something we are uncomfortable with, such as shoplifting, consume drugs or drinking alcohol, doing risky task while driving, or having sex before you feel ready. This pressure may be expressed openly ("Oh, come on — it's just one beer, and everyone else is having one") or more indirectly — simply making beer available at a party, for instance.

**Goldsmith says** “Peer pressure is stress or strains you feel from friends and school mates to act, behave, think and look a certain way. This kind of pressure can cover everything from fashion through sex and dating”

Example: Some time when our friends doing something and we are typically not and they influence us to do is an example of peer pressure. Like smoking, drinking alcohol etc.

### **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 might make fun of them if they don't go along with the group.

Others go along because they are curious to try something new that others are doing. The idea that "everyone's doing it" can influence some kids to leave their better judgment, or their common sense, behind.

How much a person is influenced by peer pressure depends on many factors. People are less likely to be heavily influenced by their friends and more likely to make their own decisions if they have:

- High self-esteem
- Goals and a positive outlook on the future
- Good social skills
- The ability to interact with people from many different backgrounds
- Strong connections to family and community.

People are more likely to be heavily influenced by their peers and less likely to make decisions for themselves if they:

- Have low self-esteem
- Are experiencing problems in their family, such as divorce, alcoholism, drug addiction, or unemployment
- Come from families where there is little support or communication
- Strongly identify with only one ethnic group
- Feel distant from school and community activities
- Are afraid of not belonging or fitting in.

## How peers influence somebody

### Directly:-



You may experience peer pressure as someone telling you what you should be doing. Sometime might be Peers directly tell you to do something.

### Tease or Coax you

They might tease or coax you so that you will follow their behavior

### Treating you as an outcast and ignoring



Some time they may not say anything at all instead they may pressurize you by treating you as an outcast or by ignoring you.

**Insults:** Making a person feel bad for not doing something, so that they eventually will.

**Reasoning:** Pressure by giving a person reasons why they should do something.

**Rejections:** Pressure by threatening to end a relationship or a friendship.

**Unspoken Pressure:** Simply seeing all your peers doing something or wearing something can be a form of pressure.

### Types of Peer Pressure

- 1. Positive Pressure** - "Peer pressure is positive when someone encourages or supports you to do something good. e.g., participating in sports, joining clubs , trying new foods, doing volunteer work, getting good grades, showing respect, meeting new people, doing the right thing, being honest, being responsible"(Morrison, Kalin, & Morrison 2004)

Peer pressure is not all bad. You and your friends can pressure each other into some things that will improve your health and social life and make you feel good about your decisions. You and your friends can also use good peer pressure to help each other resist bad peer pressure.

### **Impact of Positive Peer Pressure:**

It is universally acknowledged that our peers are the most influential people in our lives; they impact our goals, attitudes, and the ways we think and act. Teenagers can be motivated to accomplish more and aim higher through competition and exchange of information with their peers. Peer pressure can serve as powerful encouragement towards beneficial behavior, and more often influences students positively as opposed to negatively. Some people conform to such ways because as they say, "Everyone is doing it." Peer pressure has positive impact because we can be pressurised into making the right choices. It can teach us to be mature, responsible and do what's right all the time for ourselves. Positive peer pressure is often overlooked but does exist and may be described as an influence to do what is right.

According to the Survelum Public Data Bank, 68.8% of teens expressed in a survey that they were never influenced by peer pressure. 49% of participants expressed that they had never lied to their parents because their friends told them to, while only 31% said they had (Survelum Public Data Bank, 2013).

- 2. Negative Pressure** - Negative peer pressure is when people we know, that are around our age, pressurize us to do something we wouldn't normally do.

"Peer Pressure is negative when someone tries to get another person to do something they know is not right. e.g. taking drugs, committing suicide, being racist/bullying, having sex when you are not ready, shoplifting vandalizing property, drinking underage, cheating, ditching school" (Morrison, Kalin, & Morrison 2004)

### **Impact of Negative Peer Pressure:**

Negative peer pressure is some time dangerous and against school rules, home rules and personal values. A child usually starts doing school skipping, smoking, and sneaking out of the house.

- 3. Active Pressure** - Active pressure may be in the form of an explicit offer to drink alcohol or a verbal criticism for refusing to drink. Other forms of direct pressure include invitations to participate in drinking games or ordering of rounds of drinks while at a bar.
- 4. Passive Pressure** - Passive pressure is based on a teen's desire to fit in and adopt the values and practices of fellow teens. Passive social pressures can be further divided into social modeling of alcohol use ("everyone's doing it") and perceptions regarding peers' alcohol use. Although many teens do drink alcohol to an alarming degree, teens invariably overestimate the rates at which their friends drink. This false sense that all teens drink can lead teens to feel that they have to drink to fit in. By eighth grade, nearly half of all adolescents report having had at least one drink and one in five reports having been "drunk."

### **Type of Peer Pressure Activity**

Here are activities we can do to become aware of the different types of peer pressure.

**We can review the following scenarios.**

- Your friend calls you at home and asks you if you've studied for tomorrow's exam. When you say that you don't want to study, your friend invites you over and says that you two can study together.
- Your friends have started wearing low cut shirts and miniskirts to school. You don't feel comfortable showing so much skin but you don't want to look like the odd one out.
- You're at the mall with your friends and they ask you to take something from one of the stores without paying for it.
- Your friends ask you to skip class.
- You're hanging out with your friends and they are all drinking. You start thinking about trying it since they all seem to be having a good time.
- Imagine you are in a relationship in which your boyfriend/girlfriend doesn't treat you well. your friend tries to talk you into breaking up with him/her.

### **Peer pressure effect-Useful or Harmful**

Like all processes, peer pressure can be both useful and harmful. A student who had never experienced the joys of reading found himself in a group that constantly discussed books. He slowly opened his mind to reading and discovered a whole new world of exciting ideas that challenged him. He enjoyed discussing books with his new peer group and found that he was excellent at debate and group discussions. Currently, pursuing a degree in law, he attributes finding his interest to the influence of his peers.

In contrast, many students have gone through the painful process of indulging in activities in order to conform to a group. A student was caught stealing to pay for a fancy gadget. On intensive counseling, he confessed that it was the enormous pressure to fit in that made him commit the offence without thinking about the consequences.

### **Peers pressure may be useful**

Peers can have a positive influence on each other. Maybe another student in your science class taught you an easy way to remember the planets in the solar system or someone on the soccer team taught you a cool trick with the ball. You might admire a friend who is always good at sports and try to be more like him or her. 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.

## **Peers pressure may be harmful**

Sometimes peers influence each other in negative ways. For example, a few kids in school might try to get you to bunk class with them, your soccer friend might try to convince you to be mean to another player and never pass him her the ball, or a kid in the neighborhood might want you to shoplift with him.

### **Walking Away From Peer Pressure**

- Understanding your own values and beliefs
- Have Self-confidence
- Choose your friends wisely- It's great to have friends with values similar to yours who will back you up when you don't want to do something.
- Be your own best friend.
- Evaluate friendship and find new friends.

**Talk to a trusted adult-** 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 counselor can help you feel much better and prepare you for the next time you face peer pressure.

**Don't make excuses** – say exactly how you feel

Paying attention to your own feelings and beliefs about what is right and wrong

**Cool way to avoid peer pressure** - If someone is pressurising you to do anything that's not up to you and not right or good for you, you have the full right to resist or refuse for that. You have the right to say no, without giving any reason to him and the best thing to just walk away from the situation to avoid such pressure. Below are the some easy steps with the help of which you can avoid this peer pressure and be cool and relaxed.

1. Look at the person.
2. Take a breath first
3. Find the words
4. Think it through
5. Use a calm, assertive voice tone.
6. Ask what we could do instead.
7. Say clearly that you do not want to engage in inappropriate behaviors.
8. Request more time to think about your peer's demands.
9. Come up with an exit plan.
10. Be confident to say 'No'
11. Avoid situation where bad choice are more common.
12. Identify your core values and beliefs.
13. Define your future goals.
14. Simply walk away if feeling uncomfortable.

### **Peer Influence Isn't All Bad**

You might not hear a lot about it, but peers have a profoundly positive influence on each other and play important roles in each other's lives:

- **Friendship.** Among peers you can find friendship and acceptance, and share experiences that can build lasting bonds.
- **Positive examples.** Peers set plenty of good examples for each other. Having peers who are committed to doing well in school or to doing their best in a sport can influence you to be more goal-oriented, too. Peers who are kind and loyal influence you to build these qualities in yourself. Even peers you've never met can be role models! For example, watching someone your age compete in the Olympics, give a piano concert, or spearhead a community project might inspire you to go after a dream of your own.
- **Feedback and advice.** Your friends listen and give you feedback as you try out new ideas, explore belief, and discuss problems. Peers can help you make decisions, too: what courses to take; whether to get your hair cut, let it grow, or dye it; how to handle a family argument. Peers often give each other good advice. Your friends will be quick to tell you when they think you're making a mistake or doing something risky.
- **Socializing.** Your peer group gives you opportunities to try out new social skills. Getting to know lots of different people — such as classmates or teammates — gives you a chance to learn how to expand your circle of friends, build relationships, and work out differences. You may have peers you agree or disagree with, compete with, or team with, peers you admire, and peers you don't want to be like.
- **Encouragement.** Peers encourage you to work hard to get the solo in the concert, help you study, listen and support you when you're upset or troubled, and empathize with you stating that they've experienced similar difficulties.
- **New experiences.** Your peers might get you involved in clubs, sports, or religious groups. Your world would be far less rich without peers to encourage you try sushi for the first time, listen to a CD you've never heard before, or to offer moral support when you give audition for the school play.

## Conclusion

Peer pressures play an important role in anyone's development and growing up because peers give motivation to do something. If no peers available in one's life he/she cannot have a complete social circle. Peers not only give motivation rather they provide a healthy competition Peers can have influence either in positive or negative way because peers are everywhere in home, in school, in college, in play ground and in office. Nobody is immune to the effects of peer pressure, it's up to the individual to make best out of every situation. Your life is a wonderful opportunity to bring out the best in yourself. On that path, you might fall many a time or take a wrong turn. The absolute delight is in rising again and dusting off the fear of failure and moving ahead. Peer pressure is here to stay- Use it wisely as you navigate through life.

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