

Peer pressure

[Sociology](#), [Bullying](#)



" Peer Pressure is an influence that creates or the desire for change." Most teenagers agree that they will follow a peer's decision rather than their parents' or the authority's. Peers are more influential in a teen's life and tend to have more power than parents. Peer pressure has always been present and will also always be present. It is not a disease or a crime, it is merely and influence; either a negative or a positive one.

WHAT IS NEGATIVE PEER PRESSURE? Negative peer pressure is an influence exerted on a person to do something wrong. This may be stealing, drugs or other. If someone influences you into doing something like this it is considered negative peer pressure. We can help reduce peer pressure by teaching coping skills at an early age. Many teenagers who give in easily to negative pressures had a difficult child hood; low self-esteem, feeling of not belonging, poor communication and judgmental skills.

HOW TO RECOGNIZE NEGATIVE PEER PRESSURE Negative peer pressure gives something significant to teenagers. The group is a place where one feels accepted, where he can feel good about himself, where he feels secure. It increases his self esteem, and it also enhances his self-image.

SOME NEGATIVE PEER PRESSURE AREAS Negative peer pressure can often be observed in areas such as: + Sexuality+ Narcotics+ Alcohol+ Cults+ Groups and gangs+ Tobacco products+ Stealing+ School+ Etc...

THE NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF PEER PRESSURE During adolescence, a teenager is subjected to lots of peer pressure. This pressure can effect the child mentally, physically and socially. Some of the effects on a person when dealing with negative peer pressure are: Low Self-Esteem: This is the main and most common effect. When a person's peers mock him/her, or make them feel bad, this person becomes insecure. They begin

to feel down and rejected. They feel as if they are worthless to the world. And anybody who has experienced this at one time or another knows that this is one of, if not the, worst feeling you can possess. Substance Abuse: Peers often pressure one another to do something they do not want to do. Offering drugs or alcohol is very common during adolescence. And after constant persisting, and insisting that " everyone is doing it" and that " it's cool to do so" one gives into this horrible disease. And more often than not, a person can become addicted and dependent on this substance. Obsessions or Depression: People are often subjected to constant portrayals of what you are SUPPOSED to look like or act. If a person sees people that are always thin and happy, one becomes obsessed with that image, and thinks that if they do not look or act that way, that nobody will love them. So these people turn to such eating diseases as bulimia nervosa (regurgitating after one eats) or anorexia nervosa (eating too little). They also become seriously depressed and feel that life is not worth living, and think about or attempt committing suicide. Other actions: Teenagers also conform to the people around them very easily and quickly. If a friend decides to skip school, sometimes you decide to join him. However you may think it's your decision, but in fact it is this person pressuring you simply by implanting the thought into your mind. This is also true for lying to teachers and parents etc., not doing homework/schoolwork and cheating on tests. WHY DO TEENS GIVE IN TO PEER PRESSURE People give in to Peer pressure for many different reasons. One of these reasons is low self-esteem. People with low self-esteem, will do almost anything to become a cool guy. Others give in to peer pressure, because people they think are cool say to do something. These people are

just hurting themselves, because if that person is really cool, he isn't going to make you cool, because you are his little helper. Peer pressure is present in one's life as long as they have peers (school, workplace,...). Therefore, it is normal for a person to give in to peer pressure. At the beginning of teenage years, teens develop a sense of independence from their parents. Teens want to shape their identity and experiment new things. One may join a group if he is insecure about himself or if he has low self-esteem or self-worth. SELF-ESTEEM AND SELF-WORTH Self-Esteem and Self-Worth affect people very deeply. When peer pressure is exerted on people with low self-esteem the reaction is often the same. A person with low esteem for himself will try to raise his self-esteem but often in the wrong way. When someone changes his personality to conform with what others expect from them will always hurt them in the end. Teens must understand that the choices they make today will absolutely affect their future. Teens must also realise that their future is much more important than simply pleasing their friends today. Some things that you or your parents could do to build someones self-esttem are:

- + Have frequent discussions with friends or children
- + Spend quality time with them
- + Keep you eyes and ears open for new ways to offer support
- + Respect their feelings and encourage him or her to share them with you
- + Share your own beliefs and values
- + Explain that you learned from your mistakes
- + Encourage achievement but avoid adding undue pressure
- + Always offer praise when your friends make good decisions

HOW TO RESIST PEER PRESSURE There are many different ways by which one may resist peer pressure. One very effective way is by simply saying 'no'. Often we feel that they will persist but often an affirmative 'no' is enough. However, we must

express clearly our choice, we mustn't express the least sign of indecision. You may also walk away from the situation, no matter how much you want to fit in. You must realise that you are the one who makes the decisions for yourself, not your peers. If you feel uncomfortable with the people you are with, consider finding new friends, some which have a good reputation, which would eliminate any negative pressure. Another alternative would be to hang around many different types of people. That way you reduce the chances of being pressured. It is good to set yourself goals knowing that everything you do affects your future.

WHY DO PEER GROUPS HAVE POWER

The main reason why peer groups have so much power over individuals is that they give something significant to a person such as self-esteem, security or even enhances their self-image. Peer groups are so powerful, they overcome the morals of family and society. Teenagers tend to go toward other teens with similar problems and in the same situation as they are. There is a very strong desire to satisfy the need for unity and acceptance. This causes peers to have more influence than parents.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PEER PRESSURE

Peer pressure plays a very influential role in our everyday lives. It affects, not only adolescents, but children, teens, adults, even senior citizens. Although some people think they aren't affected by peer pressure, almost everyone is. Resisting even the smallest things is very hard. Peer pressure, affects the way we speak, walk, dress, act, our attitudes, who we hang out with, our friends, and what we do. Although peer pressure is often negative, but along with that negative, is also the positive. Peers, can make you do the smallest things, yet still be a large influence. Although most of the effects heard about are negative, the world would be a

much different place without peer pressure, and not necessarily for the better. How would a world of individuals get together? If one group of individuals and another, can't get together, and therefore proclaim war. How could a couple billion individuals survive together? Nevertheless, some things would get better. If many teenagers start smoking because of peer pressure, without it, fewer teens would probably be smoking. Could we survive without peer pressure? If there were no peer pressure, many things would be changed, the way we speak to friends, would be changed dramatically. We wouldn't be able to say such common things as, " Those shoes are really cool," because they could interpret this be a friend, to mean that wearing those shoes is cool, therefore being pressured. As you can see, peer pressure plays a very important role in our everyday lives. Without it, no one would be the same, a world of total individuals, who didn't listen to what anyone had to say about everything. Yet with it, a world where teens start smoking at the age of 12, having babies at the age of 14, and stealing to get money to buy drugs at 18. IS PEER PRESSURE REALLY THAT BAD?

We've established the fact that peer pressure affects everyone, but is it really that bad? There are many, many examples of disastrous consequences to peer pressure. Following is the example of David Duren. David Duren is awaiting execution on Alabama death row. For the last couple years he been asking himself: " What am i doing here?" By piecing together the events in his life. He says that his real problem was growing up with peer pressure. " I was a skinny little weekling, a straight kid." So, for company and fun he hung out with the kids in his apartment complex. He wasn't accepted at first because he didn't smoke, drink or curse. But he discovered that if he wanted

to fit in he had to do all those things. So, at age 12, he inhaled his first cigarette, drank his first beer, smoked his first joint of pot, and cursed regularly. He then discovered that by succumbing to peer pressure, he surrounded himself with so-called friends who smoked, drank, did drugs and cursed. By exposing yourself to the drug world you discover many, many different drugs. Then suddenly, he wasn't just smoking pot, he was crushing Quaaludes and mixing it with his pot. He then discovered his favorite drug, LSD. He was doing it even when in the army on the average of four or five times a week. One night, he killed a 16 year old girl while he was doing LSD. " Why??? All because I gave in to peer pressure! That's where it all started." He explains. " Your friends can make you or break you." David Duren now wishes he had taken the advice of 1Corinthians 15: 33, " Do not be deceived: bad companions corrupt good morals." Peer pressure is one of the major reasons that teens abuse illegal drugs. Peer pressure is when another person in this age group persuades someone else to do something they don't want to do. (Williams, Rob) This happens often among friends. In Alcohol, Stepney discusses children mimicking or idealizing friends, family, or T. V. Most people use peer pressure every day. A typical phrase is when someone says, " It will be fun, trust me. " This could be harmless pressure to try something like a new movie, or a new brand of cookies. It could also be pressure to abuse illegal drugs. Peer pressure is often used in harmful ways. (Doe, John) Teens at a party want to fit in. Many find it is very hard to say no when their peers are doing drugs. It may seem easy to say no, but when a teen feels pressured and wants to fit in, most teens try the drugs in the end. Another form of peer pressure is reverse psychology. This is making it look good for

you although it's bad. If someone changes sides all of a sudden, a teen may change to the other side as well thinking it was their own idea. Greed, according to an electronic source, is another reason for drug abuse among teens, as they get others hooked and sell to them to pay for their own habit. (Guillermo D. Jalil) Peer pressure is probably the main reason most teens abuse illegal drugs. During puberty, many teens suffer with depression. Depression is when a teen is not happy with themselves for real or imagined reasons. They may be suffering from low self-esteem or torment by others, leading to not being happy with their appearance or other physical features. Many teens go through periods of moodiness, inner turmoil, and rebellion (Gilbert, Sara). Depression may also occur in a teen due to family problems. A teen may think a divorce is coming due to parental behavior but the parents may not be thinking that. In *How to Live With a Single Parent*, Sara Gilbert says, " It could be worse (29). " This refers to a parent talking about a teen's father's death. Family problems are stressful and this stress can lead to depression, thoughts of suicide, and the abuse of illegal drugs. Stress is a physical, chemical, or emotional factor that causes bodily or mental tension (Williams, Rob). When adolescents go through a lot of stress they just want the problems to go away. Some abuse mind-expanding drugs, which make them forget for the time being. According to " Getting High in Junior High", youth today are rapidly changing (Doe, John). Many teens do not seem to be able to handle the changes. When they become sober again, they may become depressed. They still have the worries and emotional problems they used to. Loneliness is a feeling many teens go through. Adolescents go through this because during their teen years they become

more independent. This causes them to change their lifestyle. Changing lifestyles means they may stay in or out of the house more. They may not hang out with friends as often (Gilbert, Sara). Teens sometimes abuse drugs to pass their time because they are lonely. They do this because it makes them feel good for a short time. Nody Labi writes in "Amish Among the Amish" for Time magazine, of an Amish college student saying, "The 'thrills' are not really satisfying. The stability in the Amish community looks more worthwhile" (Labi, Nodi). This Amish college student realized the stability of her community was more satisfying than the thrills of abusing illegal drugs.