

Membership in peer groups essay sample

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Despite significant gains in diversity training, current studies continue to show that children are less likely to accept those who are different from themselves. The differences can be as obvious as physical impairments, or as subtle as differences in academic motivation. These rigid standards may create an atmosphere of exclusion for some children and adolescents that pushes them toward peer acceptance of any type. Peer groups offer children and adults alike the opportunity to develop various social skills, such as leadership, sharing or teamwork, and empathy. Peer groups also offer the opportunity to experiment with new roles and interactions, similar to treatment groups, although they are less structured. It is for this reason that many children and adolescents drift from one group to another as they “ find themselves,” or work toward formation of their relatively permanent identity.

Aggression in Peer Groups

Although bullying and teasing have long been part of peer group interactions, these negative behaviors have increased over the last decade, resulting in school violence in many instances. As children and adolescents feel Peer groups offer children and adults alike the opportunity to develop various social skills, such as leadership, sharing or teamwork, and empathy. Peer groups also offer the opportunity to experiment with new roles and interactions, and can have positive or negative influences on an individual.

(Bill Varie/CORBIS. Reproduced by permission.)

marginalized from their peers, anger builds to a point of rage at times. It is at those times that violence erupts within the school or community setting.

Negative peer interactions also occur more frequently following friendships or romantic relationships that have gone sour. The level of harassment that

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many of these children—often young women—experience is great enough for parents to become involved. In some cases, it may be necessary to move the child to another school district. A potential remediation for these negative interactions includes more active teacher involvement when negative social interactions are observed.

Influence of Peer Group

Peer groups can also have a positive influence—a fact many parents have known for years. Studies support parent’s perceptions that the influence of friends can have a positive effect on academic motivation and performance. Conversely, experimentation with drugs, drinking, vandalism, and stealing may also be increased by interaction with the peer group.

Intervention

Since schools are often the site of negative peer interactions, school personnel have a unique opportunity for effective intervention . Many schools have peer-mediation programs, in which students are encouraged to resolve conflicts on their own without the use of violence or aggression. School counselors also organize groups within the school to handle various problems, including providing social skills training and empathy training.

Risks

Peer groups often provide an example for negative and harmful behaviors. Cluster suicide is one such example. When a teen realizes that someone he or she knew has attempted or has committed suicide, the teen may see suicide as a viable option for him- or herself as well. For this reason, schools and local media should exercise caution when reporting such tragedies. Care must be taken not to portray the suicide glamorously or mythically. When parents try to protect their children by telling them to stay away from certain

friends, they should realize that sometimes this only encourages them to seek out negative role models. Parents should be supportive of their child and redirect their child's activities to more positive and prosocial peers and events. A trusted adult friend, such as a scout leader or a respected coach, may be an important part of the redirection effort. As noted, children and adolescents without strong family connections, or at least a positive connection with other adults in their life, face a higher risk of negative influence from peer groups. If the child or adolescent has not been able to form bonds with positive peer groups, it is more likely they will be perceived as distant and different from their peers, making them feel more like outsiders. Lower standards of acceptance often exist in less positive peer groups, making it easier for people to join. Unfortunately, many such groups often engage in self-destructive and anti-social activities.

Belonging to a group of friends can be wonderful. Friends can give support and help during difficult times. However, at times, being part of a group of friends can be problematic. One negative aspect of being part of a group of friends is pressure to look or act in a certain way in order to continue to be part of the group. People may be willing to do things that go against their beliefs or that they really don't want to do in order to maintain their place in the group. Belonging to a group often helps people feel more secure. The reality, however, is that their security should come from within rather than from others. In this activity, participants will discuss the importance of belonging to a group of friends and understand how it is often OK not to go along with the crowd. 1. When are some times that you and your friends don't go' together? (For example, you might not all play the same sport, ride

the same bus, or like the same foods). 2. When do you recall doing something with a group of friends that you did not want to do? 3. Why do you think people sometimes do things that they do not want to do when they are around their friends? 4. How do you think people act differently when they are around different groups of people? 5. Why do you think it is difficult for people to say no to their friends? 6. Where would you draw the line with your friends? In other words, what are some things you would not do? 7. What are some things that friends sometimes pressure each other to do or to say? 8. Why do you think people continue to be friends with people they are afraid of or who threaten to break off their friendship? 9. How can you make some healthy choices about your friends when deciding what you are and are not willing to do?

Risky Business

When struggling with identity issues and creating a core concept of self, adolescents often engage in risky or dangerous behaviors. These behaviors are often choices that result in negative consequences. Unfortunately, people this age are notorious for believing that ‘it won’t happen to me’.

Walk Your Talk

Good decision making is difficult, especially during the teenage years. This activity will help teens focus on common problems encountered by those in their peer group and determine appropriate ways to deal with these problems.

Pandora’s Box

Jealousy and envy often cause problems between friends. Adolescents, in

particular, struggle with being satisfied with things such as their appearance, their clothes and their possessions. They are often jealous of what they believe their friends have. When jealousy and envy enter into relationships, they can result in hurt, anger and lost friendships. This activity aims at improving self-satisfaction and reducing jealousy and envy.

Peer pressure is something that every child, especially teenagers, face, both directly from friends and peers, and also indirectly when they see other people doing something. Many teens struggle with resisting negative peer pressure and sometimes give in because they don't know how to say no without possibly losing friends or being considered " uncool." Organize a peer pressure retreat for a group of teens you know or work with, featuring activities that help teens understand and identify peer pressure and the best ways to combat it. Demonstrative Activities

One way to introduce the topic of peer pressure is by creating examples of how teens can easily fall into peer pressure. When the kids first come in, let them mingle, sit and chat among themselves. Send one teen out of the room to go and get you something. When she leaves, tell the rest of the group that this is an experiment and ask them all to fold their hands on their heads and act as if everything is normal when the teen comes back into the room. If she asks what they are doing, just shrug and continue to act normal. Watch and wait to see what she does. If she does what everyone else does, you can use this as a starting point in a discussion on how teens often just do what everyone else does, sometimes without questioning the logic. Identifying Peer Pressure

Peer pressure can be positive. A group of teens that volunteers at a local shelter every week can influence others to do the same, for example. To help the children identify the differences, write down a bunch of scenarios or examples of negative and positive peer pressure and place them in paper bags. Divide the teens up into pairs, each receiving a bag. The kids must quickly separate the negative and positive peer pressure cards. The first team to do so wins. Bonus points are given if they can come up with solutions to combat the negative peer pressure scenarios they were given. For another activity, you can set up a scavenger hunt with peer pressure scenario cards hidden all over the building. Each scenario is either negative or positive peer pressure. A wrong answer will lead them to a card that tells them to go back to start. A correct answer will lead them to their next scenario card until they reach the end. Role-play Activities

Role-playing can be a powerful way to show teens how to resist and steer clear of peer pressure situations. Put the teens into groups and assign each a peer pressure scenario to act out. Choose scenarios that you know are relevant to the group of teens you are working with, whether it is peer pressure to have alcohol at a party or give the answers on a test to friends who have not studied. Encourage the kids to discuss what they thought of each skit, what is realistic about it and what might not be. If the kids do not agree with how the peer pressure situation was resolved, ask them what they think would be a better solution. Creative Activities

Have a contest where the teens have to come up with the most creative ways to say no to peer pressure. It can be anything, like coming up with the most ridiculous excuse for why they cannot sneak out and go to a party (i. e., <https://assignbuster.com/membership-in-peer-groups-essay-sample/>

my dog can't sleep without me and would follow me and how uncool would that be, with him slobbering over everyone at the party?). It could be the most sarcastic response or a "no" rap. Encourage them to let loose and be as creative as possible. The kids vote for the top three. You can also encourage positive peer pressure through team building activities where teammates have to encourage each other. Set up a challenging obstacle course outside, but each team has to go through each section together and cannot leave anyone behind, or go for a challenging hike where the kids have to stay connected to each other in some way and reach the summit together.