



You may find that your friends respect you for standing up for yourself.

A peer is a person who shares something in common with you, like school or work. Peers may be the friends that you hang out with, or even the people that you'd like to hang out with. Peer pressure is when these people (your peers) try to pressure you to do something that you don't really want to do.

Fitting in

Having things in common with other people is very important to all of us. Everyone wants to fit in with a group, no matter how small that group is. When you are part of a group, you can influence others and feel accepted.

Peer pressure isn't always bad. In fact, a good kind of peer pressure is called "peer influence." Peers can encourage and support one another so that each person can be at his or her best—like being part of a team.

Sometimes though, being part of a group can cause problems. For example, one person in the group might try to get everyone else to do something that might not feel right to you, like smoking, drinking, or having sex. This sort of peer pressure can be very strong when you are a teen.

Planning ahead

If you want to make choices that you are happy with, knowing peer pressure when you see it and having a plan to deal with it are often really helpful. The tips in this handout may help you do what you think is right—no matter what "everybody else is doing."

Tips to release the pressure

Obviously, it can be hard to go against a group of friends who want you to do something that you don't want to do. It can be just as hard to say "no" to just one person. Here are some ideas to help you get out of a difficult situation.

- *Make yourself clear.* If someone is trying to turn you against something you believe in, you could say, "No, that's okay."
- *Try something different.* Try suggesting something else that you could do that's fun and isn't going to make you uncomfortable.
- *Find the exit.* If you are not comfortable with a situation, get out of it the best way you can. Say something like, "I have to go. I'll talk to you later."

Making choices

If you are unsure about the choices you need to make, talk to someone you trust—like your parents, another adult, or a close friend who won't judge you. Make up your mind and stick with it, and you won't give someone else a chance to make up your mind for you.

Every choice involves some risk. You may be worried that your friends won't like you if you don't want to do what they're doing. But you don't have to be the same as your friends. In fact, most people like people who like to do different things. You may find that your friends respect you for standing up for yourself. And you just may end up feeling pretty good.

Be on the lookout

Be prepared in case people try to change your mind, ignore you, or tell others not to hang out with you.

Have you heard these before?

- “You don’t know what you’re missing.”
- “What are you scared of?”
- “You don’t know how to have fun.”

What could you say?

- “Yeah, well, I’m not interested in finding out right now.”
- “It’s not about being scared, I just don’t feel like it.”
- “I don’t need to prove anything.”

Decide for yourself

Your peers may pressure you with messages they get from the web, TV, music, and magazines. They all show people your age smoking, drinking, doing drugs, having sex—which is not a real picture of what most young people are doing at all.

If you are being pressured to do something you don’t want to do, ask yourself:

- Is this person a good friend?
- Does he or she respect me and my opinion?

Doing your own thing can be hard, but it can also be fun. Find friends who feel like you do and who support you in whatever you want to do. Remember that respect goes both ways. It is not okay to pressure anyone else. You know how bad that can make you feel, so don’t put anyone else through it.

A good friend:

- Respects you.
- Doesn’t force you to do anything.
- Wants you to be safe.

Getting help from Kaiser Permanente

Teens can make their own appointments and come in to see a doctor, nurse, or counselor at Kaiser Permanente clinics. Some Kaiser Permanente facilities have a teen clinic with information and services especially for teens. All facilities have doctors, nurses, health educators, or mental health professionals who see teen patients.

To make an appointment to see you privately, or talk with an advice nurse, call 1-800-777-7904.

You can also visit your physician’s home page at kp.org/mydoctor.

More resources

Websites

- Kaiser Permanente kp.org/mydoctor
- KidsHealth Teen Page kidshealth.org/teen/index.html
- Planned Parenthood’s Teen Page teenwire.com

Phone numbers

- **California Youth Crisis Hotline**
1-800-843-5200
- **Child Abuse Hotline**
1-800-4 A CHILD
- **National STD Hotline**
1-800-227-8922
- **National Alcohol/Drugs Helpline**
1-800-662-HELP
- **Emergency Contraception Hotline**
1-888-NOT-2-LATE
- **National Teen Dating Abuse Hotline**
1-866-331-9474 or loveisrespect.org

Other resources

Visit kp.org/mydoctor to:

- Schedule your appointments
- Email your doctor with nonconfidential questions
- Use interactive online tools to help you stay healthy

Contact your Kaiser Permanente Health Education Center or Department for books, videos, classes, and additional resources.

If you are being hit, hurt, or threatened by a partner or being pressured to have sex, it can seriously affect your health. There is help. Call the National Teen Dating Abuse Helpline at 1-866-331-9474 or connect to loveisrespect.org.