



Self-Worth – Peer Pressure

Peer Pressure - Introduction

Peer pressure is when you are influenced by other people (your peers) to act in a certain way. If you're with friends who are doing something that you typically would not do and they convince you to do what they are doing, that is an example of peer pressure. Surprisingly, peer pressure can be a positive influence as it can help challenge or motivate us to do our best; however, peer pressure can also be negative. It can result in you doing something that doesn't fit with your sense of right and wrong. Some of the causes that lead people to be susceptible of negative peer pressure include parental neglect, fear of being ridiculed and low self-worth.

Why is negative peer pressure a problem?

Anyone that succumbs to negative peer pressure may find themselves involved in damaging behaviour and activities. This may include bullying, the use of illegal drugs, stealing, using abusive language, developing poor social skills and general disrespect.

Dr Lars Madsen, clinical advisor to The MindShift Foundation, confirms negative peer-pressure can cause people's self-worth to lower and create feelings of inadequacy. People with low self-worth are also easier targets for those who want to convince them to do things that they would not normally do. Negative peer pressure can lead people to carry out criminal acts.

According to Dr Madsen, "Negative peer pressure has a stronger effect on people with the low self-worth. Peer pressure can be of two types, negative and positive, and unfortunately the section of society which is most vulnerable to the effects of negative peer pressure is often teenagers with low self worth who are influenced by the lifestyle of their peers."

How can you lessen the effects of negative peer pressure?

Dr Lars Madsen confirms that building self-worth can help you feel more confident to make your own decisions and push back on negative peer influences. He suggests the following to help improve your self-worth when subjected to negative peer pressure.

Value common interests.

Mixing with people who like doing similar activities can help avoid situations where you feel pressured into things you don't want to do. Remember that hanging out in the 'cool crowd' might not be as much fun as it looks if you're not comfortable with the decisions that crowd is making.



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Learn to say no.

Having the strength to say no can be hard, but it can also make you feel good to be strong and in control. By saying to people why you don't want to be part of something, you will earn respect from others and gain confidence in yourself.

Don't judge others.

Try not to place judgments on other people's choices. Respecting someone else's choice may help them respect yours. Remember, you don't have to agree with their actions.

Take positive action. Taking positive action against negative peer pressure can be easier when you're more comfortable in your environment and yourself. Standing up for yourself and others can be a way to gain not only self-worth, but it will also create a positive atmosphere within your group.

Where to get help

Always remember you are not alone. Your doctor or registered health professionals are there to help you.

Our online resource page has a full list of organisations where you can get further information.
<http://mindshift.org.au/suggested-links/>.

Things to remember

The best possible support that you can give to a person experiencing negative peer pressure is to action your prevention or early intervention strategies and promote the positive aspects of peer groups. Studies show children and young people who are supported by family members are less likely to be affected by negative peer pressure.

In summary

Peer pressure can happen when we are influenced to do something we would not normally do, or are stopped from doing something we would like to do. This may be because we want to be accepted by our peers and/or family.

A peer can be anyone you look up to, or someone who you think is an equal in age or ability. A peer could be a friend, someone in the community or even someone on TV.

Peer pressure may be a positive influence and help challenge or motivate you to do your best.



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However, peer pressure can also result in you acting in ways that may not fit with your sense of right and wrong.

Updates and Further information

For the latest updates and further information please visit www.mindshift.org.au.

Our Mission

It is our mission to ensure that every person has access to the resources available to build healthy self-worth, to have a positive sense of self and to find meaning in life.

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