

Resisting Negative Peer Pressure

Kids experience peer pressure every day—from their friends, their classmates, their coworkers, and many others. While positive peer pressure is something to be encouraged, negative peer pressure can cause many difficulties in your child's life. You can help your kids resist negative peer pressure by taking the time to talk with them about it and helping them develop the tools and skills they need.

- Talk with your child about her friends—ask what she likes most about them, how they handle conflicts, and if they bring out the best in her. Try to find out more about how your child feels when she is around her friends.
- Beginning when your child is in elementary school, talk about the cost of saying no. It can be hard to say no, because it can often cost something: a friendship, social status, or something else that means a lot to your child. Let him know you understand how difficult it can be.
- Ask your child if she sees examples of negative peer pressure at school or within her group of friends. Talk about the different ways in which people experience peer pressure.
- Role-play different scenarios with your child so he has practice saying no in difficult situations. During these role-plays, focus on the following effective resistance skills:
 - Get the attention of the person(s) doing the negative pressuring (use her name, make eye contact, and say “Please listen to me!”).
 - State your “no” decision (use “I” messages and a firm voice, and reinforce the decision with body language).
 - When pressured, use self-control (restate the “no” decision, suggest an alternative subject, if appropriate, or simply leave).
 - Try other ways to say no (such as using humor, changing the focus of the conversation, reversing the pressure in a positive direction, or recruiting other help).
- Tell your child stories from your past about how you dealt with peer pressure. If you were able to resist negative peer pressure, explain why, and what you did to deal with the situation. If you were pressured into doing something you didn't want to do, what were the consequences? How did you feel?
- Teach your children excuses for getting out of tough situations. Saying things like “I have to meet up with my family—we're going out for dinner tonight” or “My parents would kill me if I did that, so I can't” can be effective ways to say no when it's tough.
- Make an effort to cultivate a positive personal identity and self-esteem in your child. If your child has low self-esteem he will be much more susceptible to negative peer pressure, and it may cause problems in the future. Address this problem before it starts by building self-esteem early and continuing throughout your child's life.

Resisting peer pressure isn't easy—in fact, it's very difficult. But if your child is prepared to make positive decisions, even in the face of negative pressure, he or she will be ready to resist peer pressure and make smart, well-informed decisions. Help your child be ready to tackle these challenges and support him or her in tough situations.

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<<http://www.parentfurther.com/discipline-values/peer-pressure/resisting>>.