

When Friends Pressure Me: What Are My Options?

INTRODUCTION

Peer pressure—the influence friends and peers have on our choices—affects everyone. Sometimes this influence is positive, but often it pushes us toward choices that don't align with our values or goals. Understanding peer pressure and having specific strategies to respond helps you maintain your independence while preserving relationships.

This packet will help you recognize different types of peer pressure, understand why it's so powerful, and develop practical responses that work in real-world situations. The goal isn't to avoid all influence from friends—that's neither possible nor desirable—but to make conscious choices about when to go along and when to stand your ground.

TYPES OF PEER PRESSURE

PEER PRESSURE TYPES	
DIRECT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clear requests or demands• "Come on, just do it"• Explicit invitations or challenges
INDIRECT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Unspoken expectations• Group norms and modeling• Feeling different or left out
POSITIVE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Encouraging healthy/productive choices• Supporting your goals and values• Challenging you to grow positively
NEGATIVE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pushing toward harmful choices• Going against your values or goals• Involving risk or potential consequences

MY PRESSURE POINTS

Instructions: Reflect on situations where you experience peer pressure.

I feel most pressured about: (Check all that apply)

- Substance use (alcohol, drugs, etc.)
- Sexual activity or relationships
- Breaking rules or laws
- Spending money
- Social media behavior
- Exclusion of others/bullying
- Skipping school/work
- My appearance or style
- Other: _____

The type of pressure that affects me most is:

- Direct pressure (explicit requests)
- Indirect pressure (just wanting to fit in)
- A combination of both

Specific situations where I feel the most pressure:

1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____
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WHY PEER PRESSURE IS POWERFUL

Understanding why peer pressure affects us helps develop better responses. Check the factors that influence you most:

- Fear of rejection or exclusion
- Desire to be liked and accepted
- Uncertainty about what's right for you
- FOMO (Fear Of Missing Out)
- Wanting to appear confident or cool
- Avoiding conflict or awkwardness
- Curiosity about new experiences
- Desire to support friends or be loyal
- Other: _____

My biggest motivation when giving in to pressure is:

This matters to me because:

RECOGNIZE THE TACTICS

Instructions: Check the pressure tactics you've experienced.

- Minimizing ("It's not a big deal")
- Challenging ("Are you scared?" "Don't you trust me?")
- False consensus ("Everyone does this")
- Guilt-tripping ("I thought you were my friend")
- Persistence ("Come on, just this once")
- Exclusion ("If you don't, you can't hang with us")
- False urgency ("Now or never")
- Offering solutions to concerns ("No one will find out")
- Other: _____

The tactic I find hardest to resist is:

Why this tactic works on me:

YOUR RESPONSE OPTIONS TOOLKIT

Instructions: Review these response strategies and circle those you'd like to try.

STRATEGY	EXAMPLES
DIRECT REFUSAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• "No thanks, I'm good."• "I don't want to do that."• "That's not for me."
GIVE A REASON	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• "I have to be up early tomorrow."• "I'm on probation and can't risk it."• "I promised my mom/coach/myself I wouldn't."
SUGGEST ALTERNATIVE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• "Let's go to the movies instead."• "I'd rather hang out at my place."

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "How about we try this instead?"
DELAY/DISTRACT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Maybe another time." • "Let's get food first." • Change the subject
USE HUMOR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "My brain barely works now, I can't make it worse!" • "Last time I did that I ended up on the news... not going there again."
BLAME SOMEONE ELSE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "My PO would send me back if I did." • "My parents check my location." • "My coach tests us randomly."
BROKEN RECORD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repeat your refusal calmly regardless of what they say • "I hear you, but I'm still not doing it."
WALK AWAY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "I need to head out." • Exit the situation physically • Text someone to pick you up

☐ **Three strategies I'm most comfortable using:**

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

One strategy I'd like to practice more:

PRESSURE SCENARIO PRACTICE

Instructions: For each scenario, write how you could respond using different strategies.

Scenario 1: Friends pressuring you to try substances you don't want to use.

Direct refusal response:

Suggest alternative response:

Blame someone else response:

Scenario 2: Friends pressuring you to skip school/work or break curfew.

Reason-giving response:

Humor response:

Walk away response:

Real scenario I face: (Describe a situation where you experience pressure)

How I could respond:

PREPARATION IS KEY

Instructions: Prepare for pressure situations before they happen.

Three high-risk situations I'm likely to face:

1.

2.

3.

For each situation, I'll prepare by:

- Deciding my boundaries in advance: _____
- Planning specific responses: _____
- Identifying support people: _____
- Creating an exit plan if needed: _____

A code word/phrase I can text a trusted person if I need help:

Who I can call for a ride/help if needed:

FINDING SUPPORTIVE FRIENDS

Instructions: Consider the qualities of friends who support your choices.

Friends who support my boundaries tend to:

- Accept my "no" without pushing
- Respect my values even if different from theirs
- Encourage my positive goals
- Stand up for me when others pressure me
- Give me space to make my own choices
- Other: _____

People in my life who show these qualities:

How I can spend more time with supportive people:

Qualities I want to look for in new friendships:

MY PRESSURE RESPONSE PLAN

Instructions: Create a personalized plan for handling peer pressure.

My biggest pressure challenges:

Strategies I'll use:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What I'll remind myself when feeling pressured:

How I'll reward myself for sticking to my boundaries:

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. When have you successfully resisted negative peer pressure? What helped?

2. How do you feel after giving in to pressure versus standing your ground?

3. What values or goals are most important to protect from negative influence?

4. How can you be a positive influence on your friends?

REMEMBER

- Everyone faces peer pressure—even adults
- Having a plan makes resisting easier
- Real friends respect your boundaries
- You don't need to explain your choices to everyone
- Standing your ground gets easier with practice
- You deserve relationships that support your well-being

- Your future self will thank you for making choices aligned with your values
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