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## **PEER PRESSURE: DETERRING STRATEGIES**

**Dr. C. MANOHARAN,  
Professor  
Amet Business School  
Amet University**

### **ABSTRACT**

The present article is concerned with peer influence and deterring strategies against the peer influence can be negative as well as negative for dealing problems related to peer adverse impacting should be conversant with the peer literature. The article features characteristics of peers, friends and measures to combat negative peer effects.

**Key words:** peer pressure positive negative measures coping strategy

### **INTRODUCTION**

Adolescence is the time when a person is most susceptible to peer pressure. Peer pressure is something everyone goes through at some point of time. During Adolescence period, teenagers tend to believe that people of same age group Understand their needs and feelings better than adults. Hence, peers tend to Influence behaviour and peer conformity in young people is most pronounced with respect to style, taste, appearance, ideology and values. For example, many teenagers start smoking just to be friends with the groups, according to peer group, are seen as 'cool'. However, all types of peer pressure are not bad.

### **TYPES OF PEER PRESSURE:**

Just as some influences can be negative and some can be positive too.

### **POSITIVE PEER PRESSURE:**

Positive peer pressure would be a pressure on oneself where you will be forced to make a positive or progressive change. For example, when your friend gives tip how to memories the difficult topic the way s/he has been doing it.



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## **NEGATIVE PEER PRESSURE:**

Negative peer pressure is when the pressure from your own opinion and thoughts doesn't match with your age mates. For example, your friends indulge in an activity like picking on someone or teasing in group. You feel that it is not correct and hence you do not engage in those activities. Due to this, your friends start maintaining distance from you or force you to join them in this activity.

## **EFFECTS OF PEER PRESSURE**

### **Low self-confidence:**

Peer pressure can affect your self-confidence by making you self doubt your own thoughts and opinions. It may also affect your wellbeing. You start self doubting yourself according to how your peers judge or see you. For example if you are being pressurized to bunk a class and you agree to it, because s/he told you so and you didn't want to feel rejected from your friends. This will have negative impact on your image of self and you would self doubt your own thoughts and opinions.

### **Poor Academic Performance:**

Some of us have high need to be accepted by their peers. This means that your peer group's approval gets placed above that of your parents and teachers. This in turn has a direct impact on your academic achievement as you may change your priorities from studies to some other activities.

### **Developing unhealthy habits:**

The more extreme forms of peer pressure propagate unhealthy habits such as smoking and drug abuse. Many teenagers start smoking or using drugs just because they can't avoid rejection from peer, fear of missing out and fail to deal with the situation assertively.

### **Isolate oneself from family and friends:**

Adolescence is age of identity exploration. Constant feeling of that nobody understands you and that the whole world is against you. We tend to get swayed away with their opinion and thoughts



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which might distant us from our family and friends. Distant yourself and fall into unhealthy company which will affect you socially and psychologically in longer run.

## **May engage in self-harm and negative thoughts:**

Sometimes the impact of peer pressure on you is so extreme that you can hardly stand to be in your own self. Isolating yourself from your family and friends can make you feel sad all the time and anxious. In many such instances, adolescents attempt self-harm behavior or fall prey of suicidal thoughts.

## **COPING STRATEGIES:**

- Avoid people or situation that you don't feel right and leave a situation that becomes uncomfortable.
- Self awareness of your own thoughts and opinion and accepting it. Understanding your own moral and immoral values.
- Learn to set boundaries so that it can save guard yourself from peer pressure
- Learn to say "NO" when you feel it's not correct or it's against your moral values.
- Share your fear and apprehensions of your assertive behavior regarding the repercussions with someone who can be your support system .Don't give up before giving it a try.
- Ask yourself, "How am I feeling about this?", "Does this seems right to me?", "What are the pros and cons of making this decision?"
- Recognize and realize: It's not ok for others to pressurize, force or trick you into doing things you don't want to or for others to make threats if you don't give in.
- Spend time with people who respect your decisions and won't put unfair pressure on you to confirm. There are other people whom you can befriends with. Try to make new friends or join group of similar thinking friends.
- When people or situations that make you feel pressurized are not avoidable, try the "delay tactics". When you can't avoid or delay a pressure filled situation, practice saying "No thanks" or



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"just NO! If "no" feels uncomfortable, practice using other responses, such as "not today", "maybe another time", or "Thanks, but I can't."

- Take a friend who supports you along if you are going to be in a pressure-filled situation and let them know what your intentions are.
- Stand up for others when you see them being pressurized by others.
- Ask for support from parents or other trusted family member, or a counselor, if you need to handle stress arising out of peer pressure and deal with it effectively. "It's easier to prevent bad habits than to break them." and ways to handle peer pressure.

Meaning of Peer Pressure:

Peer pressure is a pressure by peer group to take certain actions, adopt certain values or otherwise conform in order to be accepted. It can also be understood in a manner that it is a pressure from one peer to behave in a manner similar or acceptable to other peers. Peer pressure is a normal part of life and children need guidance from their teachers, parents and other adults so that they can handle the pressure in a positive manner.

Handling Peer Pressure

It is very important to understand for the adolescent to learn to manage the peer pressure in an effective manner. S/he needs to be taught the positive and healthy ways to deal with peer pressure. For example, if the adolescent is comforted with peer pressure, she/he can:

I make a joke and change the subject

I say No and keep saying No

I leave the area

I suggest a different activity

Adolescent can learn certain basic steps when confronted with peer pressure:

Ask questions such as:



- A) Why should I do that?
- B) Whose idea is it?
- C) Is this a good thing to do?

The last question can be answered if the act is going to cause harm to self or others or is it against the rules, norms or policies etc. Accordingly, s/he has to evaluate the consequences and manage the situation as discussed in section 2.3.2.

Adolescents can adopt certain strategies to deal with peer pressure.

- A) Nurture one's ability and self esteem.
- B) Encourage peer interaction with cultural diversities differences.

Peer pressure if dealt with a positive attitude, it can not only prove helpful for the child, but also help the child to deal with it in an amiable manner. Parents can help the adolescent deal with peer pressures by following ways:

1. Strengthen the bond with your child : He will be more likely to respect your views and values and better able to resist peer pressure if he has a good relationship with you and feels you are a source of support. This bond needs to be nurtured long before your child's teenage years.
2. Promote your child's self-esteem : Children who are confident and have positive self-worth are more likely to pursue friendships with children who are good role models and better able to resist negative peer pressure. Find opportunities to boost your child's self-esteem and enjoy success by involving him in activities that capitalize on his strengths and interests. And, of course, praise him for things he does well at home.
3. Set a good example : Your child is a keen observer of what you do and may learn more from what he sees than what he hears. If he sees that you are constantly striving to keep up with other parents, he will likely do the same with his peers. If he sees you drinking and smoking, he is less likely to resist engaging in these behaviours. If you do drink or smoke, giving it up will make a vivid impression on him.



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4. Talk with your child about peer pressure. Let your child know that you understand how hard it can be at his age to do things that make him stand out. Tell him that his peers may respect his decision not to join them in an activity even though they may not express it and that some may even admire his courage in resisting what they could not. Help him understand that a friend who is pressuring him to do something that may be harmful is not much of a friend. Appeal to his desire for autonomy by encouraging him not to let others manipulate or make decisions for him.

5. Avoid overreacting when talking about peer issues : Your child may tell you things that may make your jaw drop. If you overreact, you will discourage him from talking with you about these issues again. At the same time use these teachable moments to introduce some cautions without moralizing or lecturing. Although it may seem as though he is dismissing what you are saying, he will hear you.

6. Choose your battles carefully : Don't make an issue out of your child's wanting to wear the same clothes as his friends or adopt a trendy hairstyle. Make your stand on high-risk peer behaviour. Battling your child constantly over minor issues may drive your child toward peers who are similarly alienated from their parents. Not sweating the small stuff will enable you to be more effective when you challenge him on the larger issues.

7. Help your child develop good decision-making skills : If he can learn to trust his own instincts when making decisions, he will be less likely to let others make decisions for him. Encourage him to think through the possible consequences of the decision he is facing, including whether it may cause him harm. Let him know that giving in to the pressure now may make life harder for him later on.

8. Help your child develop responses to peers : Help him figure out what to say to peers who are pressuring him to participate in high-risk activities. Suggest responses that are short and simple and that he can say comfortably. If he is receptive, role-play with him or encourage him to practice in front of a mirror.

9. Get to know your child's friends : Make a point of encouraging your child to invite his friend's home. Spend some time with them and assess whether they are positive influences.



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10. Don't hesitate to set limits for your child : Your willingness to say no to him sets a good example and may help give him the courage to say no to a peer when faced with a potentially harmful situation.

## ROLE OF TEACHERS AND PARENTS

As adolescents spend 6-7 hours in school or we can say with peers, you as a teacher can help adolescents to deal with peer influence by following ways:

1 Be a role model for positive behaviour

1 Utilize peer pressure to keep unruly kids in line

1 Nurture abilities and self-esteem in adolescents by emphasizing on self-concept and self-worth.

Parents may follow following actions to help the adolescent in dealing with peer influences:

1 Take interest in your adolescents and their peers

1 Help the adolescents to seek amicable solutions to their problems

1 Set boundaries and rules to be strictly followed at home and outside e.g., time for returning home, no to sex/ alcohol etc

1 Take a proactive approach to potentially serious problems and involve teenagers

1 Help teenagers evaluate each friendship

## CONCLUSION

It is important to know that peer today, form an important position in the life of an adolescent and it is this influence which greatly affects the development of the child to a major extent. In this unit you have developed an understanding of peer, peer influence and the pressure created by peers. You have also understood that peers can have a positive and negative influence and it is up to the adolescent how he is able to manage it. Peer leaders play a major role in the growing up of



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the teenager and provide with a lot of inspiration to the individual. Peers create their own pressure and how an adolescent is able to deal with it, handling pressure in a beautiful manner is what he has to learn in the process of growing up as a strong individual. Teachers and parents have a role to play to deal with peer influence and to move in the right direction to become a good human being in life. Peer educators, act in different roles, such as facilitators, counsellors, sources of information, support workers or tutors thus, providing an enriching environment and leading to a healthy development of an adolescent.

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