

Combating Peer Pressure

The first time the word “no” slips from the mouth of an infant, we clap our hands and sing the praises of what we claim to be our incredibly intelligent and talented offspring. In quieter moments of reflection, we find ourselves mesmerized by the mystery and wonder of our very own child’s rapidly increasing development. Then the cute, intelligent little one develops into a teenager. What happened to the child who constantly sought their parent’s attention and company? When did an adult’s opinion and approval cease to be more important than that of their friends and peers?

To be a member of a peer group is the primary goal of most teens during adolescence. The desire for a feeling of belonging and social acceptance is very strong at this stage of a teen’s development. This is why peer influence plays a huge role in steering the experiences and interests of teenagers.

Remember, you went through this as a teen and each of our kids will go through it, too. It’s all part of the plan.

I am a Teenager and I am Normal

Questioning authority, developing independence, and separating physically and emotionally from parents are normal, healthy parts of adolescence. In early childhood, your son or daughter views himself or herself as an extension of you. In order to progress into productive adulthood, they must embrace the reality that they have their own independent identity. They do this by pushing you away and gravitating towards their peers. The peer group then becomes the main influencing factor in your

teen’s life as they attempt to evaluate and develop their own set of values. This can be an intense time of pressure for all involved.

Pressure vs. Pain

We all know that when the doctor tells us there is going to be a little bit of “pressure,” he usually means a little bit of pain. In the same sense, peer pressure may be more accurately referred to as “peer pain.” Teenagers experience intense pain associated with being disliked, unpopular or lonely; feeling embarrassed or made fun of; hurting other people’s feelings; missing out on what everyone else is doing.

Any teenager who doesn’t give into the pressure to “conform to the norm” is going to face this potential hurt, making the avoidance of giving in much less enticing. It is easy from an adult perspective to minimize these struggles, however. As a result, the first step to helping our adolescent deal with peer pressure is to empathize with them, especially when they face peer-related challenges. The second step is to start early and provide children of all ages with opportunities to develop conviction, confidence and creativity.

Conviction

- 1) Teach by example: From the time a child is young, they need to know with certainty what their family values are. This must not only be taught, but lived in our own individual lives. Hypocrisy will weaken your child’s conviction and will lead to pain when they encounter the world’s pressure.

In This Edition:

- Pressure vs. Pain
- Teach by Example
- Values vs. Behavior
- Think Ahead
- The “Why”
- Confidence
- Creativity
- The Do’s

Who is West Ridge Academy?

- Gospel Centered
- Spiritual Based
- Youth Residential Treatment
- Helped over 25,000 youth and their families
- Established in 1964



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To teach this, you must be consistently present—physically and emotionally—in your child’s life.

- 2) Values vs. behavior: When our values and behavior do not match, we experience unhappiness. Help your child understand the dissonance between their values and their behavior, and give them concrete examples of things they can do to decrease that distance.
- 3) Think ahead: Teenagers do not naturally think ahead to the future; instead, they are focused on the here and now. Talk to them about the potential consequences, negative and positive, of the choices they are or could be making. Teach them to ask, “Is it too much? Is it too early? Is it too risky?” (www.thecoolspot.gov)
- 4) Understanding “the why”: Most teenagers can tell you what they should or should not do, but many cannot tell you why. The world teaches our children daily why they should not conform to traditional family values, so we must be prepared to combat this oppositional and powerful influence. This means we, as parents, need to be well versed in “the why”. You cannot teach unless you understand. Put great thought, study, and prayer into better understanding “the why” behind why you do what you do, and take the time to share this with your children throughout their development. True understanding—spiritual understanding—creates conviction. Conviction is the

strength required to endure any kind of pressure.

Confidence

- 1) Praise your child’s accomplishments and abilities. Do not demean them, even in teasing. Children who grow up feeling confident are more likely to take that confidence with them into their teenage years.
- 2) Let your child make his or her own age appropriate choices. Teach correct principles, give your child direction, and assure your child that they can make wise decisions on their own. Allow your children to experience consequences for their own choices.
- 3) Know your child’s friends. Encourage your children from a young age to associate with positive peer influences. Confidence increases when your child’s friends say “no” to dangerous behavior. Negative peer pressure decreases among friends who have similar high standards.

Creativity

There are lots of ways to teach our children to say “no.” Teach them to be creative—make a joke, explain why, make an excuse, do something else instead, ignore the suggestion or walk away. Or, just say no. It really can be that simple.

When to Conform to the Norm: Positive Peer Pressure

From early on, get your kids involved

in positive social experiences (e.g. sports, student government, and other extracurricular activities). Such involvement increases confidence and applies “pressure” to conform to a healthy, happy adolescent norm.

Empowering Aspect of the Atonement

Most importantly, teach your children that you know the empowering aspect of Christ’s Atonement is real. Christ knows what it’s like to be alone and He knows how to help your child to be strong through this necessary aspect of human development. A testimony of and trust in the Savior is a greater gift than any conviction, confidence, or creativity you could instill in your child as they prepare to face the pressures ahead.

Our Home is a...

Safe fallback alternative if child’s activity isn’t appropriate.

Welcoming place where child brings friends—having snacks & drinks available helps.

Place of wholesome activities to observe and get to know child’s friends. Negative peer pressure is minimized when friends share similar values or standards.

Center of games and activities. Make it appealing.

Positive, busy, active and engaging place.