

TEEN PEER PRESSURE

KNOWLEDGE & PREVENTION



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Introduction

Every teenager experiences peer pressure. As a teen or young adult, an individual desires to be considered normal. This is a time when a teen is truly discovering who they are and what they want to be. This is a time when a teen is discovering purpose, dreams, and realizing skills and potential. Teens do not choose to be pressured or influenced by others. This happens naturally. However, they do oftentimes choose who will be pressuring them. At this important time in a teen's life it is especially important for parents to be both aware and involved. While some teens are able to see beyond the pressures and challenges of the teenage years, others succumb to negative pressure and engage in behavior with lasting impact.

What is Teen Peer Pressure?

Peer pressure is when a teenager makes a decision to do or associate with something that they normally would not do. This is because of how they are made to feel by their peers. Teen peer pressure isn't doing something against their will, but feeling influence to participate in something that wouldn't be the 'norm' for the teen.

Peer pressure is a common phrase used to describe the pressure experienced during the teenage years. However, peer or teen influence may be a more accurate term. As a teen engages with a group of peers and wishes to belong or become part of the group they will continue to be influenced to be more and more like them.

How can Peer Pressure be Positive for Your Teen?

Peer pressure is not always a bad thing. In fact, many teens are positively influenced by their peers every day. [Raising Children](#) gives the examples of positive peer pressure as a child being influenced to become more assertive, try new things, or to get more involved in school and activities.

Peers may challenge or influence each other in a variety of ways:

- Attending Church or Religious Events
- Living a Healthy Lifestyle
- Studying Harder
- Getting Better Grades
- Achieving a Certain Standard
- Striving for a Prestigious Career
- Volunteering for Various Causes

How can Peer Pressure Negatively Impact Your Teen?

While parents dream of their child being surrounded only by positive influences in their lives, this is not often the case. Teens are subjected to [negative pressure](#) and influence throughout the day. While not all teens will give into the pressure, sometimes teens will crumble under the pressures of their peers.

Sometimes teens will try out activities and participate in behaviors that are uncharacteristic of them. While they are not ‘forced’ to do such things, many teens feel like this is the only option for survival. The teen wishes to be accepted and find belonging in their group of peers. To go against the influence would set them up to be ridiculed, [bullied](#), or exiled from the ‘club.’

Sometimes changes in a teen’s behavior can seem minor and harmless. Perhaps a teen dresses differently, choosing different hairstyles, jewelry, or clothes than they normally would. Other times a teen may listen to a music genre they once did not prefer. Teenagers may change and adapt the way they talk, using slang or terms that were once unfamiliar to them. While all of these changes may be perceived as harmless, these could be symptoms of a bigger issue (or signs of more changes to come).

[Teacher’s Digest](#) cited six ways in which teens are negatively affected by peer pressure.

Self Confidence. Teens who deal with negative pressure will often experience a dip in self-confidence. [Negative influences](#) can make a teen feel unsure of themselves and their decisions. It can make them doubt what they have been taught, and feel insecure in their thoughts and beliefs. This uncertainty and insecurity can lead a teen to have low self-esteem and an overall lack of confidence. This negative self-image not only affects a teen’s ability to make responsible decisions now, but can also impact and impair their self-worth into the future.

Academics. A teen who faces negative peer pressures will find their highest concern being placed on their friend group. Oftentimes teenagers will negatively influence their peers to be ‘cool’ by not doing as well in their classes. Students who excel in school are often victim to peer pressures to not be a ‘teacher’s pet’ by knowing the correct answers and excelling. Other times, teens will be preoccupied with their friends and activities that they will neglect to do academic work altogether. In both instances, the teen’s grades suffer.

Adopt Dangerous Habits. Probably some of the most publicized forms of peer pressure includes those that involve risky behavior. Campaigns and ads warning against teen [drinking](#), driving, and smoking are prominent in our society. That is because teens are pressured into such activities that, while seemingly harmless and ‘cool’ at the time, can impact the rest of their lives.

Shame. Teens can feel ashamed about themselves or their families because of peer pressure. When a teen comes from a lower-income household they may feel lesser because their parents cannot afford to spend as much money, buy them designer clothes, or send them on trips and vacations. A teen may fall prey to peer influence and be the victim of bullying based on their family’s economic status.

Distancing Themselves. While it is not uncommon for teens to think nobody understands them, it is dangerous if this thinking spurs a teen to rash action. Sometimes peers will pressure or influence teens to distance themselves from friends or family who are well-meaning, positive, and constructive. Other emotionally manipulative, negative peer groups may try to cut a teen off completely from those who truly care about the teen's wellbeing.

Self-Harm. When peer pressure begins overwhelming a teen may seek options for escape. Some teens resort to self-harm or [thoughts of suicide](#) as a way to escape. It is important to recognize a teen who is being bullied through negative peer pressure. They will be anxious, self-conscious, and may even dream of permanent escape.

Peer pressure can negatively affect a teenager, setting them up for struggles as they move into adulthood. Teens who do not develop healthy habits, boundaries, and coping mechanisms are likely to continue their habits into adulthood.

What if Your Teen Has Succumbed to Peer Pressure?

Has your teen fell under the weight of the pressure of their peers? Has their language and attitude changed? Do they no longer take part in activities with the family? Have they distanced themselves from positive influences to take part in risky behavior? Are they participating in activities that are harmful to themselves and others? If you answered yes to any or all of these statements, then [Shepherds Hill Academy](#) may be a solution for you.

Shepherds Hill Academy is a [therapeutic boarding school](#) for troubled teens. SHA offers a 12 month program featuring a proven therapeutic [wilderness component](#). With a combined program of one-on-one, group and [equine therapies](#), our staff will work specifically with your teen to uncover the root of their pressure, and help them to get back on the right path.

Shepherds Hill Academy features a rustic wilderness environment, removing your teen from their current comfort zone. Modern conveniences, technology, and pop culture disappear as your teen is taken back to the simple things in life. Free of the influences of their current group, your teen will be mentored by godly men and women of character. Our 100% separate campuses allow boys and girls to grow into men and women of character without distraction from society, the opposite sex, or technology.

Call us today or [inquire online](#) to find out how Shepherds Hill Academy can make a difference in the lives of your family!

Article Resources:

- Raising Children Network, May 19, 2015, Peer Pressure and Influence: Teenagers, Retrieved from: http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/peer_pressure_teenagers.html
- Padma, August 5, 2014, 6 Negative Effects of Peer-Pressure, Retrieved from: <http://theteachersdigest.com/6-ways-in-which-children-are-negatively-affected-by-peer-pressure/>