



MODULE 4: Peers

Learning Goals

During this module, participants will:

- ◆ Define peer influences and pressures, discuss where they occur and with whom, and consider ways to deal with them.
- ◆ Discuss qualities they seek in friendships and how these qualities may change over time.
- ◆ Participate in an activity to learn more about cliques and crowds.

MODULE 4: PEERS

DEFINE THE ISSUE

Where did you sit in the school cafeteria as a teenager? What people or groups did you envy or look up to? Which did you avoid or even mock? How did your relationships with your peers affect you then? What lessons do you carry with you to the present day?

Peer and social issues are among the most noted issues identified by callers to the National Runaway Switchboard. These range from romantic relationships to problems with friends and acquaintances. Because many youth see their friends as playing a most crucial role during this period of life, the issues that arise in these relationships may feel that much more pressing.

Module 4 includes highly interactive activities to help participants experience the stress of being pressured, accepted, or rejected by peers. Participants will identify the qualities they seek in friendships and consider how their current relationships measure up.


ICONS:

For further details, see the Introduction Module.



MODULE 4: PEERS

MODULE ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY	TIME	METHODOLOGY
A. Peer Influences And Pressure	20 minutes	Discussion/Activity
 B. Friendships	10 minutes	Discussion/Brainstorming
 C. Cliques And Crowds	15 minutes	Discussion

Total time required: **45 minutes**



MATERIALS

- ◆ Poster paper or chalk/dry erase board
- ◆ Markers or chalk
- ◆ "Qualities In A Friend That Are Important To Me" worksheet



Anger Management + Stress Reduction



Consider showing the curriculum companion film "1-800-RUNAWAY".



MODULE 4: PEERS

ACTIVITY 4A. PEER INFLUENCES AND PRESSURE

20 minutes



INTRODUCE

peer influences and pressure.

STATE

Today we're going to talk about peer influences and pressure. A peer influence or pressure is when a person close to your age shapes your decisions and actions. These influences and pressures can be both positive and negative.

ASK

Who can give me an example of a positive peer influence or pressure?

ALLOW

time for participants to answer. If they need assistance, use the following examples:

- A fellow student helped me learn an easy way to remember my multiplication or periodic tables.
- My friend, who's really good at playing baseball, taught me how to pitch a fast ball.

ASK

Who can give me an example of a negative peer influence or pressure?

ALLOW

time for participants to answer. If they need assistance, use the following examples:

- A schoolmate tried to get me to help him or her cheat on an exam.
- My friend tried to get me to lie to my parents about where we were going last Friday night.

STATE

As our discussion shows, peer influences and pressure can definitely be good things, but they can also be bad things. People can experience peer pressure even when they get older. It's important for us to know how to deal with these influences and pressures from our peers and to make healthy decisions for ourselves and others.

ASK

Why do we sometimes give into peer pressure?

ALLOW

Time for participants to respond. Make sure the following points are covered:

- I want to be liked.
- I want to fit in.
- I don't want to get made fun of.
- I am curious.
- I want to try something new.
- Everyone else is doing it.
- I felt threatened.



- ASK** *What are some of the consequences of both positive and negative peer pressure?*
- ALLOW** 1-2 minutes for participants to answer.
- STATE** *So we know the differences between positive and negative peer influence and pressure, some reasons why we might give into peer pressure, and some consequences of peer pressure. Now, let's talk about WHERE peer pressure, both positive and negative, happens.*
- ASK** *Who can give me an example of a place or situation where peer pressure might occur?*
- ALLOW** time for participants to answer. If they need assistance, use the following examples:
- In friendly and romantic relationships
 - At school
 - While playing sports
 - At a party
- STATE** *Great! Now, we're going to do an activity as a group.*
- ASK** for a participant to volunteer. Have that volunteer step outside of the room so he or she cannot hear the directions or group discussion. Divide the rest of the participants into two groups.
- STATE** *We're going to do an activity where we try to persuade a person to "take our side." One group is going to take one side of the argument and the second group is going to take the other. You all are going to try to work together to persuade our volunteer to take your group's side.*
- I have a list of potential topics. You may select one of them, or the group can select a topic of its own.*
- LEAD** the group in a discussion to select a topic. Topics might include one of the following:
- Studying versus going to a party
 - Going to class versus hanging out with friends
 - Listening to friends versus listening to parents
- When the group has selected a topic, **ASSIGN** each group a side of the argument. For example, one group will argue for studying and the other group will argue for going to a party instead of studying.
- STATE** *Now that we have our topic and what side each group is taking, you will have 3 minutes to come up with ways as a group to pressure or influence your peer into taking your side.*
- ALLOW** 3 minutes for the groups to organize their arguments.
- RECALL** the volunteer.



- ALLOW** the two groups to present their arguments for their side. Make sure that each side has EQUAL TIME.
- HAVE** the volunteer pick one side.
- ASK** *Thanks for being the volunteer. How did being put on the spot to make a decision in front of your peers make you feel?*
- ALLOW** time for a response.
- ASK** *Now, for the groups - how did pressuring a peer into taking your side make you feel?*
- DISCUSS** responses.
- STATE** *Great job! The peer pressure we just witnessed was a form of direct peer pressure. Someone was telling us what to do and how we should feel about a certain issue. Peer pressure can also be indirect and individual.*
- Indirect peer pressure is not always as obvious to us as direct peer pressure. This usually happens when we hang out with different groups of friends. With one group, we might act in a way that we wouldn't act with another group. For example, we might study when we're with one group of friends, but, with another group, we might ditch class or go to a party instead.*
- STATE** *Another type of peer pressure is individual peer pressure. This is the pressure that comes from one's self. Sometimes we want so badly to fit in with a group that we pressure ourselves to do something with which we might not be comfortable.*
- So as you can see, peer pressure can be positive or negative and can come from different places and people in our lives.*
- ASK** *Do you have any questions or comments?*
- DISCUSS** responses.



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ACTIVITY 4B. FRIENDSHIPS

10 minutes



INTRODUCE

friendships.

STATE

Our friends can be some of the most important people in our lives. These are usually people that we grow to confide in and trust. Just like romantic relationships, friendships require understanding and good communication. Friendships can range anywhere from your best friend to someone who is an acquaintance.

As we grow older, the qualities that we find important in a friend can sometimes change. Also, some of our friendships may come and go, but others will stay around forever.

ASK

Why do you think some friendships last a long time while others don't? Let's spend some time brainstorming reasons why friendships may change.

ALLOW

time for participants to answer. Examples include the following:

- People move and it becomes difficult to keep in touch.
- We were involved in sports and spent a lot of time together.
- We went to different schools.
- Our lives and beliefs changed.

HAND OUT

"Qualities In A Friend That Are Important To Me" worksheets.

STATE

Let's take 3 minutes and write down at least 5 qualities that we look for in a friend.

ALLOW

3 minutes for participants to fill out their worksheets.

STATE

Next, circle those qualities that are about someone's personality. Now, put a square around those qualities that are about the way someone looks physically.

ALLOW

time for participants to complete this part of the activity.

ASK

How do you think these qualities might change over time?

How do you think that your role may change in different relationships over time?

If your friends were to list your friendship qualities, what do you think they would write down?

ALLOW

time for participants to answer all questions.

ASK

Do you have any questions or comments?

DISCUSS

questions.



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ACTIVITY 4C. CLIQUES AND CROWDS

15 minutes



INTRODUCE

cliques and crowds through an activity borrowed with permission from Mix It Up, a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center.

STATE

Cliques and crowds are groups that have exclusive members. Usually the people in these groups share a common interest or trait. Sometimes the members of these groups may play the same sport, like the same music, or wear similar brands of clothes. Cliques can be difficult to handle, especially if you don't belong to one or have been excluded from a group before.

We now have an activity to help us better understand cliques and crowds.

ASSIGN

people to one of five groups. Give each group a number.



If there are not enough people for five groups of at least three people, scale back the number of groups to three or four. The first group instructions to delete is group four instructions and then group three.

STATE

I'm going to come around to each of your groups and give you directions. Make sure to share this information only with the other members of your group.

While I'm going around, I would like for each group to come up with its own secret handshake and password.

EXPLAIN

to each group their instructions so the others cannot overhear. The instructions to each group are the following:

- *Group 1: When I give the signal, you are going to have to join one of the other groups because we have room for just four groups. Each person should join a different group.*
- *Group 2: DO NOT let anyone else join your group. Don't share your handshake and password with anyone that is not in your group.*



- *Group 3: You can accept new members into your group, but you first have to ask them a series of questions. Decide as a group what questions you want to ask them.*
- *Group 4: You must vote as a group on whether or not your group is willing to accept new members. If your last name starts with A-K, you must vote no. If your last name starts with L-Z, you must vote yes.*
- *Group 5: Your group is going to accept any new members that want to join. Instantly, share your handshake and password with them.*

STATE

Okay, let's get started. Group 1, you begin the activity.

ALLOW

participants of Group 1 to move around to the other groups. Notice whether the other groups are following their directions and remind them if necessary. Let the participants from Group 1 find another group to 'belong' to.

ASK

How many of the members from Group 1 found it difficult to join another group? Why?

DISCUSS

responses.

ASK

Groups 2, 3, and 4...The instructions I gave you specifically stated to allow NO ONE into your group or at least to give them a hard time. Did you have a close friend in Group 1 you really wanted to let into your group? How did that make you feel?

DISCUSS

responses.

ASK

Group 5...How did you feel when you knew that you didn't have to reject anyone that came to your group?

DISCUSS

responses.

STATE

The purpose of this activity is to demonstrate the impact cliques and crowds can have. Cliques are present in youth and also in adults. Remember that cliques can provide support and a sense of belonging to each member, but they can also be very hurtful and make someone feel like an outsider. Keep this in mind when you are hanging around with your own friends.

ASK

Are there any questions or comments?

DISCUSS

responses.

STATE

If you're ever feeling pressured or are having another problem with a friend, remember that you can call the National Runaway Switchboard at 1-800-RUNAWAY.



MODULE 4: PEERS

SUMMARY

STATE

- *A peer is a person close to your age who has an effect on your decisions and actions. Peer influences and pressure can be both positive and negative.*
- *Peer pressure can be direct, such as when friends ask us to do something with them, or indirect when we act one way with one group of friends and differently with another group.*
- *Individual peer pressure is when we alter our own behavior to fit in with a group.*
- *Our friends are among the most important people in our lives. Friendships can range anywhere from a best friend to someone who is an acquaintance.*
- *We all have different qualities we look for in friends.*
- *Cliques and crowds are groups that have exclusive members. They can be hard to handle if we feel excluded from a group we'd like to join.*

PEERS



MODULE 4: PEERS

HANDOUTS AND WORKSHEETS

A. Qualities In A Friend That Are Important To Me

REFERENCES

Cliques: Popular/goth/geek/loner? What are cliques and why do they exist anyway? (n.d.) Retrieved 2006, from <http://www.thesite.org/sexandrelationships/familyandfriends/friendships/cliques>

Davis, G. (2005, November). How to click without cliques: A Nationwide project pushes children to look beyond their usual school groups and reach out to new friends. *Baltimore Sun*. Retrieved 2006, from <http://www.studycircles.org/en/article.359.aspx>

Mix It Up - Southern Poverty Law Center (2005). *Mix it Up Activity Booklet: Middle & Upper Grades, 2005 Edition*. Retrieved 2006 from http://www.tolerance.org/images/teach/mix_it_up/mixitup_upper05.pdf

National Runaway Switchboard (2001). *Runaway Prevention Curriculum For Classroom and Community Educators*, Chicago, IL: NRS

RESOURCES

BAM! Body and Mind is an online destination for kids created by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has information to make healthy lifestyle choices (<http://www.bam.gov>).

KidsHealth is a website that provides doctor-approved health information about children from before birth through adolescence. KidsHealth has separate areas for kids, teens, and parents (<http://kidshealth.org>).

National Runaway Switchboard is the federally-designated national communication system (hotline and website) for runaway and homeless youth. Youth and family members call 1-800-RUNAWAY or access the website to work through problems and to find local help (<http://www.1800RUNAWAY.org>).

Reach Out! is a web-based service that inspires young people to help themselves through tough times (<http://www.reachout.com.au/home.asp>).



**QUALITIES IN A FRIEND
THAT ARE IMPORTANT TO ME**

qualities

Need to talk? Call us.
1-800-RUNAWAY
National Runaway Switchboard
www.1800RUNAWAY.org

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Module 4: Peers Pre and Post-Activity Worksheet

Initials:

Directions: Please put your initials at the top of the page and circle "pre" if you are taking the test before class or "post" if you are taking the test after class. Answer the following questions to the best of your ability!

What is your **gender**: _____ **Race/ethnicity**: _____ **Age**: _____

- A peer influence or pressure _____.
 - is when a person close to your age guides or shapes your decisions and actions
 - can be positive and negative
 - both answers a and b
 - neither answer a nor b
- Someone might give in to peer pressure for all of the following reasons **EXCEPT** _____.
 - everyone else is doing it
 - she or he wants to be liked
 - she or he doesn't want to be made fun of
 - she or he wants to remain independent
- The qualities people like in their friends never change.
 - True
 - False
- Members of a clique generally share a common _____.
 - name
 - interest
 - parent
 - math teacher
- An example of a positive peer influence is when _____.
 - my cousin begs me to share the answers for last night's homework before 3rd period
 - my friend teaches me to slow dance before the school dance
 - my boyfriend or girlfriend tries to get me to stay out past curfew
 - all of the above
- Indirect peer pressure _____.
 - can happen when we hang out with different groups
 - is when we may act different with certain groups
 - both answers a and b
 - neither answer a nor b
- Qualities we might look for in a friend include _____.
 - likes to hang out together
 - fun
 - common interests
 - all of the above
- Individual peer pressure is when we put pressure on ourselves, usually to fit in.
 - True
 - False
- A place or situation where peer pressure may occur is _____.
 - in a romantic relationship
 - at school
 - at a party
 - all of the above
- An example of a negative peer influence would be when _____.
 - my cousin begs me to take money from my parents
 - my friend helps me with my homework
 - my friend encourages me to try out for the school play
 - all of the above

