

PEER PRESSURE

Whether you are young and in school or older and focusing on a career, you are always susceptible to some form of peer pressure (both good and bad) from friends, colleagues or acquaintances; here are some tips on how to avoid negative peer pressure:

The old adage is true that you are who you hang out with. If you want to be successful, surround yourself with successful people, and if you want to be famous, surround yourself with famous people and so on and so on. Peer pressure will come at you from those you are friends with, so if you want to avoid somebody pressuring you to do something you are not comfortable with, take a good look at your friends and those who surround you? Do they have the same values as you? Do they hold the same morals close to your heart as you do? Your friends do not have to be moral carbon copies of you, but they should, at least, hold some or many of the same values as you do.

If you are approaching a situation where you have a suspicion you will be pressured or tempted to do something you do not necessarily want to do, mentally go through what you would say if the pressure started to build. For example, perhaps you have recently quit smoking but you know that tonight, when you go out with your friends they will be smoking. Imagine one of your good friends or acquaintances asking you to just “live a little and have a smoke.” What would you say to them? You might tell them that you recently quit and while the temptation was there, you wanted to see how long you could hold out as a little competitive game with yourself. Chances are, your friends may respect your wishes to remain smokeless, but you will want to be ready in case somebody does approach you about it.

It’s easier said than done, but listen to your gut feeling. Your gut will not steer you wrong, as long as you do what it says. If you have a group of friends who are trying to get you to go camping or hiking in some dangerous trails and your gut advises you against it, there is a reason. Survival of the fittest does not apply only to physical strength, it applies also to somebody with mental and moral strength. Your friends may razz you about dropping out of the camping or hiking trip, but if they are real friends, they will respect your decision.

When approached with a situation where you are unsure what to do, take a moment to seriously think of the consequences of your actions. Maybe you are in school and your friends want you to skip out of class. Sure, it sounds fun and you can go catch a movie or hang out at one of their houses, but let yourself mentally go through the cons of the situation. Say you DO decide to skip out. First, you will be behind in your classes and they may have assigned homework that you will now be late on. Second, your teacher will want an excuse for where you were and will want a note from your parents. Third, your parents may find out and they will not only be very disappointed, they might not trust you anymore and may strip you of certain privileges. Is all that worth leaving school a few hours early one day? Probably not.

Peer pressure can be really tough to fight because we all want to fit in, but if you think about it ahead of time, hang out with the right people who respect you and help you to feel confident, you can be true to who you are!

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