

Peer Pressure

Talk to your middle schooler about dealing with peer pressure

Peer pressure may be unpleasant, but it's also extremely common--especially in middle school. So what can you do about peer pressure? Teach your preteen strategies for handling it. The better he gets at deflecting pressure from friends, the more immune he may become to it.

Of course, he first needs to understand what it is, so have a conversation about it. "When kids try to get you to do something that you know you shouldn't, that's peer pressure." Things he might be pressured into doing include trying alcohol or drugs, smoking or shoplifting.

Once your preteen is clear on what peer pressure looks like, teach him strategies to combat it. Your child should:

- Think before he acts. Is the thing he's being asked to try really worth it? How will he feel about himself if he gives in?
- Laugh it off. Humor is great for defusing tension. "Yeah, I'd love to steal that CD, but then I'd be grounded for about a thousand years!"
- Firmly say no. Sometimes an assertive "no" is all it takes to make peers back off. Help your preteen practice saying it to you until he feels confident enough to say it to them.

Reprinted with permission from the September 2010 issue of *Parents Still make the difference!*® (Middle School Edition) newsletter. Copyright © 2010 The Parent Institute®, a division of NIS, Inc. Source: Harriet S. Mosatche, Ph.D. and Karen Unger, M.A., *Too Old for This, Too Young for That! Your Survival Guide for the Middle-School Years*, ISBN: 1-57542-067-8, Free Spirit Publishing.