

Is it easier for Christians?

In some ways, peer pressure is easier for Christians to resist than it is for non-Christians. At first this may not seem so, Satan doesn't pressure unsaved people like he does Christians, because unsaved people pose no threat to him. But Satan will do anything to get a Christian to break fellowship with God. But Christians have a greater sense of right and wrong than many non-Christians do, so their values sometimes allow them to say no quickly to anything that is dishonest or wrong. As a Christian you always have the strongest person on your side: God is always the majority! When you take a stand for what's right, you are taking a stand for God, and God's side is always the winning side. In this sense, Christians do have it easier, because God promises never to abandon us.

Good advice from the Bible

Negative peer pressure is just another name for temptation. The Bible gives some wonderful examples of people who resisted temptation. The key Bible verse to memorize is James 4:7, which says to submit yourself to God, for if you resist the devil he will flee from you. Keep in mind that even Jesus Christ was tempted, but not successfully: by Satan (Matthew 4:1-10), by the Jewish leaders (Matthew 16:1), by Peter, His faithful disciple (Matthew 16:23). Job withstood enormous temptation to give in to Satan. He resisted and did right simply because it was right.

God knows how to rescue us

In 2Peter 2:9 we read that the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation. And 1Corinthians 10:13 tells us that God is faithful and will not allow temptation beyond what we can resist.

God can deliver us from temptation and negative peer pressure if we pray for it. But we should pray the temptation does not arise. If it does, say no quickly and get away from the difficulty. Even if the results from doing right don't seem promising, they will turn out for the best in the end.

You have God's Word on it!

How Bold Are You?

Peer Factor

Have you had the talk?

Peer pressure takes place when a child does something GOOD OR BAD as a result of being pressured by peers. All children experience peer pressure and give in to it at one time or another. While parents can't protect their children from experiencing peer pressure, there are steps they can take to minimize its effects. Establish a plan with your tween and equip them with skills to manage peer pressure before adolescence.

Bad Companions

Some children, rather than experiencing the normal peer pressure that occurs with most children, have one or two bad companions who are a negative influence. Children choose bad companions for a number of different reasons. Some choose them for the attention they get (both from parents and other children) while others choose them for companionship. Children may also choose bad companions for the excitement that accompanies getting into trouble, to rebel against parents, or because they suffer from low self-esteem and/or little self-confidence. As with peer pressure, there are steps that parents can take to minimize the effect that bad companions can have on their children. The first step is to ask your child if they have a plan to handle peer pressure. Listen carefully to how they respond.

1. "Oh, mom, I don't have to worry about peer pressure, you know I'm a good kid." THIS CHILD HAS NOT DEVELOPED A PLAN FOR HANDLING PEER PRESSURE AND IS TRYING TO SAY WHAT IS EXPECTED 2. "Don't you trust me?" THIS IS PROBABLY A MANIPULATIVE STATEMENT. THE CHILD MAY HAVE ALREADY EXPERIENCED PEER PRESSURE, GOTTEN INTO SOME TROUBLE AND IS AVOIDING THE ISSUE 3. "Oh mom, I do what you told me to, I just say no.", LOOK FOR SPECIFIC RESPONSES OR EXAMPLES, NOT GENERALISTIC ANSWERS 4. "I'll just tell them it's (stealing, vandalism, or whatever the pressure) is stupid." THEY PROBABLY WON'T SAY THIS TO THEIR FRIENDS, AND THEY PROBABLY DON'T HAVE A PLAN.

What Parents Can Do

***Develop a close relationship with your children, develop an open, honest and close relationship with your children.** ***Help children understand peer pressure.** When children have an understanding of the process and the feelings involved with peer pressure, they are much less likely to give in to it. ***Plan regular and frequent family activities.** ***Encourage friendships with positive role models.** When children are young, parents can do this by inviting such children over to play or inviting them to join the family for an outing. Parents can also encourage their children to join groups or activities (e.g., scouting, sports, and church groups) which involve interacting with positive role models. ***Get to know your children's friends and their parents.** When parents do this, they are able to see whether their children's friends are positive influences, and whether friends' families have values similar to their own. ***Know where your children are and what they are doing.** ***Don't criticize your children's friends.** When children have friends who are a bad influence, it is not a good idea for parents to criticize these friends. In many cases, children will become defensive and will continue to see such friends out of a sense of loyalty or to rebel against their parents. Instead of criticizing bad companions, however, parents can and should discuss specific behaviors and/or actions. For example, a parent can say, "It seems like every time Julie is over here to play, you break a house rule." ***Try to figure out the reason, then address it.** For example, if a child gives in to peer pressure because he or she lacks the self-confidence necessary to stand up to peers, then parents can take steps to improve self-confidence in their children. ***Encourage a wide variety of friends.** This will help promote individuality, and will make it less likely for children to give in to peer pressure from any one group. ***Encourage individuality and independence.** One of the best ways to do this is for parents to model or demonstrate these behaviors. Parents who resist pressure from their own peers are teaching their children a valuable lesson. Parents who express their individuality are doing the same. ***Teach assertiveness.** Parents should teach their children how to stand up for what they believe in. Parents can do this by using role-playing practicing saying no to their peers. Parents can also teach their children how to problem solve when they are faced with peer pressure, perhaps by suggesting alternative activities, or by explaining why they refuse to participate in a certain activity. ***Praise assertiveness.** Parents should provide lots of praise to their children when they act in an assertive manner. Behavior that is praised is much more likely to be repeated. ***Provide discipline.** Parents should apply natural consequences or another form of punishment. Lecturing will probably not be enough to discourage such behavior in the future. Natural consequences can be restricting privileges, not allowing the child to spend time with the group or friend with whom he or she got into trouble, or requiring that the child make restitution for the wrong he or she has done. ***Seek help.** If a child is consistently giving in to peer pressure, or chronically getting into trouble with bad companions, a mental health professional should be consulted.

Having a plan of action, before circumstances arise, will help reduce the effects of peer pressure and also communicate a caring and loving relationship to your child.