

PEOPLE PLEASER [peer pressure]

THIS WEEK

Here's the reality—peer pressure surrounds our teenagers. They spend less time with their families, attend classes with large groups of peers, work at jobs with people their age, play sports with friends, and talk on the phone with them. Teenagers learn from, grow with, and are influenced by others their age. This TalkSheet will help you to deal with the real issues facing your kids and the discuss the influences of peer pressure.

OPEN

Announce you are going to conduct a taste test, like those they've seen on TV. Have them taste two different brands of soda (like Coke and Pepsi) or ice cream (or whatever else you'd like), to determine which is best, brand A or brand B.

Beforehand, tell some of your kids to choose brand A. Their job is to persuade the others to pick the same brand. Tell them to do whatever they can to get the rest of the group to pick brand A. You'll find that some in the group will give in to this pressure and will choose brand A. Keep a tally of the results and then discuss the results. How were the kids influenced by others? Why did they listen to their peers?

Some kids won't be persuaded—congratulate them for having resisted. What made them stick up for their choice? How did they feel when the others were pressuring them? What other feelings or ideas did they have?

THE DISCUSSION, BY NUMBERS

1. Discuss the difference between being a leader and being a follower. Ask the kids to brainstorm the characteristics of each. Point out there is nothing wrong with being a follower—without followers there would be no leaders—but the trick is to make certain those you are following know where they are going, and are headed in the right direction.
2. Ask the kids to share their choices and discuss other alternatives to negative peer pressure.
3. These true-to-life situations will provide practice in dealing with similar ones in their own lives. Let them share advice and responses with each other.
4. Discuss these statements in a general way, but be careful not to embarrass anyone. Each deals with a specific aspect of peer pressure and will help kids evaluate their own vulnerability. Choose one or two to emphasize, such as the one regarding parents. Try to help them stretch their

minds and think through the consequences of giving in.

5. Allow kids to share their completed sentences and thoughts on these verses. Do they think God understands peer pressure? Why or why not?

THE CLOSE

There's nothing wrong with going along with friends—as long as it isn't illegal, unethical, harmful, or likewise. God has given people beliefs and a conscience. He trusts that they'll respect themselves and him enough to make wise choices. Real friends respect each other's opinions and beliefs.

There's no doubt that the values of the world are going to be in opposition to the values of the kingdom of God. Your kids need to seek first the kingdom of God (Matthew 6:33) to help them consistently make the right decision.

Point out that Christ also was tempted in all things—just as all people are—and he understands. Christ can help in their struggles and the power of the Holy Spirit will enable them to be self-controlled—a fruit of the Spirit—rather than be crowd-controlled.

MORE

- Ask your group to find examples in the media of how kids influence other kids. They'll find examples of this pressure (anything from stealing to having sex) on nearly every teenage TV show and in magazine advertisements. Have them bring a few examples of this pressure and discuss if the media portrays peer pressure as good or bad.
- Do your kids have a solid list of their personal beliefs and values? Have them make a list of their beliefs and values—then sign the list as a contract for themselves as things they won't compromise on (such as doing drugs or having premarital sex). Encourage them to set personal goals for themselves and to include God in this goal. No temptation is too great to resist with God on their side.