



Peer Group Influence

Every Individual has the tendency to associate him/herself with a group where they feel belonged. With children, it is special and unique. They want to develop friendships with people of the same age group which is called a peer group.

“In developmental psychology, a peer is typically an age mate with whom a child or adolescent interacts.” - American Psychological Association

The need to belong to a group is greater in the teens than in childhood. As the child progresses from the pre-teen or teenage period he/she tries to identify himself/herself with a group. This is also the time when the child will try to fit in a group and can be at times confused about himself/herself. In this delicate and sensitive developmental stage, it is most important that the child is exposed to a healthy environment. This is the time when the child will explore the world and it will expand beyond the immediate family circle. Often children here are swayed by negative or wrong peer group influence. If it is negative it can cause risky behavior like a phone or gaming addiction, unreasonable demands, and unhealthy eating habits. On the other hand, a positive peer group works wonders and has positive outcomes.

For instance: At times, children choose a stream or subject just because they feel that their friends are going for it. They may even act or dress a certain way because they think everybody else is doing it even if it may not be suitable or comfortable for them.

Signs that may indicate the child is inclined toward the wrong peer group:

1. Imitating lifestyle choices to be a part of a group
2. Being Secretive with their phones
3. Arguments and disagreements are often
4. Constantly worried about being able to 'fit in'.
5. Often irritable

Below are mentioned some ways in which Parents can help their child navigate through Peer Pressure:

Empathize: Parents always wish their children have good company which will contribute to their well-being. However, at some point in our lives, we also may have faced some kind of peer pressure, which is why it is crucial that we empathize with our children if they are going through it. Simply saying 'I understand how you feel, let's talk about it' is the right way to make them feel that we empathize with them.

Listen and support them: Listen to your child's concerns without judgmental. Communicate to your child that no matter what we will always be there for you, this will make your child feel safe & secure You can begin by sharing your teen or

childhood experiences, which can be an ice breaker and encourage your child to share his/her problems.

Setting Healthy Boundaries: Peer pressure is something everyone faces at some point, but it is important to go by what you think is the right thing to do. Most children may succumb to peer pressure with the fear of rejection or not being accepted as part of the group. Helping the child to build safe boundaries and learning to say 'NO' can work in strengthening their resilience to refuse negative peer pressure.

Talking and working together to strengthen resilience in dealing with substance abuse like drugs, smoking, or internet trolling/abuse and explaining the consequences of having drugs can be really helpful.

Develop Self-esteem: At times, conveying to your child that his/her best is also perhaps not good enough can lead to unhealthy self-esteem. It is important to appreciate your child's efforts, when he/she is seeking your approval as this will motivate him/her to strive to work hard and be on the right track.

It is important to make your child feel heard and accepted at home. Make him/her feel that their opinion also matters! The child will then learn to confidently stand up for what he/she believes is right and not give in to peer pressure.

It is certainly tough to sail through peer pressure. However, supportive parenting can help the child become resilient and understand that losing a friend is better than indulging in something that goes against his/her will, or values or makes him/her feel uncomfortable.

“It's better to walk alone than with a crowd going in the wrong direction. Do what you feel is right - Anonymys

With best wishes,
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