

Protecting Your Teen From Peer Pressure



When your child was a baby and taking their first steps, you most likely hovered over them, ready to provide a safe haven if they should fall. And, as much as you would like to, as they grow and enter the teen years, your days of being there to break their falls are, for the most part, far behind you. Most parents dread the effects that peer pressure places on their child, as well as the fact that their child might, in fact, succumb to them. But the experts say that there are some things that you can do to support your child in the face of peer pressure.

You might think that the “popular” teen, the one with many friends, who plays sports and has many other interests and activities, is protected from the effects of peer pressure. But you would be wrong. Of course, the isolated child, with no social circle, has their own set of problems, but they are not typically the ones who are most affected by peer pressure. The child who is popular and part of the “in” group is the most vulnerable. These children tend to value the opinions of their peers, and desperately want to remain part of the group. Headstrong children who have few parental limits in their lives are also particularly susceptible to the effects of peer pressure. But parents can still exert a positive influence on their child by following some of these tips.

Keep lines of communication open. Talk to your children, and do not wait until they are adolescents to do so. Educators and counselors agree that open communication between parents and children helps the child better manage pressure from their peers. Children who can talk to their parents about any issue, and who know that even if their parents do not approve of something, they will still listen and offer advice are ahead of the game. Research shows teens who report learning about drugs from their parents are up to 50% less likely to use drugs than those who have not learned anything about drugs from their parents.

Practice some scenarios. What if your child is offered a cigarette or a swig of alcohol? Will he or she be prepared on how to respond? Instead of acting like this will never happen, you can help your child prepare for such a scenario by role playing, and offering some ideas as to how they can respond.

Listen to your teen. Express your opinions, but do not let them shut down the communication between you and your child. If you shut down on certain topics, your child may feel that he or she cannot trust you or cannot talk to you about these topics. Many parents are uncomfortable talking to their child about sexual activity. They do not want to believe that their child may be sexually active, and they may refuse to talk about it with their child. But, in reality, although we may not like it, and certainly do not condone it, many teens today are sexually active. And it is certainly preferable that your child get any information and/or help that he or she needs from you rather than from their peers.

Know their friends. The best way to know what is going on at school or what teenagers do after school is to know their friends and the parents of their friends. It becomes tricky if you disapprove of their friends because if you voice this disapproval, it may make your teen cling to the friend even more. Teenagers want to make their own decisions as to whom to be friends with because they believe that their parents have picked their friends their whole life, and this is a first major step toward independence. While you may

not be able to stop your child from being friends with someone you do not approve of, you can discuss with them the activities they and their friends are involved in, and the consequences of the actions they take.

Talk about issues. The more your teen knows about dangerous behavior, the less likely they are to engage in it. Many times, teens take part in self-destructive behavior because their peers glorify it and do not talk about the risks associated with it. You can step in and provide this information to your child, and also provide them with responses they can use when confronted with the behavior.

Pick your battles. You have to decide what you feel is worthy of an argument between yourself and your child. If your child wants to go to school wearing all black every day, you may not approve of it, but it does not mean your child is practicing deviant behavior because of it. So it is best to let them dress as they like, but do have a conversation about the image they project and how others will perceive them because of it.

Support and advise. When you talk to your child about an issue, support their ideas and thoughts, but also advise him or her on making good choices. When your child is talking about something that worries you, voice your concern and provide examples on what could happen if he or she chose to do one thing over another. It is important to provide information to your child while still allowing them to make their own choices, as long as those choices do not put them in peril.

*** Remember: you are still the parent.** Parents do not get the reputation of being strict or of being the “bad guy” for no reason. If you fear your teen is engaging in destructive behavior, it is your responsibility to step in and take action. Some teens will not learn without a consequence, which means that you have the job of providing the consequence before the behavior escalates to the point where someone in authority provides the consequence.

Source: Leverage Life

Stress

For free and confidential assistance, call your

Marital Problems

Financial

Employee Assistance Program and speak with a Care Coordinator:

Family Problems

Legal

(713) 781-3364

Se Habla Español

Alcohol/Drug Problems

(800) 324-4327

(800) 324-2490

Depression

www.4eap.com

Other Referrals

Your employer has contracted with Interface EAP to provide you an Employee Assistance Program.