

Name _____

Peer Pressure and the Power to Say No: Resisting Substance Abuse Together

Peer pressure plays a significant role in the decisions young people make, especially when it comes to substance abuse. In this engaging reading passage, we will explore what peer pressure is, how it influences substance abuse, and strategies to resist it.



Understanding Peer Pressure

Peer pressure is the influence that peers, or people in one's age group, can have on an individual's choices and behavior. It can be both positive and negative. While positive peer pressure encourages healthy behaviors, negative peer pressure can lead to risky decisions, such as trying drugs or alcohol.

The Role of Peer Pressure in Substance Abuse

- **Curiosity and Experimentation:** Many young people are curious by nature and may be tempted to try substances because their friends are doing it. They want to fit in or see what it feels like.
- **Desire for Acceptance:** Adolescents often seek acceptance and validation from their peers. They may believe that using substances will make them more popular or help them belong to a particular group.
- **Fear of Rejection:** The fear of being excluded or rejected by friends can lead individuals to engage in risky behaviors, including substance abuse, even if they are not interested.
- **Social Norms:** In some peer groups, substance use may be considered a norm or a way to bond. The pressure to conform to these norms can be strong.

Strategies to Resist Peer Pressure

- **Build Self-Esteem:** Developing a strong sense of self-worth can make it easier to resist negative peer pressure. When individuals value themselves, they are less likely to seek validation through substance use.
- **Assertive Communication:** Teach young people how to assertively express their thoughts and feelings, including saying "no" to peer pressure without feeling guilty.
- **Choose Friends Wisely:** Encourage young people to choose friends who share their values and support their decisions to stay substance-free.
- **Have a Plan:** Help individuals come up with strategies for different situations, such as how to decline offers of drugs or alcohol and exit uncomfortable situations.
- **Seek Support:** Let young people know that they can always seek support from trusted adults, such as parents, teachers, or school counselors, if they find themselves in difficult situations involving peer pressure.

