



HELPING TEENS NAVIGATE PEER RELATIONSHIPS

Facilitator's Guide

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OVERVIEW

As children move into the teen years, they naturally shift focus from their family to friends and acquaintances their own age – their peers. However, parents still play an important role in their children's lives and can help them navigate the sometimes complex world of peer relationships. This lesson gives parents (and other adult caregivers) ideas and information to help adolescent children cultivate and maintain healthy peer relationships. The lesson also offers advice for helping teens resist pressure from peers to engage in harmful or risky behavior.

AUDIENCE

The primary audience consists of parents or other adult caregivers of teens. Teens may also attend this class with their parents; adaptations for including teens in the class are noted throughout this guide.

LESSON TIME

This lesson takes 1 hour if one activity is offered, 1 hour and 15 minutes if two activities are offered, and 1 hour and 30 minutes if all three activities are offered.

LESSON CONTENTS

For Facilitators

- Setting the Stage for Your Workshop (general guidelines for working with a group)
- Research Overview for Facilitators
- Peers Presentation (2 PDF versions)
 - Peers Presentation (normal slide view— for showing class)
 - Peers Presentation Notes for Facilitators (notes view for reference in class)
- Facilitator's Guide (this document)
- Resources for Facilitators (list of books and websites)
- Comprehensive Reference List (citations for sources used to develop this workshop)
- Friends Are Everything: Scenarios on Peer Relationships (discussion guide)
- Peers and Peer Pressure: True or False? (quiz and answer key)
- Parents, You Can Help! (handout for use in Activity B)





For Participants

Make copies of the following handouts for each participant (as needed):

- Evaluation form
- Peers Presentation for Participants (PDF — 3-slide handout view for taking notes)
- Peers, Cliques, and Crowds – What do they mean for my teen?
- Resources for Parents and Teens (list of books and websites on peer relationships)
- Friends are Everything: Scenarios on Peer Relationships
- Peers and Peer Pressure: True or False? (Make a few extra copies for participants who want to take the quiz with their teen at home).
- Parents, You Can Help!
- Teen Talk: But Everybody’s Doin’ It
 - Access this handout at: <http://www.extension.umn.edu/family/families-with-teens/fact-sheets/teen-talk-everbody.pdf>.

SUPPLIES

- Paper and pencils
- Nametags and markers
- Flipchart or whiteboard with markers
- Computer and projector for PowerPoint Presentation (optional)

PREPARATION

- Read “Setting the Stage for Your Workshop” to help you prepare the room and materials for participants before class.
- Read “Research Overview for Facilitators” to familiarize yourself with research on teens’ peer relationships.
- Review this guide to decide how best to use lesson materials with your participants.
- Review “Resources for Facilitators” and “Comprehensive Reference List” — noting books, websites or articles that interest you. Read these resources as time permits.
- Review the PowerPoint presentation and decide whether you want to use it to accompany the workshop. The facilitator’s guide includes slide numbers that accompany parts of the lesson if you wish to use the presentation. You might choose to use it as the basis for group discussion. It is also ideal to use in a more formal presentation with a larger group.

LESSON OUTLINE

1. Welcome and Introductions (10 minutes; Slide 1)

Begin by introducing yourself as the facilitator and welcoming the group. For smaller groups, invite participants to introduce themselves by their first names, including teens if present. If teens



are not joining the workshop, ask participants to give the age and gender of their children. For larger groups where teens are not attending, you might ask participants to raise their hand if they have teens of certain ages. Go over the shared responsibilities outlined in “Setting the Stage for Your Workshop.”

2. Review Objectives (3 minutes; Slide 2)

Provide a general description of the lesson.

Review the lesson objectives:

At the conclusion of this lesson, you will understand:

- Adolescents’ normal developmental shift from parents and family to peers.
- The importance of peers to teens.
- The basics of peer relationships for teens.
- How peer pressure influences teens.
- The positives and negatives of peer pressure
- Ways parents influence their teen’s attitudes, interests, and beliefs

3. Discussion: (15 minutes Slides 3-9)

Start the class with a discussion. Ask group participants:

How would you describe your teen’s relationship with peers?

How have these relationships changed since your child entered the teen years?

Allow some time for discussion. Write participant responses on a flipchart or whiteboard, and give the group feedback building on what they have brought up in the discussion.

Next, define peers, cliques, and crowds:

Peers — the larger group of friends and acquaintances of about the same age who share similar experiences.

Cliques - the smaller group of peers the teen feels close to and who know each other well - their friends. Cliques can have both positive and negative influences on a teen or pre-teen.

Crowds — the reputation-based groups typically found in schools. Crowds form for many different reasons, often around interests or social status. The exact nature of crowds can vary, but they exist in every school.

Discuss the importance of peers for teens, and that the shift in focus from family to peers is normal.

Discuss how peers and peer groups fill many needs for teens.





So why do teens spend more time with their peer group than with their family? Peers fill many of their needs, including:

- Support for figuring out abilities and interests.
- A way to learn how to interact with others.
- Independence from adults.
- A way to learn how to deal with problems.
- Emotional support.
- Opportunities to develop friendships.
- (Optional) Distribute the handout “Peers, Cliques, and Crowds — What do they mean for my teen?” Suggest parents spend time reading this at home.

Summarize points in the handout about situations with peers that should concern parents.

- If your teen appears to have no friends, he or she may need some help learning how to make and keep friends.
- If your teen is secretive about the identity of his or her friends, it could be that he or she thinks you won’t like them, or won’t approve of them.
- If your teen suddenly loses interest in friends and wants to be alone for more than two weeks, he or she may be suffering from depression.
- If all your teen’s friends are much older, he or she might be involved in some risky activity.

If you sense parents have these concerns, allow time for some discussion.

4. Activities

Use one or more of the following activities, depending on time and the group’s needs.

Activity A – Peers and Peer Pressure: True or False? (15 minutes; Slides 10-26)

Distribute paper and pencils to participants. Ask them to write down one or two words they think of when they hear the term “peer pressure.”

Ask participants to share what they wrote. Record their responses on the flipchart or whiteboard, and then discuss whether the words are positive, negative, or both.

Distribute the quiz, “Peers and Peer Pressure: True or False?” to participants. Give participants time to read and answer the questions by circling their responses. When they’re done, use your copy of the quiz *with* the answer key to lead a discussion with participants.

Activity B: Parents, You Can Help! (15 minutes; Slides 27-32)

Distribute the handout, “Parents, You Can Help!” Point out the main ideas from the parent handout and share a brief example of each:

- Keep the parent-teen relationship going and growing. A good relationship with parents is the best insurance that the young person will choose friends of whom parents approve. Teens still want and need the security of a strong parent-teen relationship.
 - A good relationship will weather the storm of disagreement over friends or what your teen and his or her friends want to do. Keep listening, setting limits, and providing support, even when your teen appears not to be listening.



- Make it easy to stay involved in your teen's life and be aware of friend choices. Talking with your teen about what he or she is planning to do and with whom can occur as part of day-to-day conversations, not just in response to your demand for information.
- Be sure your home is a comfortable place for your teen to really be his or her own person. It should be a place where your teen can feel secure, relaxed, and protected from the world. If your teen feels supported and loved, it will be much easier for him or her to talk with you about problems.
- Continue to share your values and standards. Family beliefs and values influence teens in their choice of friends. For example, if parents value education, children will look for friends who also value education.
- Help your teen build self-esteem by helping him or her discover strengths and talents (for example, supporting your teen in continuing to develop his or her talent for working with young children, or excel in a sport).
- Encourage independent thinking and decision making within the family. Saying what you want takes practice.
 - For example, your teen may want to go to a certain movie, but may or may not feel comfortable voicing his or her opinion in a group. Encourage your teen to share his or her opinions and desires about age appropriate decisions, such as extra-curricular activities and what to wear to school.
 - Saying “no” to something that sounds like fun takes even more practice for teens. For example, a teen may be tempted to go with friends to a party at the home of someone who has a “bad” reputation and whose parents aren't home. The teen knows it's a bad idea, but may or may not say so, depending on his or her level of confidence in speaking his or her mind and doing what he or she knows is best. That sense of independence and knowing oneself can be encouraged as children are growing up.
 - It is important for a teen to be okay expressing his or her opinion respectfully and saying “no.”
- Talk with your teen about potentially risky situations he or she could encounter. It is important to encourage discussion that anticipates situations your teen may encounter and how he or she will respond.
 - For example, when talking about drinking alcohol at a party, ask your teen to think about the alternatives and what he or she feels is right. This is part of the practice needed to be independent and to make one's own decisions.
- Know your teen's friends. It can be fun to take time to get to know your teen's friends, especially his or her best friend. You will learn to appreciate your teen's friends for their individuality.
 - Be careful to look beyond the outward appearances of your teen's friends. The teen years are the time to try out things. Superficial things like hair color, choice of jewelry, and the latest fashions or music are just that - superficial.

Activity C: Friends Are Everything: Scenarios on Peer Relationships (Slides 33-35)

Distribute the discussion guide, “Friends Are Everything: Scenarios on Peer Relationships” and





facilitate group discussions - using one of the options below.

Option 1 - for classes of five or fewer participants (15 minutes). Ask participants to choose two scenarios to discuss as a group — one scenario from parents' perspective and one scenario from teens' perspective. **Option 2 - for classes of six or more participants** (15 minutes). Ask participants to form small groups of 2-3 people (or 4-6 if teens are present). Assign two scenarios to each small group to discuss — one scenario from parents' perspective and one from teens' perspective. Allow about 5 minutes for discussion, and then ask each small group to share highlights of their discussion with the entire group.

For either option, ask participants to share any further ideas they may have, as parents, caregivers, and family members, to help teens stand up for their own beliefs and do what they feel is right. If desired, write responses on a flipchart or whiteboard.

You may also want to reinforce the ideas on how parents can help teens handle peer relationships from the handout, "Parents, You Can Help!"

5. Homework (5 minutes; Slide 36)

Give participants ideas for discussion or practice at home.

- Make extra efforts to really listen to your teen, especially for comments about friends. Use those as conversations starter about peer relationships.
- Take the true or false quiz with your teen (parents might want to take home an extra copy.)
- Talk with your teen about inviting friends to your home more often, especially if he or she hasn't been doing so. Talk about what would make your home a welcoming place for their friends.

You may choose to use the optional handout, *But Everybody's Doin' It...*, *A Teen Talk Fact Sheet*, which includes more information about how teens make decisions.

6. Closing (5 minutes; slide 37)

Summarize key ideas for participants:

As children move into the teen years, they naturally shift focus from their parents and family to friends. Peer pressure certainly exists, but perhaps not always in the way we have thought about it. Peers can have both positive and negative effects on teens. Families, including parents and other caregivers, continue to influence their teens.

Stay connected and involved in your teen's life! Listen and show love and support for your teenager as you help them navigate peer relationships.

7. Evaluation (5 minutes; Slide 38)

Background

Administering the evaluation is important to you, the facilitator, as well as University of Minnesota Extension. The evaluation is a way for you to:

- Determine whether learning objectives were met (What did participants learn?).
- Receive feedback on your teaching style and methods.
- Assess future needs.

- Gather demographic and other information to report to supervisors or funders.
- The evaluation fills similar needs for us at University of Minnesota Extension. Data collected from completed evaluation forms allow Extension to:
- Develop new resources for parents and families.
- Share what we learn about parenting and families with teachers, researchers, and other professionals across the country.
- Report to our funders how resources are used and what difference they make to families and communities.

Instructions

Distribute evaluation forms and pencils. At the end of the lesson, please have participants take a few minutes to complete the evaluation.

8. Wrap-Up (2 minutes; slide 39)

Collect the evaluation forms, and thank participants for taking the time to fill them out. Also thank participants for attending and announce future workshops and topics if applicable.

9. After Class

Make copies of the evaluation forms for your own use before turning them into Minnesota Extension.

Facilitators should send the evaluations to:

Jodi Dworkin, Ph.D., Associate Professor
University of Minnesota
Department of Family Social Science and University of Minnesota Extension
290 McNeal Hall; 1985 Buford Avenue
St. Paul, MN 55108

If you have comments, questions, or general feedback regarding the evaluation, please direct questions to:

Jodi Dworkin
Phone: 612-624-3732; Fax 612-625-4227
E-mail: jdworkin@umn.edu

Thank you for including the evaluation in your work!