Welcome and Make Introductions (10 minutes)

Begin by introducing yourself as the facilitator and welcoming the group. Invite participants to introduce themselves by their first names, including teens, if present. If teens are not participating, ask parents (and other caregivers) to give the ages and genders of their children. For large groups (without teens) of more than 20, you may want to ask participants to stand up by age of their children so they can recognize each other and connect during breaks or after class, if they wish.

Review shared responsibilities:
• Everyone gets a chance to participate, if they wish.
• Sharing and expressing opinions is an option, not a requirement.
• There are many ways to parent, so everyone needs to be respectful during discussions.
• What is said in the group stays in the group.
OBJECTIVES

Following this lesson, participants 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

Review Objectives (3 minutes)

The primary audience for this slide presentation and accompanying lesson consists of parents and other caregivers of teens and pre-teens age 12-18. As such, the content, including suggested scripts, is directed at that audience. If you are presenting this lesson to your colleagues or other professionals who work with parents and teens, adjust your remarks accordingly.

Read the objectives on the slide to the class.
Launch Lesson (15 minutes to review this and Slides 4-9)

For this slide: Follow instructions in the facilitator’s guide for conducting a brief discussion on two questions to parents:

- How would you describe your teen’s relationships with peers?
- How have these relationships changed since your child entered the teen years?
Definition of Peers

Begin discussion of peers, cliques, and crowds per the facilitator’s guide. Define “peers” per the script in the guide.

While the word “peers” is often generally used to refer to people of similar ages, occupations, or interests, in this lesson, peers means something more specific – the larger group of friends and acquaintances of about the same age who share similar experiences.
Definition of Cliques

Define “cliques” per the script in the facilitator’s guide.

Cliques are smaller than a peer group. Members of a clique feel they know each other well and appreciate each other – they are considered friends. Teens can turn to their clique for help in answering questions about what to say or do, who to hang out with, and what to wear. Cliques can have both positive and negative influences on a teen.
Definition of Crowds

Define crowds per the script in the facilitator’s guide.

Crowds are the reputation-based groups typically found in schools. Crowds form for different reasons, and some members don’t even spend time together. Crowds may form around interests or social status. What kind of reputation-based crowds are you aware of?

Answers might include “the popular kids” or the “in crowd;” “jocks,” “preppies,” or “nerds.” Name any of those groups not mentioned by participants, and then continue defining “crowds.”

It’s important to remember that crowd labels reflect broad perceptions and so can be inaccurate, judgmental, and even cruel. Labels also can have more than one meaning. For example, “popular” and “popularity” have both positive and negative connotations. The exact nature of crowds can vary, but they exist in every school.
Discuss the importance of peers to teens.

Peers are extremely important to teens, and they tend to take cues from their contemporaries – rather than their parents – regarding everyday behavior and choices. Parents and family are still important, but secondary to friends as teens develop their own identities. This shift in focus doesn’t mean parents – or the family as a whole – no longer play an important role in teens’ lives. Likewise, it doesn’t mean that parents don’t continue to influence teens, especially about important life decisions – like careers and choice of study after high school. Although the typical teen spends twice as much time with peers than with family, parents should still expect their teenage children to stay involved and do things with the family.
What Peers Provide

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

Why do teens spend more time with their peer group than with their family? Because peers – especially a clique of close friends – fill many of their needs, whether they realize it or not. Here’s what peers provide teens:

• Support for figuring out abilities and interests.
• A place to learn how to interact with others.
• Independence from adults and development of a separate identity from parents.
• A means to learn how to deal with problems.
• Emotional support.
• Opportunities to develop friendships.

As noted in the facilitator’s guide, option to set up the next phase of the discussion by distributing the handout “Peers, Cliques, and Crowds: What do they mean for my teen?”
When Parents Should Be Concerned

Discuss when parents should be concerned about their teenage children’s peer relationships. Refer to the “Peers, Cliques, and Crowds . . .” handout.

As a parent, when should you be concerned about your teen’s peer relationships? Here are some situations that should concern you:

• 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 friends or says “you won’t like them.”
• If your teen suddenly loses interest in friends and wants to be alone for more than two weeks, he or she might be suffering from depression.
• If your teen’s friends are much older, he or she might be involved in risky activity.

Ask participants if they have any of these concerns and discuss as time permits.

Maintaining a strong relationship and keeping the lines of communication open with your child is essential in all these circumstances. Talk to your teen about his or her feelings, and ask a professional for advice in handling the situation, if necessary.

NOTE: If you chose to make copies of the optional “Peers, Cliques, and Crowds” handout, this may be a good time to distribute them. Encourage participants to read them and discuss with their teen at home.
Activity A – Peers and Peer Pressure: True or False? (15 minutes to administer quiz and review correct answers — showing this and Slides 11-26)

If you are conducting Activity A, follow directions in the facilitator’s guide for administering the True or False quiz, starting with asking participants to write down one or two words when they hear the phrase “peer pressure.” Facilitate a discussion about participants’ responses as directed in the guide, i.e., write responses on a flipchart or whiteboard; ask whether each response is positive, negative, or both; and discuss briefly.

Next, distribute copies of the “Peers and Peer Pressure: True or False?” quiz without the answer key. Give participants a few minutes to complete the quiz, and then use the answer key to lead a discussion with participants about each question.

Display slides 11-26 as you go through the answers.
Question 1

After participants complete the quiz, explain that you’ll be going over the answers with the group.

Here’s the first one: Teens are not all the same in their susceptibility to peer influence. Is this true or false?
 ANSWER 1: TRUE

- Susceptibility to peer pressure is unique
- Boys are more susceptible than girls, especially in risky situations
- Younger teens are more easily influenced than older ones
- Peer pressure peaks in 8th or 9th grade
- Individual characteristics make a difference
- Peer pressure varies by situation and context

Answer 1

“True” – and then provide an explanation per the Answer Key. Highlights of the answer are summarized on the slide.
Question 2

It is normal for teens to want to spend more time with friends than with their parents or other family members.

*True or false?*
ANSWER 2: TRUE

- Teens naturally shift focus from parents and family to peers – friends and acquaintances their age
- This is due, in part, to teens’ growing independence
- However . . . parents and family are still important and still influence teens

Answer 2

“True” – then provide an explanation per the Answer Key. Highlights of the answer are summarized on the slide.
Question 3

Peer pressure can be both positive and negative. True or false?
**ANSWER 3: TRUE**

“It is not a question of whether or not teens will experience peer pressure, but rather what kind of pressure.”

Laurence Steinberg

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**Answer 3**

“True” – then provide an explanation per the Answer Key. Read the quote from Laurence Steinberg. Give examples of how peer pressure can be negative (alcohol and drugs, breaking the law) and positive (participate in after-school activities or try something new).
Question 4

Teens are heavily influenced by their friends, even about issues where they already have existing beliefs.

True or false?

Question 4

Question 4: Teens are heavily influenced by their friends, even about issues where they already have existing beliefs. True or false?
Answer 4

“False” – and then provide an explanation per the Answer Key. Highlights of the answer are summarized on the slide.
Question 5

Question 5: Teens are influenced far more by their peers than by their parents on every issue. True or false?
Answer 5

“False” – then provide an explanation per the Answer Key. Highlights of the answer are summarized on the slide.
Question 6

A teen’s friends will typically have views opposing those of the teen’s parents.

True or false?

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Question 6

Question 6: A teen’s friends will typically have views opposing those of the teen’s parents. True or false?
Answer 6

“False” – then provide an explanation per the Answer Key. Highlights of the answer are summarized on the slide.
Question 7

Question 7: Peer pressure for teens is very direct – “in your face.” True or false?
ANSWER 7: FALSE

- Peer influence exists in many forms and degrees
- It’s usually more subtle than direct
- A teen’s take on pressure to drink alcohol: “No one shoves a beer in your hand, [but] if everybody else is drinking, you feel a little weird sipping a soda.”

Answer 7

“False” – then provide an explanation per the Answer Key. Highlights of the answer are summarized on the slide.
Question 8

There is nothing parents can do to help their teenage children deal with peer pressure. True or false?
**ANSWER 8: FALSE**

- Parents *do* influence how teens handle peer pressure.
- Ways parents can help:
  - Build teens’ self-esteem by talking to them about their strengths and talents
  - Encourage independent thinking and decision-making skills
  - Talk through challenging situations their teen might encounter with peers

Answer 8

“False” – then provide an explanation per the Answer Key. Highlights of the answer are summarized on the slide.
PARENTS, YOU CAN HELP!

Keep the parent-teen relationship going and growing.

- A good relationship with parents will weather the storm of disagreement over friends and what they want to do.
- Talk with your teen about friends and activities in day-to-day conversations, not just in response to demands for information.
- Be sure your home is a comfortable place for your teen to be his or her own person.

**Activity B — Parents, You Can Help!** (15 minutes to review and discuss points in handout—showing this and Slides 28-32)

Distribute the handout, “Parents, You Can Help!” to participants. You will be reviewing and discussing the main points in the handout with participants.

While teens’ focus naturally shifts from parents and family to peers, parents still can and do influence their teens. They also continue to play an important role in their lives.

Maybe you have a strong relationship with your teen, cultivated since childhood. Maybe you need to rebuild that relationship. Either way, the point is to keep your relationship with your teen “going and growing” in order to help him or her learn skills to become a healthy, self-sustaining adult. One skill you can help your teen learn is how to effectively handle peer relationships, including developing healthy friendships and fending off negative peer pressure. As a parent, you can help your teen learn those things if you have a strong relationship with him or her.

So . . . how do you develop and maintain a strong parent-teen relationship? There’s lots of advice out there about that, but two key elements are: Love and listen. Express your love through words and actions; affirm and support your child. And always listen.
You can help your teen effectively handle peer relationships and fend off potential negative peer pressure by sharing your values and standards. Talk regularly to your teen about your family’s values – like honesty, integrity, and respect for education. Be a good role model for the values you believe in. For example, show that you value education by helping with homework. Also set appropriate expectations and standards – high enough to inspire, but realistic enough not to discourage.

Continually expressing your family’s values and standards in a positive way – without lecturing or nagging – will influence your teen’s choice of friends for the better. Remember that while teens may differ from their parents on short-term, lifestyle choices in things like clothes or music, they often have the same or similar views as their parents about long-term, substantive choices in things like college or future plans. Sometimes those shared, deeper beliefs don’t surface until a teen is older.

PARENTS, YOU CAN HELP!

Continue to share your values and standards.
- Keep talking about your family’s values.
- A family’s values and standards influence a teen’s choice of friends.
- Teens often have similar views to their parents about substantive issues, although they might not be evident until they’re older.
Confidence will help your teen better handle peer relationships. As a parent, you can help your teen build self-esteem by aiding his or her discovery of strengths and talents; these aren’t always obvious. As teens get older, their interests narrow. Watch your teen carefully for signs of strengths and show your support.

Encourage your teen to try new things to indulge healthy interests that will reveal and build strengths. For example, you notice your teenage son likes showing his younger cousins how to play basketball. Encourage him or her to volunteer at the local rec center where he can work with young children.

Besides building confidence, knowing strengths and talents can help teens find direction in life.
The family is the perfect environment to help teens learn how to think for themselves and make wise decisions about peer relationships. Starting with age-appropriate decisions, like what to wear or what extracurricular activities to join, parents can help teens develop skills to make better decisions about more serious issues, such as underage drinking. Skills include the ability to:

• Respectfully voice an opinion, and
• Say “no” to choices that violate a teen’s values
As an adult who was once a teenager, you can help your teenage children figure out how to handle situations where they might face pressure from peers to engage in negative behaviors, such as underage drinking, bullying, or stealing. Talk to them about potentially risky situations they might encounter, and then brainstorm some ways they might respond. Discuss both negative and positive ways to respond, along with the ramifications of each. Focus on positive alternatives to getting involved in negative and potentially health-compromising situations.

For example, discuss possible responses to the presence of alcohol at a party. Talk about strategies and alternatives: Should your teen skip the party and find other “safer” and just as fun places to be with those friends? If your teen really wants to go, can he or she go with a friend who will be an ally in saying “no”, if necessary? Does your teen have a way to get home if he or she decides to leave the party early? (Make sure you’re available to offer a ride, if necessary.)

Whatever the situation, take the time to talk your teen. This is part of giving him or her the skills and knowledge to become a healthy, independent adult.
PARENTS, YOU CAN HELP!

Know your teen’s friends.
- Take the time to get to know them
- Look beyond appearances
- Make your home welcoming to your child’s friends
- Consider inviting them to family activities

It’s important to know your teenage children’s friends so you can offer advice on handling peer relationships when necessary. Make your home welcoming to your teen’s friends. Take the time to get to know your children’s friends, especially the ones they’re closest to. Talk to those friends and spend time with them. Remember to look beyond appearances – maybe a friend doesn’t dress or have a hairstyle you like, but he or she may still be a positive force in your child’s life.
Activity C — Friends Are Everything/ Option 1—for small classes (15 minutes, including close—”What Do You Think?”)

Distribute the discussion guide, “Friends Are Everything: Scenarios on Peer Relationships” to participants and facilitate discussions per instructions in the facilitator guide.
Activity C — Friends Are Everything/ Option 2—for large classes (15 minutes, including close —"What Do You Think?")

Distribute the discussion guide, “Friends Are Everything: Scenarios on Peer Relationships” to participants and facilitate discussions per instructions in the facilitator guide.
WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Share your ideas for helping your teens stand up for their beliefs and do what they think is right.

End this segment with a short discussion per instructions in the facilitator guide.

What are your ideas for helping your teenagers effectively handle peer relationships and peer pressure? What would you do to support your teens in standing up for their beliefs?
TRY THIS AT HOME

Engage with your teen:

▪ Make an extra effort to listen
▪ Welcome your teen’s friends to your home
▪ Take the true or false quiz together at home (if you didn’t do so in the workshop)

Assign Homework (5 minutes)

Assign “homework” to participants.

Try one or more of these ideas to engage with your teen about peers and peer relationships:

▪ Make an extra effort to listen – really listen – to your teen, especially for comments about friends. Talk to your child about friends and other relationships with peers.

▪ Take the true or false quiz with your teen and discuss the correct answers together. (Hand out copies to parents who want them.)

▪ Talk with your teen about inviting friends to your home, especially if they haven’t been doing that. Offer to provide food or do other things to make your teen’s friends feel welcome.
Close and Summarize (5 minutes)

Close the lesson by summarizing key concepts.

As children move into the teen years, they naturally shift focus from their parents and family to friends and peers. Peers can have both positive and negative effects on teens; but parents and other caregivers continue to influence their teens as well.

What does this mean for you? Stay connected and involved with your teenage children. Take time to listen to them, and then offer advice based on things you learned in this class. Above all, show love and support for your teenagers as you help them handle the tricky world of peer relationships.
Conduct Evaluation (5 minutes) and Wrap-up (2 minutes)

Distribute evaluation forms and administer the evaluation.

Please take a few minutes to complete the evaluation form. This is an anonymous survey. That means all responses will be summarized, your name will NOT be shared with anyone. Your feedback will help me improve my teaching, and it will help Extension staff improve lesson content and activities.

Collect the evaluation forms, and thank participants for taking the time to fill them out. Announce future sessions and topics if applicable. (Make copies of the evaluation forms after class for your own use before turning them into Minnesota Extension.)
Display this slide as participants exit the classroom.