

Peer pressure & assertiveness

Peer pressure

You may have decided to make a positive change to your substance use, however explaining it to your friends isn't always easy. They may still want you to *use* with them, do something that goes against your decision or makes you feel *uncomfortable*. It can be very difficult to resist peer pressure, especially when there is a group. Remember that real *friends* shouldn't be making you do things you don't want to.

How might peers pressure you?

- Via *insults* or making you feel bad for not doing something.
- By giving you lots of *reasons* why you should do something.
- Through *rejection*, by threatening to end a relationship or a friendship.
- Simply seeing lots of friends doing something is hard and called *unspoken* peer pressure

How do you resist peer pressure?

It's important to firstly understand your own *values*, the beliefs that are important to you, that you stand by. Just being clear in your mind about your values will give you self-confidence. Talking to a trusted adult can help, as can hanging out with those of your friends who are more like you and share the same values.

Assertiveness

Assertiveness skills help you to stay true to your *values* and choices. Assertiveness is about expressing yourself honestly without being influenced by others. It's about standing up for yourself *calmly*. When being assertive you can say *no*, while being clear about what you *feel*. It takes into consideration other people's feelings and is not aggressive. Assertive communicators are *confident* and able to *compromise*.

Assertiveness tips

- *Respect* yourself – what you think, feel or want is just as important as what others do.
- Express yourself *calmly* – don't go silent, yell, threaten or shame people as this doesn't help. Take responsibility and explain how you feel. Practice speaking calmly (by yourself) if this is hard.
- *Plan* what you're going to say – If you have time, think about how you want to express yourself, practice different approaches and decide on one that feels right.
- Don't be afraid of saying '*No*' – Often this makes people respect you. Remember, you can't make everyone happy all the time. Offer to help find a *solution*.

Assertive communicators

- *Listen* without interrupting the person talking.
- *Clearly* state his / her needs and wants.
- Stand up for themselves and their *rights*.
- Make eye contact.
- Speak clearly and in a normal tone / volume (not shouting etc.)
- Have confident *body language*.

believe in
yourself

Saying No

How to say no or refuse something

- Try not to *hesitate*, just say 'No thanks' quickly. Don't look like you're thinking about it.
- Be clear and *appear confident*. Match your body language to what you are saying.
- It helps to have *prepared* to reason or response. Think about situations you might be in, and how you might respond, before you find yourself in them

Different ways to say no

Below are a few suggestions for different ways to say 'No'. *Practice* them so they come to you easily when you need them.

"I'm not comfortable with this."

"Please don't do that."

"Not at this time."

"I can't do that for you."

"This isn't acceptable."

"I've decided not to."

"This isn't going to work for me."

"I don't want to do that."

"I'm drawing the line sorry."

Some other ways to manage difficult situations

- Be a *broken record* – giving the same response over and over.
 - "I said no and I mean no... No, no, no 😊"
- *Delay* – put off the pressure for the time being.
 - "Not just now I've got something else on my mind."
- *Change the subject* – divert the conversation to another topic less threatening.
 - "Hey how about we go and see where Jodie is?"
- *Avoid* the topic or situation – be clear that you're not going there.
 - "I am not going to discuss that..."
- *Walk away or ignore* – this can't be used in every situation but can be helpful if feeling threatened.
 - "Sorry I have to go now."
- *Recruit a friend* – get someone to back you up against the person pressuring you. Make it two to one.
 - "Ally, help me to convince Damian..."
- *Reverse the pressure* – this can help the person realise how you are feeling.
 - "How about you stop putting me under pressure for a second?"
- *Use "I" statements* – using 'You' statements can be perceived as criticism. Instead say...
 - "Hey, I'm feeling... (stressed / bullied etc) because... (you're not listening / I can't help you.)"
- *Use 'Fogging'* – give a short, chilled response, accepting what they say without agreeing to it.
 - "Yeah, you're probably right. You should go for it. 😊"