

# Decision-Making



Decisions... Decisions...  
Decisions...

You've known your best friend forever. You both grew up in the same neighborhood, went to the same schools, even started playing soccer together at age 5. And now you've both finally gotten good enough to make the school team.

The problem is, while learning comes easy to you, for your friend it is often a struggle. And doing well is really important because, if grades slip, the soccer coach suspends players from the team!!

Last night you learned that your friend's in serious trouble because of his poor grades. To keep from being suspended from the team, he's asked you to text message him the answers to the math test today.

You really care about your friend, but you know cheating is wrong.

What will you do?

.....

This scene is an example of situations we encounter every day. Some are tougher than others.

What kinds of things should YOU consider whenever you need to make an important decision?

Check out the ideas on the following pages. See how they might work for you.



# The “3 D’s” of Decision-Making

Think about the scene on the previous page (or a situation you’re dealing with right now) and.....

## 1. Define the Problem

If you’re not exactly sure what it is, here are some things you can do to help figure it out:

- Write it down. (Sometimes writing about a problem can help you understand it better.)
- Talk with parents, friends, teachers, coaches, and counselors. (Talking with those you trust can help you think things out more clearly.)
- Go for a walk, a jog, or a run.

Everyone has a different way of thinking things through -  
Discover what works best for **YOU!**



## 2. Determine Options & Outcomes

One way to do this is to fold a sheet of paper in half lengthwise. In the left column, leaving lots of space between each idea, list all the options or choices you could live with. Then, on the right side, list all the corresponding outcomes or results. Remember, each option can have more than one consequence. Also that some of these may be **positive**, some **negative**.

For each option or choice also check out your **feelings**. Ask yourself:

- “How might this affect me?”
- “How would I feel about that?”
- “Could it work out badly?”
- “Could I lose trust, privileges, or freedom?”

If any of the answers makes you uncomfortable, **CONGRATULATIONS!** Your job has just become easier. Simply X out that option and continue considering the others.



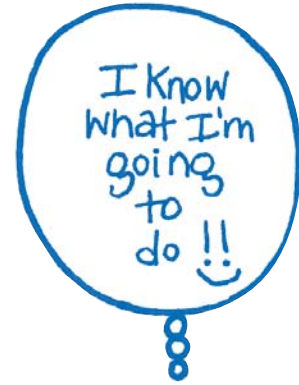
### 3. Decide, Act, and Evaluate

After reading (and, if necessary, re-reading) your list of options, choose one .....

- ▶ that is legal and acceptable to the general community
- ▶ that feels right to you
- ▶ that you're the **MOST** comfortable with
- ▶ that you think has the best chance of working out well.

After you've made your decision, and acted on it, ask yourself:

- "Am I pleased with how things worked out?"
- "Would I make the same decision again?"
- "If not, what would I do instead?"



Even if you made  
the wrong decision, don't let it  
get you down.

Remember, everyone makes  
mistakes.

The important thing is to learn from  
them and to try and do better  
the next time.

**Okay, now...**

here are more scenes for you to think about:



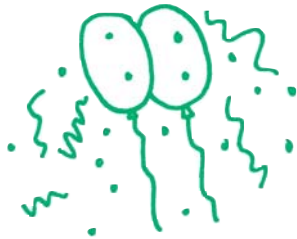
You absolutely love acting in school drama productions. But play rehearsals are scheduled for the same time as track practice, which you also love.

What do you do?



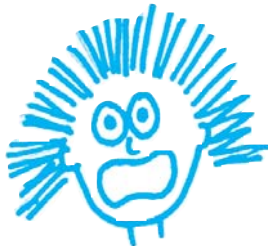
Your folks have strict rules about using the computer. There are sites you're allowed to visit on the Internet and others that you shouldn't. You've also been warned a thousand times about never putting personal information on the web. A bunch of your friends just found a cool new web site and want to post some funny pictures taken at your recent birthday party. They're pressuring you big time, saying there's nothing to worry about because your parents will never find out.

What do you do?



Your best friend is having a party Saturday night. Her parents will be away for the weekend. Her older sister's in charge, and she's agreed to buy the alcohol.

What do you do?



As you can see from the above scenarios, making decisions isn't always easy. At times, it can be very stressful. Especially when others are pressuring you to do something you really don't want to do.

To understand more about this special type of pressure, read on.....

# Peer Pressure

**A PEER** = someone about your own age  
&  
**PRESSURE** = influence



So together, peer pressure is when someone about your age tries to influence you to do something. When this happens, people often give in..... even when they're unhappy about the situation. Sometimes they give in because they don't know **HOW** to say no.



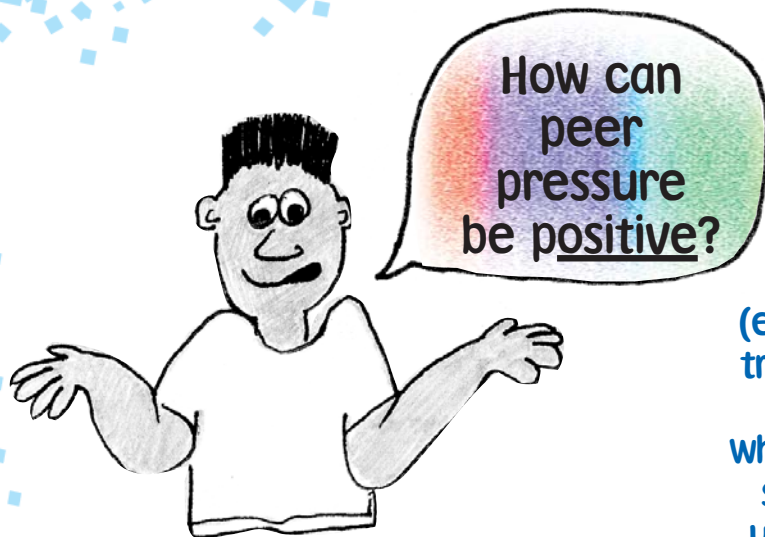
Other times they give in because they have a **STRONG NEED** to fit in and be part of the crowd.



Now, wanting to belong and feel part of a group is natural and normal.

It's part of what makes us human.

But "going along" may not always be smart. That depends on whether the peer pressure is **positive** or **negative**.



Peer pressure is positive (even supportive!) when others try to get you to do something that is **GOOD** for you... when they encourage you to do something that is in line with your values and the rules you and your family live by.



## Examples of Positive Peer Pressure

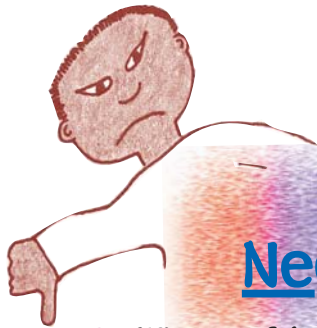
- When a friend encourages you to try out for the band or sign up for a new after school activity.
- When a friend tries to get you to attend an alcohol and drug-free party.
- When you encourage classmates to raise money to help hurricane victims.
- When you encourage your friends to invite the new student to join you for lunch, instead of letting him sit and eat alone.
- When you try to get others to volunteer to clean up the neighborhood or help feed homeless people.





What do you mean by negative peer pressure?

Negative peer pressure is when someone your age tries to get you to do something that is **NOT** good for you.... something that goes against your values and the rules you live by.



### Examples of Negative Peer Pressure

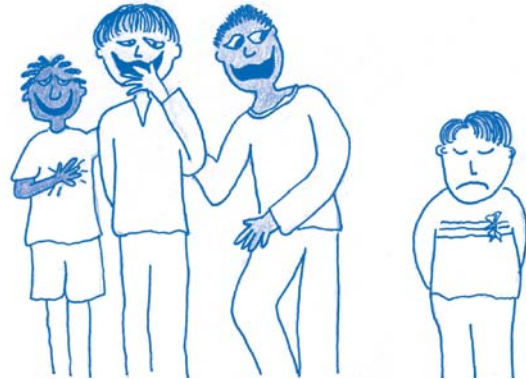
- When a friend tries to get you to smoke at a party....or anywhere else, for that matter.
- When a friend tries to get you to join others in playing a mean joke on a classmate.
- When friends pressure you to spray paint graffiti on a wall of the school building or to vandalize the new scoreboard on the soccer field.
- When a friend tries to get you to help him steal something from a store.
- When a classmate wants you to hurt someone else's feelings by helping to spread a rumor.





So what does all this mean?

Standing up to negative peer pressure can be hard...



...especially if others make fun of you or call you names.

But the important thing to remember is..... the decision to give in to negative peer pressure is YOURS. Whatever happens as a result of your decision is YOUR RESPONSIBILITY.



When in doubt...



Remember the "3D's" of Decision-Making: Define the problem. Determine options & outcomes. Decide, act & evaluate.



And then make the decision that is best for YOU!

In fact, if you stand by your decision (for example, not to drink alcohol or do drugs), you just may find that others will follow your lead !!



Bottom Line: No matter how much others are pressuring you, YOU are always in charge of you! It's.... Your thoughts Your feelings Your actions Your RESPONSE-ABILITY



So, what can I do?  
How can I handle  
negative peer  
pressure?

Learning to say **NO** is a way of handling negative peer pressure. Saying **NO** can build confidence and self-esteem.

(It also keeps people out of trouble.... and from feeling guilty later on.)

Here are several ways of saying **NO**:

### BROKEN RECORD



No, Thanks!  
No, Thanks!  
No, Thanks!

### NAME THE CONSEQUENCES



If I do that,  
I'll be  
grounded!

### CHANGE THE SUBJECT



Did you hear what  
happened at the  
game yesterday?

Coach says  
drugs will  
hurt my game.



### SUGGEST ANOTHER ACTIVITY

...but do it in a way that accepts the person, just not what she is trying to get you to do.

### MAKE AN EXCUSE



I have to  
go home!



Let's go  
see a  
movie  
instead!

My  
parents  
will kill  
me!



### APPLY COUNTER PRESSURE

...but only as a last resort, since hurtful comments increase tension and generally make situations worse.

What a **STUPID** idea!





Anything else  
I can try?

- **Honesty**

“This isn’t for me!”

“I promised I wouldn’t and I don’t break my promises.”

“This isn’t worth ruining my life over.”

“This isn’t worth dying for.”

- **Humor**



“No thanks, my  
mom is psychic!  
I’ll stick to soda.”

- **Leaving The Situation**

- ▶ Just walk (or run) away
- ▶ Call for a safe ride home

(Obviously, this will only work if you’ve talked about it with your family in advance. If you’re uncomfortable, and want to leave without someone hearing you call for a ride, try this. Call home and say, “I just remembered, and I’m afraid I might forget again. Please remind me to take my.....trumpet, soccer uniform, English notebook, whatever.....to school on Monday.” Because you discussed it with them earlier, your parents know this really is a code that means, “Please come get me. I’ll be waiting outside. I need a safe ride home.”)



- **Thinking Ahead**

For example, if you hear rumors and are worried about what **might** happen at a party, make other plans instead. Use the “3D’s” for Decision-Making ahead of time to avoid putting yourself in situations where you think you might be pressured.

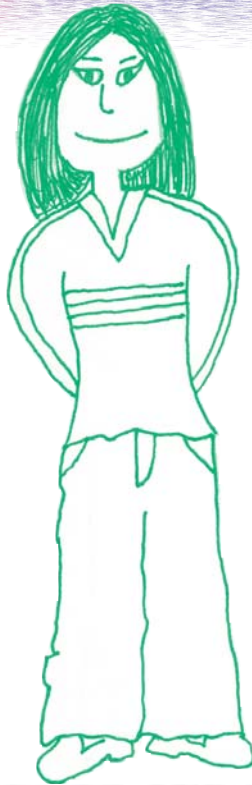
- **Listening To Your Body**

If you ever get an “uh oh” feeling inside, **TRUST IT**. It’s your early warning detection signal. Stop and figure out what’s making you uncomfortable. Then decide what you need to do to stay safe.

- **Playing It Safe**

Whenever you’re UNSURE about what to do, play it safe. Say, **“NO!”**

# How To Be Assertive And Say No!



In addition to knowing different ways of saying NO, it is important to know **HOW** to be **assertive**... how to get your needs met without becoming loud or physical. (Another word for that kind of behavior is aggressive.)

A person who is assertive maintains self-respect and at the same time shows respect for others.

Remember, people have a right to ask you anything they wish... but **YOU** always have the right to say no.

Here are a few tips that will make this easier to do.

## When You Want To Say “No!”

- **Stand or sit up straight**  
When you slouch, people are less likely to take you seriously.
- **Before saying anything, take a deep breath and let the air out slowly**  
This gives you time to calm down and think about what you really want to say.
- **Look directly at the other person**  
This helps them know you mean business.
- **Talk in a normal voice**  
You don't need to shout in order to get your point across.

continued...

- Say “NO” nicely, but firmly

Be respectful. Using put downs or sarcasm just makes the other person angrier.

- Don’t ask lots of questions

Questions raise people’s hopes and give them the idea that if they give you the right answers, you just might say, “Yes.” Then when you finally get up the courage to say no, they’re even MORE upset and disappointed.

- Be honest and direct

It isn’t necessary to get into a long discussion. You don’t even have to give an explanation. The only person you really need to answer to is yourself.

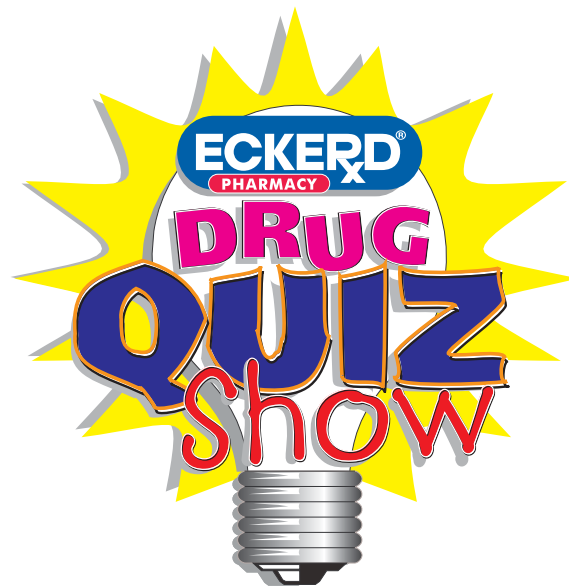
**YOU** are the only one responsible for your actions.

Can you think of a situation in which you wish you had said “NO” assertively? If so, remember this.....



You deserve to be proud of the decisions you make. If others make it hard for you to make good ones, perhaps they aren’t really your friends.

Learning to be assertive when saying “NO” is like learning to ride a bike or play the guitar. The more you practice, the easier it gets.



# Acknowledgements

The Drug Quiz Show gratefully acknowledges  
the Eckerd Pharmacy  
for making possible the creation of this Learning Center.

Special thanks also go to the following individuals for their  
dedication, expertise and assistance:

- Concept:** Mattie Bicknell, Prevention Educator
- Content:** Patricia Schramm, M.S.  
Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention Education Program  
Syracuse Diocesan Schools
- Valerie Stedman, M.S., Health Educator  
Christian Brothers Academy
- Linda Shapess, Teacher Trainer New York Health Central  
Onondaga-Cortland-Madison BOCES
- Susan Meidenbauer, Executive Director  
Eckerd Drug Quiz Show
- Debrah Shulman, Ph.D.  
Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention Education Program  
Jamesville-DeWitt School District
- Artists:** Jennifer Pisegna, M.S., C.A.S., School Counselor  
Westhill Central School District
- Anthony Washington, Syracuse, NY
- Graphic Design:** David VanWie, Syracuse, NY

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