
1. EXPLAIN TEEN ADVISORS (3 minutes)

Hello, we're Teen Advisors and we're glad to be here with you today! Teen Advisors are sophomores, juniors, and seniors who have committed to be positive role models and to live lives of integrity. Every one of us has signed a drug-free contract, promising to abstain from drugs, alcohol, tobacco, and inhalants. Many TAs also make commitments to be sexually abstinent until marriage. There are over 500 of us in the Columbus area who are committed to being drug-free role models, and hundreds more across the nation.

You may be wondering what Teen Advisors is all about — what is it that we actually do? Well, first of all, we're not just some drug-free club, and we don't look down on people who do drink or do drugs. We don't think we're better than anybody else just because we sign a contract. Our mission is to influence our peers to make positive decisions with their lives. We reach out to others with love & encouragement. We don't judge or condemn people for making wrong decisions, but we try our best to influence them to make the right ones.

At school, Teen Advisors talk with the freshmen about things that high school students have to deal with. Outside of school, we form a support group of teenagers who have similar standards. Three times a year, we go on the most incredible weekend retreats together. Every month, we have huge parties with all the other Teen Advisors from around the city. We get to form lots of great friendships with students from all the other high schools, and we have really fun events together. By standing together & supporting one another, we are able to keep our commitments, and (hopefully!) we can be an encouragement for you to make good decisions in life!

2. INTRODUCE THE TOPIC (3 minutes)

Teen Advisors talk to the freshmen at their schools about things that high school students have to deal with. Today we will be talking about the topic of "Friends & Peer Pressure" – how to make good friends and how to deal with peer pressure. Because we have been freshmen before, we know what it's like to adjust to a new school and a new group of people. The challenge is to figure out the right people to be friends with, and to be aware of the dangers of negative peer pressure.

Right now, we are going to introduce ourselves to you with our name, grade, and one characteristic we think is important for quality friends to have.

In a major survey of high school students, one out of five said they felt worthless, self-critical, and lonely. When asked for the reason behind these negative feelings, most of them answered that they did not have a quality group of friends. We all have a built-in desire to fit in – to find friends who accept us for who we are. And sometimes, the peer pressure to fit in can lead us to do things we normally wouldn't do. Those are exactly the things we want to talk about with you today!

I have an important statement to say which will set the tone for today's Classroom Session: We choose the kind of peer pressure we are going to have in life when we choose our friends. Let me say that another way: Each of us has a certain amount of control over the kind of peer pressure we will have in life when we choose our friends.

- *The friends we choose will either build us up or pull us down.*
 - *The friends we choose will influence us to make decisions – for either right or wrong.*
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3. ACTIVITY (10 minutes)

Now we are going to break you up into 5 small groups. The TAs will split up into your groups to help lead the discussion in each group. I am going to read a statement aloud to the class, and then I'll give you about a minute to discuss together with the members of your group whether or not you agree with the statement, and why. TAs, you all help guide the discussion in your small group. Okay, here's your first statement to discuss:

1. *People tend to choose friends similar to themselves.*
2. *It is easy to make quality friends.*
3. *My friends have a big influence on my life.*
4. *I think I am a quality friend.*

Now I am going to hand a scenario to each small group. The TA in your group will read the scenario aloud to your group. You then have 2-3 minutes to discuss the scenario and come up with some advice to share with the class. Choose a freshman spokesperson from your group who will share your group's scenario and advice with the class.

4. GATHER QUESTIONS (5 minutes)

Right now, we want to give you the opportunity to write down questions you have on the topic of "Friends & Peer Pressure." The TAs are going to pass out 3x5 cards. Please be honest & genuine with your questions. They will be totally anonymous, so DO NOT put your names on these cards. Write down at least one question you have, and turn your card back in. We are going to give you 3-4 minutes to think and to write. Here are a few suggestions to get your mind going... *(Guide the freshmen in brainstorming by giving them LOTS of suggestions to think about! Keep listing more & more suggestions for them as they write...)*

(Once all 3x5 cards have been returned, give them to the TA Adult Listener in the room.)

5. SHARING (10 minutes)

The scenarios you all just discussed earlier come right out of real life. There are many students who have felt just like the students in those scenarios. There are probably even students in the room right now who have dealt with those very same things.

Each one of us has had a different experience related to friendships throughout life. Some of us have no problems making friends; some of us have a hard time making new friends. For some of us, our friends have led us down the wrong path; for others, our friends have lifted us up and made us better people. Right now, each Teen Advisor is going to briefly share about the role that friends & peer pressure have had in their lives.

(The TA Adult Listener will return the class's 3x5 cards to you during this "Sharing" segment.)

6. QUESTION & ANSWER (7 minutes)

Right now, each TA is holding 2-3 questions from this class on the topic of Friends & Peer Pressure – these are the questions that you all anonymously wrote down for us on 3x5 note cards. The TAs will randomly read a question, and then discuss their answers to your questions. 2-3 TAs will be commenting on each question, discussion-style. We aren't experts, so our answers may not be perfect, but what we want to share with you is our best advice from our experience.

7. CLOSING (2 minutes)

We have a handout to give you that describes a Quality Friend. As you read it, remember that we choose the kind of peer pressure we are going to have in life when we choose our friends. We want to encourage you to choose quality friends – friends that will accept you for who you are – that will support you – that will lift you up and make you a better person – that won't lead you down a wrong path.

As TAs, we are here for you, not only during these Classroom Sessions, but all throughout the year. If you ever need someone to talk to, we are here! Stop us in the hall or grab one of us after school.

You all have been great listeners! Thanks for letting us spend this time with you today!

Facts & Information about FRIENDS & PEER PRESSURE

We choose the kind of peer pressure we are going to have in life when we choose our friends. The friends we choose will either build us up or pull us down. The friends we choose will influence us to make decisions – for either right or wrong.

Most teenagers will listen to their friends more than any other age group – more than their teachers, more than figures in the media – even more than their parents.

Quality friendships can provide many benefits, including added protection from stress and depression because friends help ease problems. Quality friendships also may help people live longer because they lower the risk of illness and help resolve tension. Quality friends also help reduce the potential to develop bad habits, and also provide added motivation to end bad habits.

The most common things people have to overcome to make new friends are:

- *moving to a new town or a new school (or both)*
- *shyness / introversion*
- *a change in interests*
- *low self-esteem*
- *they've been hurt in the past by friends*

Many people have a hard time making new friends simply because they feel they are bad at starting conversations. Here are some helpful suggestions for improving your conversation skills:

- *To get a conversation going, ask open-ended questions. Avoid questions that can be answered with a simple "yes" or "no".*
- *Ask questions that get the other person talking about their interests.*
- *Find things you have in common, and talk about them.*
- *Remember things the other person has told you before, and ask about those things.*
- *When someone is speaking to you, let them know that you are listening – make eye contact with them and respond as they talk.*
- *Listen at least as much as you talk.*
- *As you listen, think about what the other person is saying – not about what you are going to say whenever they finish talking!*

Frequently Asked Questions about FRIENDS & PEER PRESSURE

1. I'm really shy & introverted. How can I overcome my shyness to meet new people?
2. How do I handle it when my friends don't get along with each other?
3. My best friend just started dating someone, and I feel like our friendship is no longer important to them anymore. What should I do?
4. I just moved here from a different town, and I don't know anybody. How can I make some quality friends?
5. My present group of friends has started doing stuff I don't agree with. I don't want to be like them, but I don't want to leave them, either. What should I do?
6. I have friends in many different groups. I find that when I spend time with one group, the others get mad. What should I do?
7. Is it better to have a couple of close friends or a big group of acquaintances?
8. I've never really had a best friend. There's nothing really special about me, and it seems like no one would want to have me for a best friend. What should I do?

Scenarios for Small Group Discussions

Friends & Peer Pressure CRS

Scenario #1 –

It's really hard for me to make friends and keep them because I'm very shy. I'm afraid to talk to people – maybe because I figure they don't care or they won't like me. Sometimes I think I'll have to go through life without any friends, unless I can make myself say "hello" to people and risk getting rejected. What can I do to get over my shyness and make friends?

Scenario #2 –

I started school with one group of friends, but lately I've been feeling more and more distanced from them. We don't seem to have much in common anymore. I'd like to branch out and make new friends, but whenever I talk to new people or do things with other people, my old friends get mad at me and treat me differently. I don't want my old friends mad at me, but I really want to make some new friends. What should I do?

Scenario #3 –

I just moved here from another town. I had a really good group of friends in my old town, and I miss them a whole lot. I know I should probably reach out and try to make some new friends here, but honestly, I just want my old friends back. Besides, it seems like everybody here already has a group of friends and they don't need anybody else. What should I do?

Scenario #4 –

Ever since elementary school, people have picked on me. I'm not rich or popular; I'm not thin or good-looking; I'm not a star athlete. There's just nothing special about me. I feel lonely a lot of the time, and I have a really hard time making friends. It just seems like no one would want me for a friend. I like to talk, and I'm willing to put myself "out there," but I'm tired of having my feelings hurt all the time. Do you have any advice for me?

Scenario #5 –

My friends have recently gotten into some stuff that I really disagree with. It's gotten to the point where it seems like that's all they ever talk about anymore, and I'm starting to feel left out. They make it sound like so much fun, but part of me thinks they are doing it just for popularity. Part of me wants to join them so I'll feel more included, but part of me knows it's wrong. I'm afraid that if I tell them how I feel, they'll think I'm being stuck-up and judgmental. I know what I'm *supposed* to do, but the situation just seems so hard – any advice?

“A Quality Friend...”

- A Quality Friend likes you for who you are,
not for what you have.
- A Quality Friend stays with you,
even in the bad times.
- A Quality Friend lifts you up,
and helps you become a better person.
- A Quality Friend influences you to do right,
and doesn't lead you down the wrong path.
- A Quality Friend tells you encouraging words,
and doesn't gossip about you.
- A Quality Friend really listens to you,
and isn't just waiting for their turn to talk.
- A Quality Friend tells you the truth,
even if it's difficult, and does so in a kind way.
- A Quality Friend really cares about you,
and puts friendship into action.

We choose the kind of peer pressure we are going to have in life when we choose our friends. The friends we choose will either build us up or pull us down. The friends we choose will influence us to make decisions – for either right or wrong.

Improving Your Conversation Skills

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