

PEER PRESSURE & Alcohol and Other Drugs

No matter how old they are people care what others think and want to fit in. When you are just starting to think for yourself, the influence of your friends and people your age—your peers—can be powerful. It can affect how you feel, dress, and act. Peer pressure can be good and bad. Good pressure from your peers might lead you to play sports, study hard or join clubs. But there are often negative pressures, too—to make fun of someone, to tell a lie, or to cheat on a test. Sometimes the pressure may be about actions that have more serious results like skipping school, shoplifting, using alcohol, tobacco or other drugs or having sex.

Make up your own mind, even if your peers don't agree with you.

Young people make choices every day. The choices you make say a lot about what kind of person you are. When you feel unsure, try talking to someone you trust: your parents, another adult who cares, a school social worker or maybe a close friend you respect. Sometimes it's easier to say NO if you are involved with other people who think like you.

It's okay to say "NO"

Some decisions, like those about drinking, drugs or sex, are difficult to make and have serious consequences. Be prepared to feel peer pressure. Plan to say NO if you think you might be tempted by peer pressure. Saying NO is not always easy. Saying NO to friends is especially hard, because you don't want to lose their friendship.

It's important to remember that you are in control of your choices. You do not have to explain your reason.

Try these ways to say NO: change the subject, avoid the situation, have something else to do, leave, or make it clear that you don't have to go along with other people.

If you have to say "NO" more firmly, here are some ways to keep in mind:

●No! No way! ●That's not for me ●It's not my style ●What's your problem? ●No thanks ●Sorry, I'm driving ●I don't do drugs ●I have to get up early for work.

Show your friends you have a mind of your own. When your peers see you stand by your good decisions, it may help them make better decisions in the future.

If you have concerns, please contact your School Social Worker

Taken From *Helping Hand*, the CESA 9 AODA Education Network Newsletter