

Inclusiveness

In the last week of this unit, students will talk about peer pressure which is something they are likely well-acquainted with by now! However, they may not realize that there are two types of peer pressure: positive and negative. The lessons this week give students an opportunity to differentiate between the two, think about how to make positive choices when faced with pressure, and evaluate how to be themselves, regardless of how others might be pressuring them in their thoughts and actions.

Begin the unit with the whole class lesson and then aim to complete at least two of the mini lessons with your students throughout the week. Each mini lesson is designed to present elements of the main lesson in new and engaging ways.

Main Lesson

Whole Class Lesson
30 minutes



Responding to Peer Pressure

This lesson introduces students to the concept that peer pressure can be either positive or negative, and invites them to distinguish between the two and respond in appropriate ways to both types of pressure. (See page 2 for lesson details.)

Mini Lessons

For Small Groups
15 minutes



Just Say No Role Play

In small groups, go through different situations that you could encounter as an 8th grader where you feel negative peer pressure and need to say “No”. Practice some of the strategies you learned in the main lesson: broken record, walking away, distraction, and humor. After each role play, evaluate the consequences of your decision.

For Partners
15 minutes



The Power of Choice

With your partner, share a time you felt pressured to make a decision (good, bad, or indifferent) and what happened. In hindsight, did you make the right choice? Explain.

For Individuals
15 minutes



Making My Own Decisions

Journal 3-5 strategies you can use or words you can say to stand up to peer pressure. As you prepare to enter high school, you may find yourself in situations where you need to make choices and may feel pressured to make the same choices as others. How will you feel confident in making your own decisions?

Technology-Focused
15 minutes



Online Peer Pressure

In what ways does social media pressure us? Do we feel pressured to “like” or share something just because someone else does? Can we truly be ourselves online?

Responding to Peer Pressure

In this lesson, students will explore examples of both positive and negative peer pressure. They will have an opportunity to see if they can differentiate between the two and think about how to respond accordingly.

Lesson Timeframe

30 minutes

Required Materials

- No materials are required for this lesson

Standards Map

This lesson aligns with CASEL Competencies, National Health Education Standards, International Society for Technology in Education Standards, when applicable, and Common Core State Standards. Please refer to the [Standards Map](#) for more information.

Lesson Objective

Students will:

- Differentiate between positive and negative peer pressure.

Teacher Connection/Self-Care

There is a lot of pressure on teachers: pressure to have students who pass their state tests, pressure to close the achievement gap, pressure to make sure everyone is at or above grade level, and pressure to be the best. Sometimes the pressure we feel is positive and it propels us toward improvement, it challenges us to grow in our craft, and it inspires us to try new things. Sometimes the pressure we feel is negative and it makes us become self-critical, induces self-doubt, or leads us toward poor choices.

When you feel pressure, identify a few things:

1. Is the pressure you feel positive or negative?
2. Does the pressure lead you to grow or improve?
3. Does the pressure challenge you in a way that feels good or bad?
4. Does the pressure you feel lead toward greater inclusiveness?

Identifying how the pressure makes you feel or where it will lead you is the first step in knowing how to respond. Sometimes we will need to reject the pressure outright, and sometimes we will need to accept its challenge. Sometimes you can reframe negative peer pressure so that it serves you in a positive way. Regardless, you are in control of how you respond!



Share

5-7 minutes

Welcome to the last week of our Inclusiveness unit! I hope you have enjoyed learning about how to be more inclusive by creating inclusive spaces, being an upstander, and considering other perspectives. What is one of the strongest lessons or new ideas you've learned in this unit so far? (Invite student responses.)



Inspire

3-5 minutes

Today we are going to talk about peer pressure. I know this is a term you know. Can someone define or explain it for us? (Invite student responses.)

Yes! As you get older, you will be exposed to more peer pressure. Your friends, parents, teachers, society, and culture will all have ideas about what you should do and who you should be. The key will be knowing the difference between positive and negative pressure and making the choice that is right for you. This might include saying no even when you don't think you can.



Empower

15 minutes

To help you know how you can respond when you feel pressure, you need to determine if you are feeling positive pressure (which is meant to encourage you or challenge you or help you become better) or if you are feeling negative pressure (which is meant to coerce or convince you to do something you aren't very comfortable with and could create a negative outcome).

Let's look at a few situations and identify if they are examples of positive peer pressure or negative peer pressure. However, you are going to do this with your eyes closed so you aren't pressured to make your choice!

Hold out one hand in a "thumbs up" gesture and close your eyes. No cheating! Now, turn your thumb to the side so it is neither pointing up nor down. After I read the situation, if you think it is an example of positive peer pressure, point your thumb up ("thumbs up"). If you think it is an example of negative peer pressure, point your thumb down ("thumbs down").

Situation #1: You love music and have a good singing voice and knack for reading music. But, you have never had any instrument or vocal lessons. You hate crowds and think you would feel really nervous if you had to play or sing in front of others. Still, your mom wants you to sign up for choir and your grandma said she would pay for piano lessons. What kind of pressure are you feeling?

Have students "vote" with their thumbs (and with eyes closed!) and then invite them to open their eyes after everyone has made a choice. Then ask a few students to share their rationale for their choice; include at least one from each side if students voted both up and down.

Situation #2: Your brother has been grounded from his phone because his grades have slipped. You parents are gone for the night and you know that he's taken his phone from your mom's nightstand. He tells you not to say anything and that he'll put it back before they get home. What kind of pressure are you feeling?

Repeat the voting and sharing from Situation #1.

Situation #3: Your math teacher is asking you to participate in the math competition because you are skilled in math and have one of the top grades in the class. You don't have as much confidence in your abilities as your

teacher does and are hesitant, but you really like your math teacher and don't want to let her down. What kind of pressure are you feeling?

Repeat the voting and sharing from Situation #1.

Situation #4: You have worked hard babysitting to earn \$50 to spend on your family vacation to the beach. You are really hoping to find some cool souvenirs to bring back with you, and already know you want to buy a t-shirt that you saw when you were there last year. The weekend before you are going to leave, you go to the mall with your friends. You see some shoes that all your friends have. You don't need new shoes, but they are really cool. Your friends all think you should get the shoes. They cost \$49.50 with tax, which would wipe out your vacation money. What kind of pressure are you feeling?

Repeat the voting and sharing from Situation #1.

Situation #5: You are eating lunch with your friends when the new student in your class comes into the lunch room. You can see that he doesn't have any particular place to sit. You start to wave him over when another buddy nudges you in the ribs and shakes his head "no." What kind of pressure are you feeling?

Repeat the voting and sharing from Situation #1.



Reflect

5-7 minutes

Sometimes it can be hard to tell what kind of pressure we are feeling, but it is important to think about that because some pressure is intended to help us or push us to do something new and positive that make us better people. You will likely experience a lot of negative pressure, though, that could harm you or others. It is important to avoid that kind of peer pressure or, when it can't be avoided, navigate it by making the right choice.