

DECISION-MAKING & PEER PRESSURE



MYTH BUSTING

MYTH: "Everyone is doing it. If you don't, you're the odd one out."

FACT: Most teens are NOT regularly using substances. The perception that "everyone" is doing something is itself the peer pressure tactic.



WHY THIS MATTERS

The teenage brain is biologically more sensitive to social rewards and social rejection. This is not a weakness, as it's just how human brains developed. But it means social pressure hits harder at 15 than at 25. Understanding this makes you better at spotting when it's being used on you.



HOW SOCIAL PRESSURE WORKS

Overt pressure is easy to spot:

- *"Come on, everyone's doing it"*
- *"Don't be such a buzzkill"*
- *Repeated asking after you've said no*

Invisible pressure is harder to spot:

- *Wanting to fit in without anyone saying anything*
 - *Assuming you need to use to have fun*
 - *Feeling like your sober opinion won't count*
 - *Not wanting to seem anxious or uncool*
- Most peer pressure is invisible.*



SCENARIOS

Scenario C: You're the only one not drinking. You feel out of place. → **This feeling is OK. It doesn't mean you have to drink. It just means your brain is doing its normal social reasoning.**

Scenario A: At a party. Someone hands you a drink and keeps refilling it. You didn't ask for a refill. → **It's okay to say "I'm good" and hold the cup. You don't owe anyone an explanation.**

Scenario B: A friend keeps asking you to try something. You've said no twice. → **A person who respects you will stop after you've said no once. Repeated asking is pressure.**



EXIT STRATEGIES!



Things you can say:

- *"I'm on medication, I can't drink"*
- *"I'm the designated driver tonight"*
- *"I have something early tomorrow"*
- *"I'm good for now, thanks"*
- *Or just: "No thanks." You don't owe a reason.*

Pre-planning:

- *Decide your limits before you arrive*
- *Have a code word with a friend to signal you want to leave*
- *Know your exit. How are you getting home?*

PROTECTING YOUR FRIENDS

Signs a friend needs help:

They're significantly more intoxicated than the group

They seem confused, upset, or checked out

Someone is trying to get them alone

They've stopped responding to you normally

What to do:

Stay with them

Interrupt a situation that doesn't feel right . You don't need proof

Call for help if needed. Being wrong is okay; not acting can be irreversible

Check in the next day



SUPPORT SYSTEMS

You don't have to navigate this alone. Having even ONE person you can be honest with about substance use (a friend, a parent, a counselor) significantly lowers risk.

If you're worried about your own use:

- *You can talk to a school counselor confidentially*
- *SAMHSA helpline: 1-800-662-4357 (free, confidential, 24/7)*
- *Text "HELLO" to 741741 for the Crisis Text Line*

There is no version of needing help that is shameful.

