

# Self-Esteem

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Activities to Build Self-Worth

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Grades 6-8

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## Foreword

Addressing self-esteem and social resilience in students is fundamental to creating a safe, happy learning environment. *Self-Esteem, Grades 6 to 8* is a resource for investigating personal and social issues faced by middle-school aged students. The activity topics in this book have been carefully selected to address issues specific to

middle school students with a view to building self-worth and establishing resilience in challenging situations. All activities are suitable for whole-class instruction or for use with individuals or small groups with particular needs.

Other titles in this series are:

*Self-Esteem, Grades 2 to 3*

*Self-Esteem, Grades 4 to 5*

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### Positive Peer Groups

#### Indicators

- Understands that peer pressure can be a positive or a negative influence.
- Demonstrates a willingness to be a positive role model for others.
- Understands how the positive behaviors of others can influence him/her to behave in a positive way.

#### Pre-Lesson Focus Discussion

Ask the students whether anyone has ever asked them if they would “jump off a cliff if their friends did.” Ask the students to describe what is being demonstrated by this saying. Would they really jump off a cliff? Would they be able to make their own decision to save themselves?

Discuss how we can be positively influenced by peer pressure. Encourage the students to give examples of times when they have been encouraged in this way. How did it help them achieve a personal goal or improve themselves?

#### Using the Student Activity Sheet

1. Look at the cartoon at the top of the student activity page. Discuss the kind of relationship these girls have and whether it appears to be a positive association.
2. Read the text discussing peer pressure. Encourage the students to elaborate on what is meant by positive peer pressure. Discuss how being around peers who are a positive influence could help them to stay safe and happy.
3. Have the students identify who their peers are and write a list to Question 1 (a). Instruct the students to complete the remaining parts of Question 1 independently and not to let the opinions of others influence their answers. Their answers in this section should remain as personal and private reflections. Discuss the reasons why it is important that answers about their peers be kept confidential and that the need to keep them that way should be respected.
4. Direct the students to Question 2, reading both the question and the categories listed in the boxes. Allow the students to complete the task by writing under each category how positive peer pressure could influence them. When complete, they can share their ideas for each category with the class for discussion.

#### Follow-Up Suggestions

Have the students write a testimony as to how their peers have had a positive influence on them and encouraged them to become a better person.

#### Sensitivity Issues

Ensure that the students don’t equate positive peer pressure over others with showing-off or self-righteousness. Being a positive influence over others is indicative of and conducive to good self-esteem, but not superiority over others.

#### Activity Links

- Who’s Watching You? ..... pp. 14–15
- Accepting Compliments ..... pp. 18–19
- What People Like About Me ..... pp. 40–41
- Spreading the Love ..... pp. 42–43
- Who Are Your Friends? ..... pp. 68–69
- Being Yourself ..... pp. 76–77
- Make Someone’s Day ..... pp. 110–111

#### Answers

Answers will vary

You most probably have heard of peer pressure. Usually we hear people using peer pressure as an excuse for why they have done something they normally wouldn't. Peer pressure isn't always about feeling forced to do things we don't want to. In fact, some peer pressure (positive peer pressure) can encourage us to do what we ought to!



1. (a) Who are your peers?

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(b) Have you felt pressured to do things you don't want to do by them? Give an example if you have.

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(c) What do they do to persuade you to do things?

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(d) What positive things have they encouraged you to do?

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2. Write examples of how peer pressure can be positive in the following ways.

**What could positive peer pressure encourage you to ...**

dress like?

behave like?

do?

be like in the future?

## Negative Peer Groups

### Indicators

- Understands that his/her friends can place pressure on him/her to behave in a negative way.
- Identifies feelings and behaviors which can result from negative peer pressure.
- Suggests how negative peer pressure could influence a person's self-esteem and future prospects.

### Pre-Lesson Focus Discussion

Discuss and define peer pressure. Allow the students to share their experiences of peer pressure. Attempt to determine how they can tell the difference between positive and negative pressure from peers.

Debate whether or not all people are susceptible to peer pressure. What type of person would be more likely to be affected by peer pressure? From this, write a class list of the qualities a person who is least likely to be affected might have. (The list should be guided towards including qualities that indicate a healthy self-esteem.)

### Using the Student Activity Sheet

1. Look at the cartoon at the top of the student activity page showing kids defacing property with graffiti. Discuss how Billy is feeling and whether or not she would be in this situation by choice. Encourage the students to share similar experiences they have been in, how they felt, and what the consequences of their actions were.
2. Read the text about how you can choose to handle peer pressure. Allow the students to share the difficulties they have experienced in standing up to their peers and going against the crowd. How does this behavior make them look to their peers? Is it worth being different? Discuss whether it is good or bad for their image to make independent decisions.
3. To answer Question 1 (a) and (b), have the students write how they know they are under negative pressure from their peers, including the types of things their peers say to them in these situations.
4. As a whole class, brainstorm to list types of trouble a person could get into by being persuaded by negative peer pressure. Allow the students to take notes during the discussion to fill the space provided for Question 2.
5. Discuss how being a victim of negative peer pressure might affect a person over an extended period if they were unable to say "no" and continued to get into trouble. Have the students write their own predictions for a person's self-esteem and future prospects if in this situation to answer Question 3.

### Follow-Up Suggestions

Have the students draw simple cartoons or write labels describing the types of situations a person under the influence of negative peers might find themselves in. Display the labels and cartoons with the heading "Is This You?"

### Activity Links

Anything Is Possible .....	pp. 10–11
Staying In Control .....	pp. 30–31
What Is "Cool" ? .....	pp. 44–45
How to Say "No" to Your Friends .....	pp. 74–75
Being Yourself .....	pp. 76–77
Keeping Out of Trouble .....	pp. 112–113
Joking and Teasing .....	pp. 120–121
Teasers .....	pp. 122–123

### Sensitivity Issues

There is a fine line between negative peer pressure and bullying. Students need to be aware that negative peer pressure that makes them feel unsafe, should be handled by removing themselves from the situation as soon as possible and reporting the incident. Students should understand that by protecting peers who are involved in inappropriate behaviors, they may ultimately incriminate themselves through association with the group.

### Answers

Answers will vary

# Negative Friendships



Peer group pressure affects everyone, including adults. However, by making good decisions about who you will be friends with and saying “no” when you have to, you can choose whether peer pressure will affect you in a positive way or a negative way.

1. How do you know when you are under negative peer pressure?

(a) How do you feel?

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(b) What do your peers say or do?

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2. Brainstorm to list examples of what negative peer pressure causes people to do, feel, or act like.

3. How could negative peer pressure affect a person’s ...

(a) self-esteem?

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(b) future?

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