

Back to school, back to friends, back to peer pressure. The beginning of the school year can bring feelings of excitement, anxiety, and the need to fit in. With society, movies, music, and social media normalizing alcohol and drug use it's no surprise that teens are feeling pressured to use substances to fit in.

Studies show that one of the strongest influences on adolescents are their parents. Talking with children and providing healthy, real life examples for them can help reduce risk-taking behaviors and guide them down the path to a healthier lifestyle.

Here are some ways of dealing with peer pressure that you can discuss with your child to help them navigate their way through uncomfortable situations: (Tips obtained from Women's and Children's Health Network)

- **Most importantly, be true to yourself.** Make your own choices. Get to know who you are and what is good for you and your life.
- **Think about what someone gets out of pressuring you to do something.** Is this really for your benefit? Or for theirs? What do they get out of forcing you to do something you don't want to?
- **Think about what you are getting out of the choices you are making.** What would you like for yourself in the future? How are the choices you are making now going to help or hinder your ability to achieve these goals? What might you do to get there in the most successful way you can?
- **Learning skills like assertiveness can help.** This can mean using messages like "I think...", "I feel...", "I will..." or "I want...".
- If someone is pressuring you to do something you don't want to, **talk to someone you know will listen and help you.** Keeping it inside and carrying your worries around can make things even harder to deal with.
- **Find things you are interested in.**
- **Hang out with a range of different people** and listen to what is important to them. There is no one way of doing or viewing things. Think about what is most important to you and who you are as an individual! You might find that a different group of people is more like you. Give it a go and find out! Giving it a go can mean you learn more about what is good for you – whether you decide that you think they are people you wouldn't want for your friends.
- **Learn from your mistakes and learn from your peers - their successes and their mistakes.** This can help you make positive choices about your own, swinging, fun-loving life!

For more information on peer pressure and tips to help your child with refusal skills, visit:

http://www.healthcommunities.com/healthy-living-guides/index.shtml/10-ways-to-help-your-child-resist-peer-pressure_102

<https://drugfree.org/article/start-talking/>

If you are interested in more information and resources about substance use, visit ysb.net.