

Peer Pressure Party

Overview

In this activity, students will experience peer pressure in a controlled situation to understand how their thinking and feelings affect what they do. Students will also gain an understating that a key component to loyalty is first being loyal to your own values.

Grades

5-8

Activity Type

Small groups

Whole group

Materials

- Bowls of popcorn, candy and chips (one of each bowl per small group)
- Napkins and plates (as necessary)
- A set of “Direction Strips” for each group (attached)
 - Each group’s set of strips should have 1-2 strips saying “Do not eat.”
 - The remainder of each group’s strips should say, “While you enjoy some snacks, strongly encourage everyone to eat” for the rest of the class

Duration

30 minutes

Teacher Preparation

- Create a set of strips for each group (see attached); each set of strips should have 1-2 “Do not eat” strips. Ensure there are an appropriate number of strips so that each student in each group has a direction strip.
- To help students buy into this activity, teachers should tell the class ahead of time that as part of tomorrow’s activity, they’ll be having a small party. You can invite students to bring food or drink to enjoy at the party, or you can provide the food.

Instructions

1. Tell the class that you all are going to have a little party. Divide students into groups of five students each and designate a specific area of the room for each group. Give each group of five a set of the attached “Direction Strips,” ensuring students do not see any other strip other than the one they are given. (Groups can vary in number and be less or more than 5; the most important thing is that each group has 1 or 2 non-eaters, with the remainder being eaters. If working with groups of an alternate size than 5, teachers will just need to vary the “Direction Slips” assigned.)
2. Tell students to choose a strip of paper and to silently read it. Explicitly tell students that they should NOT share what is on their strip with their group mates, even if they don’t like the

instructions given. Explain to them that this strip tells them what they are to do during the “party.” Tell students they MUST follow the directions given to them with no complaint.

3. Give each group bowls/cups of tasty treats and tell the students to begin their “party”. Remind them to do exactly what their strip of directions tells them.
4. Give students about 5-8 minutes to interact (some enjoying the snacks, others not). Roam the room and provoke conversation in groups with limited interaction. Consider encouraging “eating” students to really pressure the non-eating students, throwing in comments like:
 - Gosh, why don’t you just eat something?
 - Are you too cool to eat with us?
5. Finally, stop the “party” and ask the students who got the “Do not eat,” slip of paper to come to the front of the room. Give them their own treats and ask them to describe how they felt during the activity.
 - Did any of them give in? Why or why not?
 - What did they do to avoid the pressure of their classmates?
 - If they gave in, what might be the consequences of bending to peer pressure?
6. Ask the rest of the class what methods they used to apply pressure during the activity. Write their responses on the board or overhead.
 - Which methods were the most effective in making students eat?
 - Which responses from the non-eaters were most effective?
 - Was there a difference in groups that had more than one non-eater?
7. Go back and ask the class to discuss the best way to handle each type of peer pressure listed on the board. Encourage students to consider multiple responses.
 - What if you experienced actual peer pressure in a different setting (i.e. from your friends to do something you really know you shouldn’t do)?
 - Maybe at a party where someone is trying to get you to drink alcohol and you don’t want to?
 - How could you respond to the pressure and stay loyal to your values?
 - In activity setting: I don’t mind if you eat right now, but I’m just not hungry.
 - In party setting: I’m just passing tonight because I have a soccer game early tomorrow morning and need to be in top form.
8. Culminate the activity by discussing with students: You have just experienced various methods that people will use to manipulate you into doing what they want you to do. Often you’ll hear this described as peer pressure. Many of your classmates tried to entice you, some told you they would not be your friend anymore, some may have even tried to threaten you or put you down. Being loyal means that you are first true to yourself – respect yourself. When you are loyal to your own principles and values, you will find that you will be able to minimize negative peer pressure and maximize your loyalty to other people and ideas that align with your values.

Direction Strips

(Cut these apart and provide a set to each group.)

The following is your one direction for this activity. Do not share your directions with anyone else:

Do NOT eat!

The following is your one direction for this activity. Do not share your directions with anyone else:

Do NOT eat!

The following is your one direction for this activity. Do not share your directions with anyone else:

While you enjoy some snacks, strongly encourage everyone to eat.

The following is your one direction for this activity. Do not share your directions with anyone else:

While you enjoy some snacks, strongly encourage everyone to eat.

The following is your one direction for this activity. Do not share your directions with anyone else:

While you enjoy some snacks, strongly encourage everyone to eat.
