



## BACKGROUND NOTES: PEER PRESSURE

Even though young people often report that they learn more from friends when they reach adolescence, studies have found that these same adolescents would prefer to learn about a variety of important topics from their parents or other caring adults. Peer influence does increase during adolescence, but the influence of caring adults can remain strong if you've established a strong relationship during the earlier years. Most peer pressure for young people is just as subtle as it is for most adults.

This is why practicing saying no to peer pressure is important. Each young person can help develop his or her own ways of saying no, but it's your job to help them practice these so that they are prepared if the offer is more subtle or more direct than what was expected. A lot of this will depend on the age and attitude of the child, and the most important thing is to make sure the child is comfortable with what he or she wants to say. Your job is to coach them to use language and phrases that they come up with themselves to resist peers pressuring them to use drugs, have sex, or drink alcohol. The younger the child, the more practice he or she will need. This cannot be a one-time session. You might find, that a 10-year-old has no trouble saying no to a suggestion that he drink alcohol at a neighbour's house. However, three years later when the 17-year-old next door asks him if he wants a beer, he may hesitate because he is not as sure of himself and his convictions at 13 as he was at the age of 10.