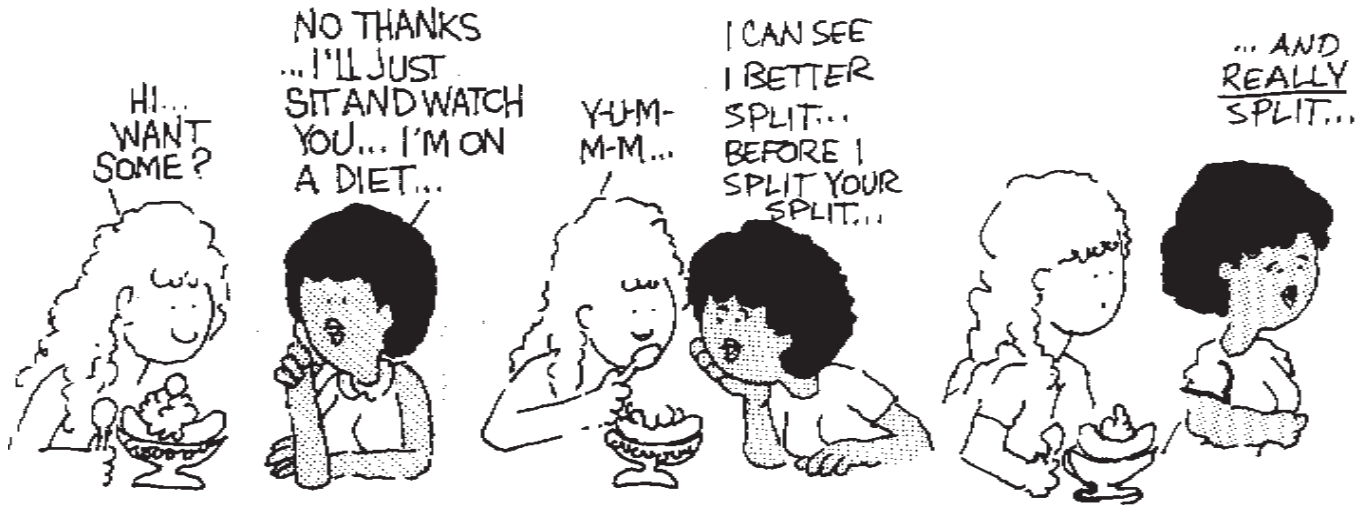


Pressure!



Positive and Negative

One of the strongest influences on people is pressure. Pressure can take many forms. Sometimes pressure is positive. For example, a teacher pressures students to study, learn, and get good grades. A supervisor pressures employees to conform to high performance standards. Sometimes we put this kind of pressure on ourselves.

Other times pressure is negative. For example, an individual pressures a friend to use alcohol or other drugs. One teenager pressures another to go somewhere "off limits." A group pressures its members to participate in an illegal demonstration.

Negative pressure can put you in a "no-win" situation. You don't know whether to do what the person wants or not. If you *don't* do it, you risk losing a friendship. If you *do*, you hurt yourself. Either way you lose—or so it seems.

In situations like these, try to decide what's most important to you. *Does a real friend constantly pressure you to be somebody you aren't or to do things you don't want to do? Should you give in to people who put you in that kind of position?*

You must choose when to stand your ground. Ask yourself these questions:

1. What am I being asked to do?
2. Do I really want to do it?
3. What are the consequences of doing it?
4. What other choices do I have?

Remember a time someone pressured you to be somebody other than yourself. How did you feel? _____

What did you do? _____

Recall a time when someone pressured you to do something you knew was wrong or dangerous. How did you feel? _____

What did you do? _____

All Dressed Up

Peer pressure comes in many styles and disguises. It can be:

- friendly
- teasing
- intimidating
- guilt-producing
- humiliating
- verbally abusive
- demanding
- bribing
- threatening
- physically menacing

What style of peer pressure do you recognize in each of these statements?

"I'll take out the trash for a week if you'll..."

Style:

"If you know what's good for you, you'll..."

Style:

"If you were really my friend, you'd..."

Style:

"Come on, be a pal and ..."

Style:

"If you don't do it, I'll tell Mom."

Style:

"It's okay, we all know you can't handle your liquor."

Style:

"Only a wimpy, blubber-faced loser like you would refuse this stuff."

Style:

Ways to Say No

1. **Say no.** Clearly, flatly, confidently.
2. **Say no and give a reason.** "No thanks. Smoking is bad for me and makes me look stupid."
3. **Say no and suggest something else to do.** "No thanks. I'm hungry. Want to go for a pizza?"
4. **Say no and leave.** "No thanks. See you around."

Ways To Be Convincing

- **Always respond to peer pressure assertively.** When pressured in a friendly way, remember that you too can be friendly—even humorous—yet assertive at the same time.
- **Use appropriate voice and body language.**
 1. Maintain good posture.
 2. Establish eye contact.
 3. Let your facial expression project calm confidence.
 4. Speak clearly, in a firm, steady voice.
 5. Be definite. Don't say, "I probably shouldn't" or "I don't think so."
 6. Avoid debate. If your first two or three refusals are ignored, get away. Don't put up with attempts to persuade.
- **When you say no and give a reason, use only a few words.** Don't spend a lot of time explaining yourself. Remember, you have a right to make your own decisions.
- **When pressure is intimidating or menacing, don't waste time arguing or talking.** Leave the scene as quickly as possible. If you think you are in danger, find someone who can help you.

Try It!

One of your best friends _____ has gradually stopped calling and coming over.

_____ Lately, when you see

this friend at school, he or she is with a group of kids you don't know. You decide to stop by your friend's house one afternoon to see what's up. Your friend seems happy to see you, and invites you upstairs to his or her room where you encounter several members of the new group sitting around smoking dope and drinking beer. Your friend teasingly invites you to "relax, for once" and join them.

What do you say?

What do you do?
