



Peer Pressure Online

Information for Parents



Your child has taken part in a Be Strong Online session, a new peer-to-peer learning programme from The Diana Award charity in partnership with Vodafone.

This session explored peer pressure online: how do young people deal with pressurised situations they encounter when using the internet? What are some examples of peer pressure they come across online, both positive and negative? And what strategies can they use to tackle this pressure from others?

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Young people have always been influenced by people they admire, their friends, and also the people they want to be their friends.

The difference today is that they are increasingly influenced by people outside of the school gates and their immediate social circle – by the stars they follow on internet platforms such as YouTube, or those they ‘meet’ on social media sites and online gaming platforms.

The thing about these online peers is that they can influence without having to face the consequences that friends would if they meet in the offline world. It’s much easier to pressurise someone into doing something risky if you can hide behind your screen if things go wrong.

Your child may face pressure from these online friends to take part in potentially dangerous internet dares and crazes, or to get involved in other activities that seem out of character, such as smoking, drinking or sending naked or sexually suggestive images of themselves.

Here are our tips, produced in association with Parent Zone, to enable you to support your child and help them cope with online peer pressure. If you would like to find out more there is an article for parents with all the information you need to accompany this advice. You can find the link at the end of this section.

It’s good to talk

- Starting the conversation can often be the most difficult thing. One way to begin would be to tell them that you have read or heard about a child being pressured to do something online. Ask them if they have ever heard of that happening to anyone they know – or if it has happened to them.
- If they say they haven't, ask them how they would resist someone pressuring them to do something online they didn't want to.
- If it has happened to them, ask them how they dealt with it. Then ask them if it happened again, whether they would do the same thing.
- Once they have finished, discuss with them how they could try to make amends if they did something to hurt someone else, or how you can help them feel better about themselves if they are the ones who have been hurt. In either scenario, discuss ways they could deal with the situation if it happens again.
- Ask your child if they have ever been tempted to get involved in any online pranks or dares, or know someone who has. Make them aware of the boundary between a fun online dare and one that could lead to serious harm. Explain that sharing them with others online could lead children or young people more vulnerable than them to take unwise risks.
- Both parents and children can feel uncomfortable talking about sex, but it's much better to speak to your child now about the dangers of being pressure into sharing naked or sexual images online, rather than waiting until something happens.
- Suggest they think carefully before they post anything online or via email or a social media app, no matter how much they are pressurised into doing so. A compromising image sent to a friend or a nasty comment on a message board could be there forever and visible to anyone. Even if they delete an image or comment, someone else could have already shared it and your child will have lost control of what they posted.

Remember you know your child better than anyone. If their behaviour changes or they seem to be uncharacteristically withdrawn or upset think about what might be happening online as well as offline.

Further help

If you are concerned about peer pressure affecting your child, don't be afraid to get advice or support from their school or a friend you trust. If you think your child may be being pressured into doing something that could put them at risk, you can contact the NSPCC's free Online Safety Helpline (0808 800 5002), or CEOP (www.ceop.police.uk) for advice.

More Information

www.parentzone.org.uk/peerpressure

www.antibullyingpro.com/how-to-stay-safe-online

www.parentinfo.org/

www.vodafone.com/content/parents

www.vodafone.com/content/parents/advice/sexting.html

<http://www.ceop.police.uk/>

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Diana Award, 2nd Floor, 120 Moorgate, London EC2M 6UR Tel: 020 7628 7499

Website: www.diana-award.org.uk Twitter: @Dianaaward

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120 Moorgate, London EC2M 6UR

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