

# The Peer Pressure "Bag of Tricks"

## Role Playing Lesson for Middle School Students

This lesson follows the introductory lesson on The Cool Spot Web site ([www.thecoolspot.gov](http://www.thecoolspot.gov)) and should be followed by the "Know Your NOs" lesson on resistance skills. Time range possible for this lesson is 45-120 minutes.

### Enduring Understandings

- Peer pressure is the powerful feeling of pressure from someone your own age that can push you toward making certain choices, good or bad.
- Peer pressure can take a number of different forms, both spoken and unspoken, and can lead to risky, disapproved, or personally unwanted behavior.
- Students can learn to identify peer pressure tricks, which is the first step toward resisting them.

### Essential Questions

- What forms does peer pressure take?
- Why do people give in to peer pressure?
- What feelings can result from being pressured?

### Outcomes

Students will be able to:

- recognize different types of spoken and unspoken pressure
- name different types of spoken and unspoken pressure
- demonstrate different types of spoken and unspoken pressure
- name the feelings that spoken and unspoken pressure can generate

*Note to teacher: Make students aware that ways to resist peer pressure will be addressed after this in a separate lesson.*

### Materials Needed

- "Things to Remember" for each role-playing group or whole class (p. 2)
- student copies of role-playing response sheets (p. 3)
- one copy of each role-playing scenario (pp. 4-6)
- class-size enlargement of Spoken and Unspoken Pressure poster (p. 9)
- class-size enlargement of Peer Pressure Definitions (p. 10)
- labeled "Peer Pressure Tricks" bags, one bag per group of students. Each bag should have one cut set of "Peer Pressure Bag of Tricks" strips (pp. 11-12)
- writing paper and pens or pencils for students
- role-playing props as needed (see pp. 4-6)
- large, visible writing area and writing instrument for teacher

## Procedure

- Organize the class into six small groups. See role play scenarios and decide whether to have six mixed groups (i.e., boys and girls), or four mixed groups plus one group of all boys (for Scenario A), and one group of all girls (for Scenario F).
  - Provide the "Things to Remember" notes (see below) as a handout to each group or post an enlargement for the class.
  - Give each student a Student Response Sheet.
  - Give each group a scenario to role play.
  - Give each group a "Bag of Tricks."
  - Have each group select a spokesperson to hold up the group's answer choices from the "Bag of Tricks."
  - Have the groups empty their bags and spread out the papers.
  - Allow the groups enough time to plan and practice their scenarios.
  - Call the groups up one at a time for their role plays (set appropriate ground rules if needed in addition to the "Things to Remember" list).
  - Call "Freeze" at the end of each role play; then have the role players relax.
  - Have each group's spokesperson hold up the paper strip for the Trick they think is being demonstrated.
  - Read aloud each choice; then announce the correct answer.
  - Ask students to explain their choices; allow time for Q&A and for the class to fill in their Student Response Sheets.
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## Things to Remember

- Don't tell any of the other groups which "Trick" you are presenting.
- Involve everyone in your group; treat everyone in the group respectfully.
- Do not use a specific situation that people can identify or that will embarrass anyone.
- Demonstrate the "Trick" well enough for other students to identify it.
- Do not use any word that sounds like the "Trick" you are demonstrating (e.g., don't say "reject" during the "Rejection" scenario).
- The person being pressured may react but is not to respond verbally to the pressure.
- All players are to stop when the teacher calls "Freeze" at the end of the demonstration. Wait until the teacher signals you to relax.

## Student Response Sheet

Complete the chart below as you watch the Peer Pressure role plays. Use the Cool Spot Web site ([www.thecoolspot.gov](http://www.thecoolspot.gov)) and the resources from your teacher to help you identify the "Tricks." Use your own words or the word bank to describe the feelings of the person being pressured.

### Feelings Word Bank:

scared	embarrassed	confused	angry	curious	attractive
calm	abandoned	obvious	invisible	alone	unimportant
cool	out of control	ignorant	smart	ugly	disrespected
stupid	in control	important	excited	nervous	powerless

**Spoken or Unspoken  
Pressure**  
(write one)

**Peer Pressure  
Trick**  
(write one)

**Feelings**  
(write more  
than one)

**Team Fans**

**Substitute  
Teacher**

**Math Test**

**The Party**

**The Dance**

**The MP3 Player**

## Role Play Scenarios

**Scenario A - Team Fans** (don't tell other groups—this "Trick" is "Rejection")

**Characters:**

Josh - a boy who has just moved to the area  
Several other boys who are local team fans

**Setting:** Outside the building before or after school or in the cafeteria during lunch

**Action:**

- Several boys are standing together discussing their favorite team.
- Josh walks past.
- One boy calls out to him and asks who his favorite team is.
- Josh answers with the name of another city team.
- All the boys laugh and turn away from Josh.
- Another boy calls out, "I guess YOU won't be at our (team name) party Sunday!"
- Josh walks away.

**FREEZE**

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**Scenario B - Substitute Teacher** (don't tell other groups—this "Trick" is "The Put Down")

**Characters:**

Brianna - a polite, respectful middle school student  
Other less respectful and somewhat rowdy students  
Mr. /Ms. Morgan - substitute teacher

**Setting:** A middle school classroom

**Action:**

- Brianna enters the class, greets the substitute, sits down, and prepares to work.
- Other students enter, notice the substitute, and start spreading the word that there's a sub.
- The bell rings, and other students continue to stand and talk, etc.
- The substitute asks each of the other students to take their seats and quiet down for the morning announcements.
- Brianna remains seated quietly while other students continue laughing, messing around, and throwing paper wads, some directed at Brianna.
- Brianna ignores the disruption.
- One student calls Brianna a chicken and adds noises; then others make comments to her about her being a brown-nose or teacher's pet.

**FREEZE**

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**Scenario C - The Math Test** (don't tell other groups—this "Trick" is "Reasoning")

**Characters:**

Pete - a kid who didn't study for a math test

Other students, friends of Pete, who did not study but have a "cheat sheet"

Mr. /Ms. Ramos - the math teacher

**Setting:** a middle school classroom

**Action:**

- Pete comes into the classroom and hears the teacher say there's a math test.
- Pete mutters something about his mom's reaction to another failed math test.
- Friends overhear Pete and tell him not to worry; they've got him covered with the "cheat sheet."
- Pete hesitates and expresses concern about cheating and getting caught.
- Friends give him reasons why they think it's fine—such as everyone does it, they've done it before, and they didn't get caught.

**FREEZE**

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**Scenario D - The Party** (don't tell other groups—this "Trick" is "The Huddle")

**Characters:**

Katrina - a nice girl who likes a cool boy and wants to be popular

Mick - the cool boy that Katrina likes

Other cool kids

**Setting:** an end of school year party

- Mick and other kids are gathered in a huddle around one student who is showing them a new music video on a portable media player. They are enjoying the video.
- Katrina walks in.
- A few in the group turn and briefly look at her and then at Mick. They don't acknowledge her and turn back to the video.
- Mick smiles at her and then gives his attention back to the video and the group.
- She approaches the group, but they don't turn to include her.

**FREEZE**

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**Scenario E - The Dance** (don't tell other groups—this "Trick" is "The Look")

**Characters:**

Diana - a shy girl wearing simple, plain clothing

Rafe - Diana's shy best friend, also dressed in a plain way

Other "popular" students wearing stylish jeans and casual shirts

**Setting:** a school dance

**Action:**

- The students in the stylish clothes are dancing and laughing.
- Diana and Rafe enter and stand apart, watching the others.
- One or two of the popular students notice Diana and Rafe and give them "the look," which can include looking them up and down, rolling their eyes, slightly shaking their heads in disapproval, and the like. They also nudge their friends—without saying anything—to look as well.

**FREEZE**

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**Scenario F - The MP3 Player** (don't tell other groups—this "Trick" is "The Example")

**Characters:**

Nicky - a girl who wants to fit in.

Other girls who are friends with each other and who all have MP3 players with earbuds

Nicky's mom

**Setting:** the mall

**Action:**

- Nicky's mom drops her at the mall to get new athletic shoes and other team equipment.
- As Nicky is walking to the shoe store, she passes the girls listening to their MP3 players and sharing their earbuds.
- Instead of going to the shoe store, Nicky heads for the electronics store and gets an MP3 player.
- When her mom meets her, Mom asks where Nicky's new shoes and equipment are.

**FREEZE**

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## Direct Instruction

Use information from the role plays and Student Response Sheets to reinforce and chart the following information about peer pressure.

Peer pressure takes many forms—

- Spoken pressure: Rejection, Put Down, Reasoning
- Unspoken pressure: The Huddle, The Look, The Example

Peer pressure evokes a broad range of feelings—

- Positive: pride, importance, belonging, etc.
- Negative: confusion, insecurity, isolation, etc.  
(use Student Response Sheets for examples)

People give in to peer pressure for a number of reasons—

- to improve social or academic standing
- to broaden their group of friends or acquaintances
- to attract or deflect attention
- to avoid negative repercussions
- to attract positive feedback
- to learn something
- (other from students)

## Discussion Questions

- In the role plays, were there any situations in which the peer pressure could be seen as positive? Think about "The Example"—how might Mom see having an MP3 player as a good thing for her daughter? What might be some positive and negative consequences for Nicky? How might this be different if Nicky were a boy? Which other role play demonstrated that having a certain thing can help someone feel like they fit in? ("The Look")
- Is peer pressure always deliberate?
- Does peer pressure always say something negative about the person or people exerting the pressure? Give examples.
- Are there any advantages or disadvantages in being (or trying to be) friends with someone outside your normal social group, as in "The Huddle"?
- Think about the "Reasoning" role play. Is it more important among middle school peers to just seem to succeed on school tasks or to really succeed on school tasks?
- Is peer pressure exclusive to teenagers? Explain your answer.

## Closing and Summary

*Note to teacher: "That's Me" is a strategy in which the instructor makes a series of statements to the group and those to whom each statement applies stand up and say, "That's Me" and then sit down again. The intent is to have people in the group identify others with whom they have something in common.. Because of the sensitivity of this topic, you may adapt this strategy and ask students to simply think their responses.*

Use "That's Me" for the following statements:

I have used unspoken pressure against someone.  
I have had unspoken pressure used against me.  
I have used spoken pressure against someone.  
I have had spoken pressure used against me.  
I have used unspoken pressure to help someone.  
I have had unspoken pressure used to help me.  
I have used spoken pressure to help someone.  
I have had unspoken pressure used to help me.

## Suggested Follow-up activities to Peer Pressure Lessons

Ask students to make note of peer pressure they see being used in at least two of the following places within a given time frame (before the next class, by the end of the week, etc.) and name the type of pressures exhibited. If possible, they should state whether or not the pressures were successful and how they knew. (Ground rule: nothing too personal or embarrassing.)

in school (academically)  
at the library  
at the mall  
between two adults  
between two younger children

in school (socially)  
at a team or group practice  
at home  
at work

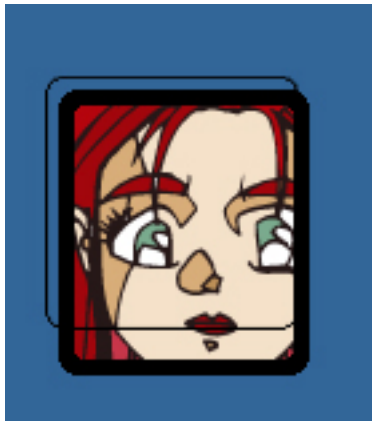
Play charades or Pictionary using Spoken Peer Pressure expressions and phrases such as:

You're such a loser  
I promise I won't tell  
What a geek/nerd/freak

Nobody will know  
Everybody does it  
(other suggestions from the class)



**Spoken Pressure** - Also called direct pressure. It's when a person asks you directly to do something, or says things to you that push you toward a certain choice.



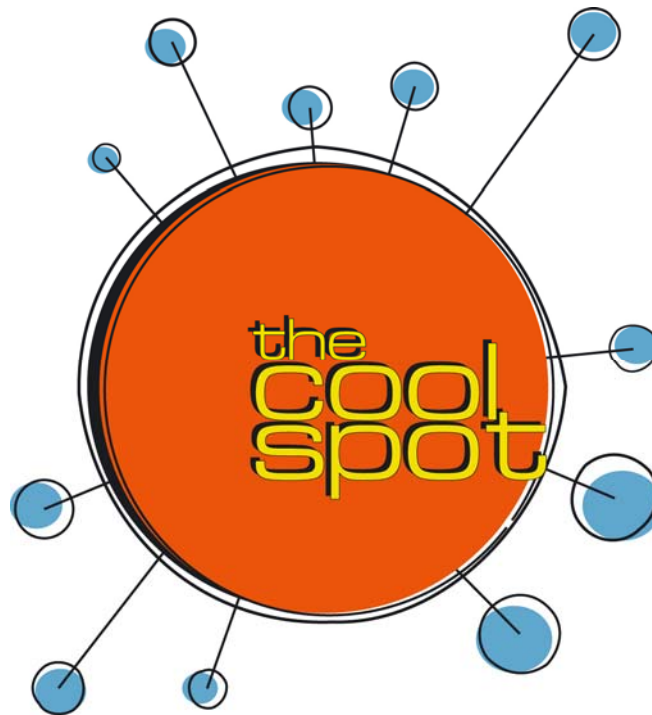
**Unspoken Pressure** - Also called indirect pressure. It's when nothing is actually said to you, but because you see others doing something, you feel pressure to do the same.

## **Peer -**

someone in  
your own  
age group

## **Pressure -**

the feeling that someone  
is pushing you toward  
a certain choice,  
good or bad



## **Peer Pressure**

the feeling that someone your own age is pushing  
you toward making a certain choice,  
good or bad

visit [www.thecoolspot.gov](http://www.thecoolspot.gov)  
for tips on identifying and resisting peer pressure

# Peer Pressure Bag of Tricks

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Spoken pressure:

## REJECTION

Threatening to leave someone out or end a friendship.

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Spoken pressure:

## PUT DOWN

Insulting or calling names to make someone feel bad.

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Spoken pressure:

## REASONING

Giving reasons to do something or why it would be OK to do it.

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Unspoken pressure:

## THE HUDDLE

A group stands together talking or laughing, maybe looking at something you can't see, with their backs out to others.

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Unspoken pressure:

## THE “LOOK”

Kids who think they're cool give a look that means: “We're cool and you're not.”

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Unspoken pressure:

## THE EXAMPLE

Popular kids simply buy or wear or do something, and because they set an example, others want to follow.

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