



(CHECKING OUR REALITY



A “PLUG AND PLAY”
ACTIVITY FOR YOUTH



FACILITATOR GUIDE

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Overview

This lesson, designed to supplement your school's or organization's youth programming, will help you counter youth misperceptions of peer participation in risk behaviors. Adolescents are especially susceptible to peer influence (Steinberg, 2007) and tend to overestimate peer participation in risk behaviors such as alcohol, tobacco and other drug use, and sexual behavior (Helms, 2014). These misperceptions can influence youth themselves to engage in the risk behaviors especially if they are seeking approval from high status, or "popular," peers (Helms, 2014). Adolescents who perceive their peers as more sexually active, more approving of having sex, and exerting more pressure on them to be sexually active tend to be more sexually active themselves. Adolescents' own sexual activity is even more strongly associated with the perception that their peers are sexually active than with direct pressure peers may apply to them to be sexually active (van de Bongardt, 2015).

In this lesson, you will teach youth the difference between peer influence (implicit pressure) and peer pressure (explicit pressure) and provide them with accurate information about peer norms. Youth will also work together to identify strategies for recognizing and resisting future peer influence and pressure, including strategies to remind themselves that their initial perception is not always accurate. They will apply what they have learned to develop messages to help their peers question their own assumptions and refrain from taking unhealthy risks.

KEY TOPICS	AUDIENCE	LENGTH
Peer influence, peer pressure, norms, decision making, resistance skills	Middle and high school youth	45 minutes

GOALS

- Youth will understand the difference between peer influence and peer pressure.
- Youth's perceptions of peer norms will become more accurate as they are exposed to accurate information about peer engagement in common risk behaviors.
- Youth will become aware of their tendency to overestimate peer engagement in risk behaviors.
- Youth will reconsider whether a potential decision to engage in sex or another risky behavior is influenced by an erroneous perception of what others are doing.
- Youth will develop strategies and skills for managing future peer influence and peer pressure and encouraging others to do so.
- Youth will become less likely to engage in unhealthy risk behaviors.

KEY MESSAGES FOR YOUTH

- You can be influenced by what you think your peers are doing, even if they are not directly pressuring you to do something.
- Initial assumptions about peer norms often are not accurate.
- Young people often overestimate the prevalence of unhealthy risk taking among their peers.
- It's important to stop and think about whether your assumptions are accurate.
- You have the ability to make decisions that give you the best physical, emotional, and social health outcomes.
- There are helpful strategies you can use to make decisions that give you the best possible physical, emotional, and social health outcomes.

Before You Start

To get ready to deliver this lesson, review this checklist and gather all the materials and technology you will need. Some activities will require advance preparation. Read the Facilitator Guide to familiarize yourself with each section.

Resource	How to Prepare	Where You Will Use this Resource
Laptop or tablet device		Entire lesson
Projector or shared screen using videoconferencing platform such as Zoom, Google Meet, Microsoft Teams, or Blackboard		Entire lesson
Students' school or personal laptops, tablets, or mobile phones (optional)		Section 2, Part 1 Section 3
Checking Our Reality Slide Deck	Download the slide deck and have it open and ready to present from your laptop, tablet, or other device.	Section 1 Section 2, Part 2 Section 3, Part 1

Resource	How to Prepare	Where You Will Use this Resource
<p>Online Quiz</p> <p>Quizizz is an application that offers a free, basic account for teachers or facilitators. Students will access the quiz on their laptops, tablets, or mobile phones and will take the quiz at the same time. Answers will be revealed on a dashboard, which you can share with your students using a projection screen or shared screen in a virtual environment like Zoom. Alternatively, if you are already using a different quiz application such as Kahoot, you can use the Checking Our Reality Quiz Questions to set up a quiz using that tool.</p>	<p>Get your free, basic account for Quizizz and set up the Checking Our Reality quiz in advance of your class.</p> <p>To sign up for Quizizz, follow these instructions: https://quizizz.zendesk.com/hc/en-us/articles/115001575472-Signing-up-for-an-account</p> <p>To create the quiz:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Save the file Checking Our Reality Quiz Questions to your computer or other device. • Create a new quiz in Quizizz. Look in the upper left corner of the page for the button to create a quiz. • Name the quiz “Checking Our Reality” and select a relevant subject (e.g., “specialty”). • Select “Import from spreadsheet” (right side of page). Upload the file Checking Our Reality Quiz Questions by dragging the file to the window shown. • Select “Save.” • Ensure that the quiz uploaded correctly and that formatting appears correct. • Select “Done” in top right corner. • In the quiz details pop-up screen, add relevant grades and make the quiz private. • Save the quiz. • Ensure that all students have a device with which to take the quiz. If students are using a personal device, make sure they have access to the internet and can access the Quizizz website, and that use of their devices falls within the school’s or other relevant institution’s policies. To make sure no student is left out, you can pair students with partners if only some students have devices. 	<p>Section 2, Part 1</p>

OVERVIEW

Resource	How to Prepare	Where You Will Use this Resource
<p>Paper and Pencil Quiz (alternative activity for online quiz)</p> <p>If you are unable to use Quizizz for this activity, please use the paper and pencil Checking Our Reality Quiz.</p>	<p>Download and print the paper and pencil Checking Our Reality Quiz. Print one per student or team.</p>	<p>Section 2, Part 1</p>
<p>Chalkboard, whiteboard, flip chart, or means to display results of brainstorming activity (e.g., shared Google Doc, Google Sides, Zoom’s whiteboard feature)</p>		<p>Section 2, Part 2</p> <p>Section 3, Part 1</p>

Resource	How to Prepare	Where You Will Use this Resource
<p>Your students may already have access to creative applications through their school or your organization that will help them develop their informational messages about peer influence for the activity in Section 3, Part 2. At a minimum, they should have either paper and writing implements or word processing software such as Microsoft Word or Google Docs. However, you may want to consider the following optional resources for students to develop messages about peer influence:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Flipgrid free account 2. Canva for Education free account 3. Giphy collection of GIFs 	<p>Get a free educator account with Flipgrid. Students do not need their own accounts to join. You will need to sign up, create a new private group, and invite students to join via student email, student username, or Google Classroom. Students can record and submit their own videos and add special effects.</p> <p>Get a Canva for Education free account and invite students to create social media posts, posters, flyers, or other materials to get their ideas across.</p> <p>Give students this link to Giphy so they can add GIFs to their messages if desired.</p>	<p>Section 3, Part 2</p>

SECTION 1

“Peer Pressure”—It’s Not as Simple as It Seems (7 minutes)

OBJECTIVES

- Youth will understand the difference between peer influence and peer pressure.
- Youth will understand that peer influence and the desire to follow norms can have a strong effect on people’s behavior.

KEY WORDS AND PHRASES

- Peer pressure
- Peer influence
- Norms

MATERIALS

Checking Our Reality Slide Deck

TECHNOLOGY/TOOLS

None

1. Introduce the lesson.



SAY: This lesson will inspire you to challenge your assumptions about what your peers are doing. You’ll test your knowledge about what kinds of choices people are making about things that affect their health. Then you will work as a team to figure out how you can use what you’ve learned to make the best choices for yourselves.

By now, you’ve heard the term “peer pressure” MANY times over the course of your life; right? Often the term is used by adults to talk with you about resisting peer pressure from people your age who might encourage you to do things that could be harmful to you, like drinking alcohol or using drugs. But what does “peer pressure” really mean? Is it really that teens “pressure” other teens to do things that aren’t good for them or is it something more subtle or indirect? For example, which of these scenarios do you think is more common?

2. Show slide #1 in the Checking Our Realty Slide Deck (Peer Pressure vs. Peer Influence)

The slide has a black header with the title "Peer Pressure vs. Peer Influence" in white. Below the header is a blue background with two large circles. The left circle is red and contains "SCENARIO 1" and a paragraph of text. The right circle is yellow and contains "SCENARIO 2" and a paragraph of text. A small number "1" is in the bottom right corner of the slide.

Peer Pressure vs. Peer Influence

SCENARIO 1
A teen is pressuring another teen to smoke, saying things like “c’mon, it’s not a big deal” or “give it a try; don’t be a loser.”

SCENARIO 2
A group of guys are talking about an upcoming party and how much alcohol a few friends are bringing. Another teen is thinking to himself that he must be the only one who isn’t interested in getting drunk.

1



ASK: Which of these two scenarios is more common?

Summarize the student responses; they are likely to say that Scenario 2 is more common.



ASK: If you heard someone say the phrases “peer pressure” and “peer influence,” which of these two scenarios seems more like “peer pressure” and which one seems more like “peer influence?” Why?

Summarize the responses.



SAY: Although you hear the phrase “peer pressure” used all the time, “peer influence” is probably a better phrase to describe Scenario 2. “Peer influence” is when you do something because your friends are doing it or because you think your friends are doing it and you want to feel accepted by them, even if they aren’t bugging you or even directly encouraging you to do it. You might feel pressure to do something, but nobody is actually directly pressuring you. Your perception of what they are doing could definitely have an influence on you though. Direct pressure, like in Scenario 1, happens sometimes, but, in reality, teens don’t typically bug each other to do things like drinking, smoking, using drugs, or getting involved in other risky behaviors. In fact, friends are more likely to support each other’s efforts to do well than directly pressure each other to do unhealthy things!



SAY: So, since direct peer pressure isn’t that common, why do adults who care about you make such a big deal about “peer pressure”? Well, let’s talk more about peer influence and how our perception of what others think and do plays a role in what we all do.

3. Introduce the concept of social norms.



ASK: Can you think of any expressions you say or clothing you wear in some situations but not in others? Can you share some examples?

Give students a chance to respond and summarize if needed.

FACILITATOR TIP

Potential examples include a sports event, school, a wedding, a party, a date.



ASK: Why do you think you act differently in each of these different situations?

Give students a chance to respond and summarize if needed.



SAY: It’s human nature to look at what others around us are doing and behave similarly so we fit in with the people who share our culture and expectations of how people should act. Try to think of some examples of behaviors that you do at school to fit in with general expectations. Some examples might be saying “hello” when others greet you or waiting in line at the cafeteria. Most likely, these are things we do because it’s what we assume is the norm for how people act. Norms are the unwritten rules of behavior that are considered acceptable in a particular group or society.



ASK: How might someone feel if they act in ways that totally ignore these norms? For example, what if someone walked into the cafeteria and started getting their food and then realized they just skipped dozens of people waiting in line? How do you think they would feel?

FACILITATOR TIP

If students don’t mention it, say that people often get embarrassed or uncomfortable when they realize that they accidentally broke an accepted norm of their group.



ASK: Are there any items teens think they must have to fit in with their peers?

FACILITATOR TIP

If students don’t mention them, bring up items like cell phones, social media accounts, and popular brands of clothing or shoes.



ASK: Why do many teens feel like they need to have these things to fit in?



SAY: People of all ages will pay attention to what members of their social group do and then do the same things to fit in. When they’re with a different social group, they may change their behaviors to be like members of that group. The key point is that we feel different kinds of pressure from our different social groups to act in certain ways. Sometimes it’s direct pressure, like if a friend hands you a drink at a party or if they say they don’t want you to come with them to a party if you’re not planning to drink. More often, though, it isn’t that obvious. It can be as simple as assuming everyone else is doing something and feeling like you won’t fit in if you don’t do it too.

4. Wrap up section 1 and transition to section 2.



SAY: Of course, it’s important to think for yourself when it comes to decisions that affect your health and future, regardless of what others are doing, but what happens when we’re wrong about the norms for our social groups? It means we’re being influenced by norms that aren’t even real!

SECTION 2

“Everyone’s Doing It.” But Are They Really?

OBJECTIVES

- Youth’s perceptions of peer norms will become more accurate as they are exposed to accurate information about peer engagement in common risk behaviors.
- Youth will become aware of their tendency to overestimate peer engagement in risk behaviors.

KEY WORDS AND PHRASES

- Norms
- Assumptions
- Exaggeration

MATERIALS

- [Checking Our Reality Slide Deck](#)
- [Checking Our Reality Quiz Questions](#) (for the online version of the quiz)
– or [Checking Our Reality Quiz](#) (paper and pencil version)

TECHNOLOGY/TOOLS

- Projector, laptop, or tablet device
- Students’ school or personal laptops, tablets, or mobile phones (optional)
- Quizizz account: If you choose to conduct an online quiz that students can take using their laptops, tablets, or mobile phones, see Before You Start on page 2 for instructions on signing up for a free Quizizz account and setting up the online quiz.
- Chalkboard, whiteboard, flip chart, or means to display results of brainstorming activity (e.g., shared Google Doc, Google Sides, Zoom’s whiteboard feature)

PART 1 | What Are High Schoolers REALLY Doing? Test Your Knowledge!— Quiz and Discussion (10 minutes)

1. Introduce the Checking Our Reality Quiz



SAY: Let’s find out what your peers are really doing. We will have a competition to test your knowledge! When it comes to peer influence, let’s focus on the things that could get you in trouble or get in the way of having the future you want. What are some of those things?

FACILITATOR TIP

If students don’t mention these items, briefly bring up examples such as inappropriate language at school or at home; staying out late on a school night; playing video games with friends instead of doing homework; skipping class.

If students don’t bring up alcohol use; smoking or vaping; drug use; or sex, say:

“Choosing to take unhealthy risks when it comes to smoking or vaping; alcohol use; using marijuana or other drugs; or having sex could lead to serious negative consequences.”



SAY: You’ll each take an online quiz to guess how many high school students currently are choosing to take unhealthy risks. Then we’ll compare your answers to what high schoolers themselves said in a recent national survey. [Optional: There will be a prize for the person or team with the most accurate guesses.]

2. Administer the quiz.

Option 1: Online Quiz

You already should have signed up for Quizizz and set up the Checking Our Reality quiz using the [Checking Our Reality Quiz Questions](#) before starting this lesson. Or, you should have set up a quiz using the [Checking Our Reality Quiz Questions](#) in a quiz application you are already familiar with. See instructions in Before You Start on page 2. To run the Quizizz quiz, follow these instructions:

- Visit [Quizizz.com](https://www.quizizz.com).
- Log in.
- Select “My Library.”
- Select the “Checking Our Reality” quiz.
- Select “Start a live quiz.”
- Select “Classic” game mode.
- Select “Continue.”
- Turn off “show answers during activity.”
- Click “or share via” to copy the website link and share with students via chat or email or have students type in “joinmyquiz.com” and enter the join code shown on your screen for the quiz.
- Ask students for verbal confirmation that they all have entered (you can also see the participants on your screen).
- Select “Start.”

Look at the on-screen scores and announce the winning individual(s) or team(s) with the most correct responses. The class’s accuracy will be shown.

Optional: Provide awards to the individual(s) or team(s) with the highest percentage of correct answers (note: there may be ties).

Option 2: Paper and Pencil Quiz

Hand out printed copies of the [Checking Our Reality Quiz](#). Students can work on their own or in teams. Have students turn in their quizzes when they are finished. Use the answer key to determine how many answers each student or team answered correctly and announce the winning individual(s) or team(s) with the most correct responses.

Optional: Provide awards to the individual(s) or team(s) with the highest percentage of correct answers (note: there may be ties).

3. At the end of the quiz, using the answer key and script provided, reveal the correct answer for each question and announce the proportion of students that answered correctly.

Adapt what you say to the results. For example, you might either say, “Looks like most people got this right!...” or “Looks like most people thought this behavior is a lot more common ...”

Checking Our Reality Answer Key and Script for Reviewing Quiz Results with Students

1 CURRENT ALCOHOL USE

Yeah, the legal drinking age is 21. But most high school students drink, right?

- A. Everyone drinks; like 10 out of 10
- B. Probably like 7 out of 10 drink
- C. **Correct answer: Most high school students don’t drink; maybe just 3 out of 10 do**



SAY: Most high school students don’t currently drink! That’s according to a recent national Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) survey, which found that only 3 out of 10 high school students are current drinkers. Alcohol use can lead to tough situations, like school problems, violence, and trouble with the law.

Source: Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance – United States, 2019 (CDC, 2020), 29.2% of students had had at least one drink of alcohol on at least 1 day during the 30 days before the survey (i.e., current alcohol use).

2 CURRENT SEXUAL ACTIVITY

How many high school students are currently having sex?

- A. Most; like 9 out of 10
- B. About half; or 5 out of 10
- C. **Correct answer: Not very many; maybe 3 out of 10**



SAY: Fewer than 3 out of 10 high school students are currently sexually active, according to a recent national CDC survey. Having sex can be risky because it can lead to getting HIV or other sexually transmitted infections or being involved in a pregnancy.

Source: Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance – United States, 2019 (CDC, 2020), 27.4% of students had had sexual intercourse with at least one person during the 3 months before the survey (i.e., currently sexually active).

3 CURRENT CIGARETTE USE

Are cigarettes cool?

- A. Not really; 3 out of 10 high schoolers smoke
- B. Correct answer: Nope; only like 1 out of 10 high schoolers smoke**
- C. Sort of; about half of high schoolers smoke



SAY: Fewer than 1 out of 10 high school students are current smokers, according to a recent national CDC survey. Most don’t use dip or cigars, either. We all know that smoking causes cancer, but it also makes you smell bad and turns your teeth yellow. Nicotine in cigarette smoke also affects brain function and memory.

Source: Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance – United States, 2019 (CDC, 2020), 6% of students had smoked cigarettes on at least 1 day during the 30 days before the survey (i.e., current cigarette use).

4 CURRENT VAPE USE

How about vapes or e-cigarettes? How many high schoolers vape?

- A. Hardly any; a little more than 1 out of 10
- B. Correct answer: A few; like 3 out of 10**
- C. Most of them; around 7 out of 10



SAY: Only about a third of high school students currently use electronic vapor products like vapes or e-cigarettes, according to a recent national CDC survey. Although vapes seem safer than cigarettes, research shows that the vapor you inhale can contain high levels of toxic metals that can damage your body. Vaping also exposes your brain to nicotine, which can affect brain function and memory and lead to nicotine addiction and make it more likely you’ll become a smoker.

Source: Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance – United States, 2019 (CDC, 2020), 32.7% of students had used an electronic vapor product on at least 1 day during the 30 days before the survey (i.e., current electronic vapor use).

5 CURRENT MARIJUANA USE

Okay, what about marijuana?

- A. Correct answer: 2 out of 10 high school students smoke marijuana; not many**
- B.** 8 out of 10 high school students smoke marijuana; almost everyone
- C.** 6 out of 10 high school students smoke marijuana; a little over half



SAY: Only 2 out of 10 students currently smoke marijuana, according to a recent national CDC survey. Marijuana can seriously hurt your coordination and thinking. Marijuana, alcohol, and other drugs can also lead to choices that could put you at risk for a sexually transmitted infection or a pregnancy.

Source: Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance – United States, 2019 (CDC, 2020), 21.7% of students had used marijuana (also called grass, pot, or weed) one or more times during the 30 days before the survey (i.e., current marijuana use).

6 PRESCRIPTION DRUG USE

How many high school students have taken a prescription pain medicine without a doctor’s prescription or differently than a doctor told them to use it?

- A.** About 3 out of 10
- B. Correct answer: About 1 out of 10**
- C.** About half of high school students; 5 out of 10



SAY: Just a little more than 1 out of 10 high school students have ever taken a prescription pain medicine without a doctor’s prescription or differently than a doctor told them to use it, according to a recent national CDC survey. Prescription pain medications are hard to quit taking, and too many can kill you.

Source: Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance – United States, 2019 (CDC, 2020), 14.3% of high school students have taken a prescription pain medicine without a doctor’s prescription or differently than a doctor told them to use it.

7

CURRENT SEAT BELT USE

How many high school students rarely or never wear a seat belt?

- A. About half; or 5 out of 10
- B. Some; like 3 out of 10
- C. **Correct answer: Fewer than 1 out of 10**



SAY: Only about 6% of high school students rarely or never wear a seat belt when they’re riding in a car with someone else, according to a recent national CDC survey.

Source: Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance – United States, 2017 (CDC, 2018), 5.9% of students rarely or never wore a seat belt when riding in a car driven by someone else.



SAY: You were probably surprised by some of the high schoolers’ answers to these questions. But these answers are based on recent confidential surveys of high schoolers all over the country. There is nothing to suggest that teens are lying on these types of surveys. In fact, teens have given similar answers on a variety of surveys, so it’s unlikely they are lying. When we actually look at the facts, we find that most high schoolers don’t drink, have sex, or use drugs. Next, you’ll get into teams to see if you can figure out why people often exaggerate how much their peers participate in risky behaviors. And then you’ll come up with ways you and your peers can keep from getting fooled.

PART 2 | Why Do We Exaggerate?— Brainstorming in Teams (8 minutes)



SAY: A lot of research has been done with teens showing that they often think their peers smoke, drink, have sex, or take other unhealthy risks a lot more than their peers actually do these things. Also, researchers have learned that when teens have, an exaggerated idea of how many of their peers are taking unhealthy risks, they are more likely to take those risks, especially if they think popular peers are doing it.

You can see that it’s a problem if people are tricking themselves into making unhealthy choices that could get in the way of reaching their own goals, based on an exaggerated idea of what peers are doing. The question is... how do we solve this problem? The first step is figuring out why it is happening. I’m going to put you into teams to see if you can use what you know about what goes on in your own social groups to figure out why this happens. Then we’ll use your ideas to come up with strategies for how to fix the problem.

1. Break the class into groups of 4-5 students (in-person groups or virtual breakout sessions). Show Slide #2 from the Checking Our Reality Slide Deck (Why Do We Exaggerate?).

Why Do We Exaggerate?

In teams, answer this question:

Why do teens have an exaggerated idea of how many of their peers are taking unhealthy risks when it comes to things like alcohol, drugs, and sex?

As you brainstorm, discuss these questions.

1. Are teens more likely to notice the one person who drinks or talks about hooking up with someone than the nine people who don't?
2. When someone doesn't do something, they probably don't talk about it; do they?
3. Do you think some people might be quiet about their own beliefs and behaviors if they think their beliefs and behaviors are different from what they think most people are doing?
4. Do you think some people might lie about things like drinking or having sex because they think it will help them fit in? How would lying reinforce other people's assumptions about how common it is for teens to drink or have sex?
5. How might social media like Instagram, TikTok, and Snapchat affect people's perceptions of what peers are doing?
6. What about other types of media like YouTube, video games, music & music videos, movies, and TV shows? What role might they play in making people believe most teens are taking unhealthy risks when they really aren't?

2



SAY: Your job is to answer the question, “Why do teens have an exaggerated idea of how many of their peers are taking unhealthy risks when it comes to things like alcohol, drugs, and sex?” Briefly talk about the 6 additional questions on the slide to come up with your reasons. You’ll have 5 minutes to brainstorm in small groups. Choose one person to share your team’s ideas with the larger group afterward.

2. Bring the small groups together and ask each group to share their ideas. Summarize common themes on the chalkboard, whiteboard, flip chart paper, or virtual whiteboard or ask a student volunteer to do it.

FACILITATOR TIP

It is best if students come up with ideas on their own, but here are some things you can say if they don’t.

- “Risky behavior stands out. When a few people talk or brag about taking unhealthy risks like hooking up or getting drunk at a party, it gets attention. But many more people don’t take unhealthy risks. They just don’t go around talking about what they aren’t doing, so it doesn’t get the same kind of attention. For example, how many of you have heard someone talk about how sober they were last night?”
- “When people post on social media, they often are trying to create an image that makes them look popular and shows that they are having a good time with others. Just one post showing an unhealthy risk like getting drunk at a party might get viewed by a lot of people who end up feeling like they’re missing out if they’re not doing it too.”
- “Once people get the idea that a certain behavior is considered cool, they might pretend they are doing it too, even if they are not. This can create a cycle where everyone’s assumptions become more exaggerated because of the pretending.”
- “Advertising and marketing can also influence perceptions and make unhealthy risks seem cool. For example, beer commercials can encourage underage drinking.”

SECTION 3

Changing Our Assumptions to Fit the Reality

OBJECTIVES

Youth will develop strategies and skills for managing future peer influence and peer pressure and encouraging others to do so.

KEY WORDS AND PHRASES

- Peer pressure
- Peer influence
- Messaging

MATERIALS

[Checking Our Reality Slide Deck](#)

TECHNOLOGY/TOOLS

- Projector, laptop, or tablet device
- Students' school or personal laptops, tablets, or mobile phones (optional)
- Chalkboard, whiteboard, flip chart, or means to display results of brainstorming activity (e.g., shared Google Doc, Google Sides, Zoom's whiteboard feature)
- Google Slides or shared Google Doc for each group (optional)

PART 1 | Breaking the Cycle. How Can We Keep From Being Fooled?—Problem-Solving Activity (10 minutes)

1. Introduce problem-solving activity.



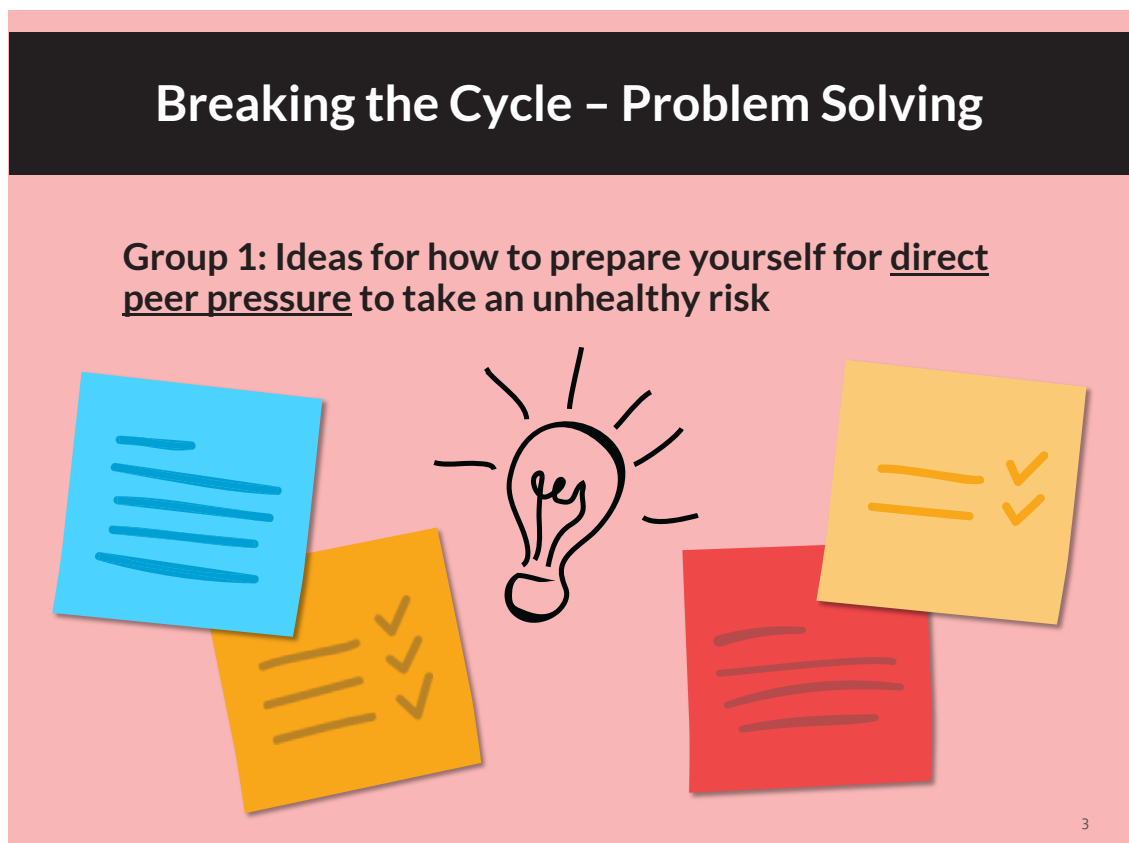
SAY: You've learned that people have exaggerated assumptions about how much their peers take unhealthy risks, and you've discussed why this happens. Now let's see what can be done about it. There are things you can do to question your assumptions and remind yourself not to be fooled in the future.



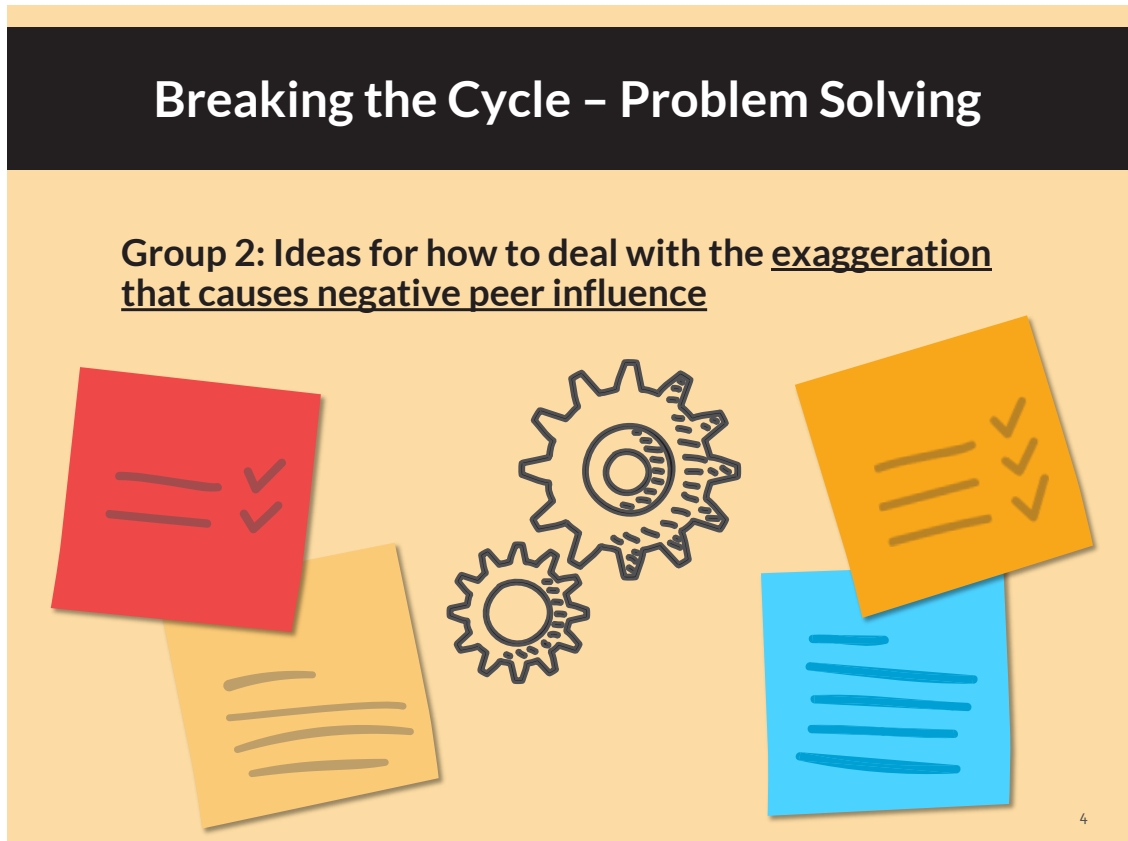
SAY: You will brainstorm some ways to stop the cycle. We will start by dividing into two groups.

2. Divide class into two groups. Each group will have a shared Google Doc or piece of paper to record their ideas.

- Share slide #3 from the **Checking Our Reality Slide Deck** with Group 1. If you are conducting an in-person session without student laptops or other devices, print out the slide in advance.



- Share slide #4 from the **Checking Our Reality Slide Deck** with Group 2. If you are conducting an in-person session without student laptops or other devices, print out the slide in advance.



SAY: Group 1 will list as many ideas as you can for how to prepare yourself for direct peer pressure to take an unhealthy risk.

Remember: Direct peer pressure may not be as common as peer influence, but it does happen. What can you do to prepare so you are ready to make the smart choice when it happens? Direct pressure means that someone asks or encourages you to take an unhealthy risk, like asking you to send them a nude photo or offering you a beer at a party.

Group 2 will list as many ideas as you can for how to deal with the exaggeration that causes negative peer influence.

Remember: Peer influence is when you feel like you should behave in a certain way to fit in with your peers. What are some ways you can remind yourself that healthy behaviors are actually a lot more common than unhealthy ones? How can you tune out the messages that tell you that unhealthy behaviors are common and popular?

Each group will have 3 minutes to come up with as many ideas as you can. One person in each group should make a list of all your ideas.

Nominate a student from each group to be note-taker or ask for volunteers.

3. Bring groups back together and debrief from the problem-solving activity. Discuss each group's ideas.



SAY: Each group's note-taker has 1 minute to share your group's ideas. Group 1... Go!

Summarize main ideas of each group at the end.

FACILITATOR TIP

Use the following items as examples if students are stuck and need inspiration. Let students come up with these ideas on their own as much as possible.

Peer Pressure

Create and practice responses to pressures in advance.

- Question the person about what they're asking you to do or say.
- Say a simple, "no thanks."
- Change the subject of the conversation.
- Use family rules or expectations as an excuse not to participate.

Talk to a trusted adult or peer about pressure you're experiencing.

Peer Influence

- Focus on positive norms. Stay involved in constructive activities like playing a sport, participating in a club, making art or music, spending time with your family, or starting a new job. When talking with peers, focus on what you are doing that is healthy. Remember that your behavior is always influencing others, so make sure your actions represent your values and make healthy personal choices about things like alcohol, drugs, and sex.
- Amplify the positive messages on social media. *Ask students for examples of positive posts they can "like" and share (ideas: photos or videos of friends doing healthy things or reaching their goals; announcements about new clubs, study groups, sporting events or concerts; inspirational quotes or songs; posts that show emotional support).*
- Maintain healthy relationships with peers who don't take unhealthy risks.
- Clean up your social media feed!
 - If certain accounts make participating in risky behaviors more tempting, unfollow them.
 - Follow more accounts that encourage leadership, constructive activities, and independent thinking.
- Remind yourself that assumptions may not always be true by
 - asking your peers about their healthy activities and focusing your attention on those.
 - asking trusted adults to help you find facts like the ones we shared today if you have questions about what people your age actually think and do.
- Make a list of your goals. Remind yourself why each goal is important to you and how taking unhealthy risks could get you off track. Make a list of the people who will support you and hold you accountable for making healthy decisions.
- Guide your friends toward success by supporting and encouraging them as they strive to reach their own goals. Remind them that taking unhealthy risks can throw them off track.
- Look for positive role models whose behaviors you respect and admire. Is there someone who inspires you to chase your dreams and be your best self?

PART 2 | Breaking the Cycle. Empowering Our Friends So They Don't Get Fooled— Message Creation Activity (10 minutes)

1. Engage students in creating messages to inform their peers about peer influence and the importance of challenging assumptions.



SAY: There are also things you can do help your friends keep from getting fooled. It takes everyone working together to break the cycle of people doing things they don't really want to do just because they think it will help them fit in or be more popular. Your final assignment is to work in teams to create powerful messages to teach others what you've learned today. You'll design a message to help other people your age check their own reality. Your goal is to help your friends understand that people often have exaggerated ideas about how many of their peers actually take unhealthy risks. Think of a creative message that makes your peers question their own assumptions. It could be just words or could include photos, GIFs, or videos. You can use any format you'd like. You could make an Instagram post; a TikTok video; a poster, flyer, or postcard; or anything you think would appeal to your peers. How convincing can you be?

Divide class into teams of 3-5 students and allow students to work freely on their messages while you circulate to answer questions.

FACILITATOR TIP

Tell students what resources they can use to create their messages. Adapt the activity to the supplies and technology available and whether you are teaching an in-person class or a virtual class. Students can create their messages on paper using art supplies supplied by their school or your organization or supplies they have at home. If students are working from home, they can upload photos of their messages via the videoconferencing platform you are using so others can see them. Students can also use commonly available applications such as Microsoft Word or Google Docs and publicly available photos or GIFs to create a message. Consider incorporating technology such as Flipgrid or Canva for Education to give students more options. See Before You Begin on page 2 for more information about these and other applications.

If you are teaching a virtual session, give each team access to a shared document so any member of the team can add words or images. If that is not feasible, students can still work together in breakout rooms to create a message and designate one student to design the product.

Give students 5 minutes to create their informational message and allow 4 minutes for sharing them with the class afterward (approximately 1 minute per group).

2. Wrap up the lesson and remind students of the key takeaway messages.



SAY: Great job. Now you know what norms are and what an important part they play in our lives. You know the difference between peer pressure and peer influence and how important it is to stop and think before you assume that your initial impression is accurate regarding what other people are doing. You came up with some great explanations for why people often exaggerate how much their peers are taking unhealthy risks and you used that information to discover ways to make sure you and your friends don't get fooled in the future. This will empower you to make decisions that keep you safe and healthy and help you create the future you want for yourselves.

References and Additional Resources

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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Resources on Peer Pressure and Adolescent Friendships](#)



This resource was developed by RTI International under contract HHSP2332015000391/HHSP23337016T with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Family and Youth Services Bureau.