

TEEN TURNING POINTS



You've got peer power

By now you've probably heard a lot about peer pressure. A peer is someone in your own group, such as friends, classmates or anybody you hang out with. Peer pressure is when any of those people try to influence your behavior, actions or thoughts. Usually peer pressure means someone is trying to get you to do something negative that will get you in trouble. However, you can use peer pressure to influence others to do good deeds. This positive influence is called "Peer Power."

Use peer power to make good choices. Peer power is friends talking friends into doing something positive or talking them out of something negative. An example of peer power is when someone is thinking of dropping out of school, and you talk him or her into staying.

Self-esteem has a lot to do with avoiding peer pressure and choosing to use peer power. A person with high self-esteem is sure enough of himself or herself to know when someone wants him or her to do something bad. It's hard to use peer power when you have low self-esteem because you want to be liked by others so much that you will do anything they want you to do.

What is peer power?

Peer power is:

- **Daring to be different.** Help your friends to make smart choices.
- **Planning for the future.** Choose positive goals and stick to them.
- **Proving to yourself and others.** Doing positive things is not "corny" or "uncool."

Peer pressure can be very powerful and tempting in the teenage years because it is normal to want to be liked by your friends. However, you can counter that pressure by using peer power because you know the difference between right and wrong – good and bad. Peer power makes you feel good about yourself because you are doing the right thing. When others see how positive you are and how good it makes you feel, they'll want to use peer power, too.

Teenagers often go along with their friends in doing bad things because it's "cool." Peer power means using your own head and finding out its even cooler when you do good things and stays out of trouble – and make your own decisions. Only you can determine which "cool" you want to portray – the positive or the negative.

The next time someone tries to get you to do something that you know is wrong, tell them you've got the power – positive peer power, that is.

Sometimes peer power is not enough to get through some tough decisions. When these times come around, feel free to discuss your problem with a trusted adult such as your parents, a teacher or a counselor.

If you need help

For help in an emergency, call Crisis Services at (810) 2570-3740 or toll free at (877) 346-3648, where a counselor is available 24 hours a day. TTY users call (810) 232-6310. For non-emergency services, call (810) 257-3742.

Other Genesee Health System handouts include: *Assisting teens with healthy grieving, Teen-parent communication, Adolescence and independence, Out of the blue* and *Teen peer pressure*. © www.genhs.org

