

UNDERSTANDING THE *PRESSURE*

A look into the culture of peer pressure in the daily lives of high schoolers

Peer pressure was a daily part of almost all high schoolers' lives. From education to social settings, peer pressure had a massive impact. It could be as simple as a friend begging someone to cop a picture of the math quiz when the teacher wasn't looking. They rolled their eyes and said "Don't be lame; they'll never know".

It could be as serious as "Come on just try and take a hit, I've done it a million times. Here now drink this," before they shoved a blunt and shot of vodka towards someone and before the person knew it, they were passed

out on a dirty basement floor. Or maybe someone is unsure about if they really wanted to hook up with the "bad boy", but their friends mocked them and said "come on it's really not that big of a deal, just do it, get over yourself," and they ended up doing something they immediately regretted. Peer pressure sometimes wasn't as talked about as it should have been nor was its central role in high school life always truly remembered and recognized.

Names have been altered to protect the identity of the students interviewed

BY THE NUMBERS...

Stats on common teen decisions

A PROFESSIONAL OPINION It was not guaranteed that every student exposed to a peer pressure situation would succumb to it. "I think that depending on what people's morals and values are, and how confident they are that they stick to those, directly impacts how they respond to peer pressure situations," School Interventionist, Karin Dudek said.

SEX

31.3 % of BVSD high school students have stated they have had sexual intercourse.

source colorado healthy kids survey 2017

DRUGS

36.2% of BVSD high school students have reported to have used marijuana at least once.

source colorado healthy kids survey 2017

ALCOHOL

62.5% of BVSD high school students have reported to have had at least one drink of alcohol.

source colorado healthy kids survey 2017

THE POSITIVE LIGHT

A different take on the classic teen issue

Many people in high school gave into the pressure. They smoked the joint because that's what everyone was doing, they drank the shot because they wanted to be cool. But still, there were some people who avoided what some considered to be the "unhealthy and bad" peer pressure.

"I've experienced peer pressure to do good things, and peer pressure to interact in social situations and get me out of my house. I haven't experienced it in the way that everyone stigmatizes peer pressure, at a party or whatever," Jane Doe (12) said.

Doe felt that it was relatively easy to avoid situations where she was forced or pressured to do something that was perceived as "wrong" or "bad" in the eyes of the public. She felt the secret to this was within the people she surrounded herself with and what they brought out in her and each other.

"I think I'm surrounded by people that care for my well being and I've been lucky enough to be with such great friends that know how to make the right choices and I've made the choices to surround myself with these people not surround myself with others who, maybe they're in a different situation where they experience those kinds of things." Doe said.

Doe thought the reason that many high schoolers fell victim to this

negative peer pressure was clear. Her answer lay in the stereotypical idea of high schoolers: insecurity.

"I feel like peer pressure happens when individuals aren't comfortable in who they are as themselves so they want to try to fit in with these other people... trying to get that identity. I think it's another reason why [I can resist]: I know myself really well and I'm confident in who I am and that's why I can trust myself to make decisions. I don't need other people," Doe said.

Doe also recognized that often people may have used peer pressure as an out, a way to take the blame off themselves and put it on to others. But Doe felt this was not often justified.

"If you do make those decisions, whatever they are, you have to take responsibility because you made that choice," Doe said.

Doe had come to an understanding: if people faced negative peer pressure it often came down to three things: the people they surrounded themselves with, their confidence in themselves, and their ability to take responsibility.

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definition from lexico.com

[PEER PRESSURE]

NOUN

influence from members of one's peer group.

"His behavior was affected by drinking and peer pressure."

STUDENT TAKE

Students get real about their experiences with peer pressure

““ My friends and family have always worked hard; it's just what I've always been surrounded by. There's definitely peer pressure on me to do the same, because everyone around me is working hard and succeeding. ””

““ Peer pressure is so evident in people's sex life here. I have lied to boys because I'm ashamed to say I'm a virgin; society and my friends have made me feel like it's not okay to be inexperienced. ””

““ I never thought I would do drugs. Drinking maybe, but I never thought I'd get high, not until I started surrounding myself with people who did it, encouraged it, and thought it was okay. ””

““ I've had friends who have drank so much, I have had to call 911 or their parents. It's terrifying to not know if your friends are going to live or die. It is so extreme here in Boulder. Reality is sometimes lost. ””