

Understanding influences on behaviour

Learning objective

Students explore how family, peers and the media influence how individuals interact in a given situation.

Take Home Messages

- We interact with different people in different ways.
- Communities can be diverse.
- Feeling connected to a community is good for a person's wellbeing.
- Influence or pressure can be both a positive thing and a negative thing.
- Pressure can be external (when friends, family or people in the media do or say things to persuade us to do something they want) or internal (when we put pressure on ourselves to behave in a certain way).
- Individuals may place internal pressure on themselves to conform to a group.

Materials

- 8 pieces of butcher's paper
- Student Activity Sheet: No pressure! [one per pair]

Before You Get Started

- This activity is an introduction to the Year 6 activity [Peer influence](#).
- Teachers should know and understand the [protective interrupting](#) technique and what, why, when and how it is needed and used.
- Students may have questions that they feel uncomfortable to ask. Providing a [question box](#) for students to place their questions in anonymously will ensure their questions are answered in a safe environment.

Learning Activities

Whole Class

Students develop an understanding of influence or pressure and identify that it can be both positive and negative, and that individuals also place internal pressure on themselves to conform to a group.

1. Place sheets of the butcher's paper around the room with the following 8 headings:
 - Positive things my friends have influenced me to do.
 - Negative things my friends have influenced me to do.
 - Positive things my brother/sister has influenced me to do.
 - Negative things my brother/sister has influenced me to do.
 - Positive things my Mum/Dad has influenced me to do.
 - Negative things my Mum/Dad has influenced me to do.
 - Things I have seen in the media that have influenced me to do something positive.
 - Things I have seen in the media that have influenced me to do something negative.
2. Explain to students that they will be conducting a [graffiti walk](#). Split students into 8 groups.
 - Give an example for each graffiti sheet to ensure that students understand the task first.
 - Each group walks around the room with a nominated scribe writing down responses.
 - Tell students to place a tick next to a comment if it was something that they would have written.

3. Review the completed sheets as a whole class and identify the most common responses on each sheet (as identified by the number of ticks). Whiteboard these or highlight the top responses on the sheet.
4. Ask:
 - How does it feel to be influenced in a negative way to do something?
 - How does it feel to be influenced in a positive way to do something?
 - Which influences are easier to handle? Positive ones or negative ones. Why?
 - How can you avoid some of the negative influences? (using positive self-talk, using optimistic thinking, choosing different friends, gaining some knowledge or skills, being assertive)
 - Have you heard of the term 'peer pressure' before? What do you think it means?
 - Give one example each of when peer pressure can be a good and/or a bad thing. Why?
 - Why do some young people give in to negative peer pressure?
 - What sorts of things do our families/friends do or say to influence us to behave in a certain way?
 - What kinds of relationships do we see modelled in the media representing young people?
 - What messages do you think young people take from these and how might they change the way they behave?
 - Is this a realistic representation of relationships that exist in real life?
 - How does access to digital media and the internet on devices such as mobile phones affect young people's relationships with each other? How can you make sure you maintain healthy relationships using these media?
 - Do you think your family or your friends have more influence over how you behave?
 - How might this change as you get older?
 - Do you sometimes feel pressured to do something even though your family or friends may not have said or done anything to pressure you? In other words, the pressure is something you create for yourself with certain self-talk? (e.g. young people often feel like they need to wear the same clothes or have the same hairstyles as their friends, or smoke or drink with their friends, so they 'fit in' even though their friends may not have put any pressure on them to conform.)
5. Explain that influence or pressure can be both a positive thing and a negative thing, e.g. your friends can influence you to smoke and also not to smoke.
6. Explain that pressure can be external (when friends, family or people in the media do or say things to persuade us to do something they want) or internal (when we put pressure on ourselves to behave in a certain way, perhaps to please or be like friends, family or people in the media).
 - Ask for examples of both internal and external pressure.
7. Ask students to re-group and examine one graffiti sheet. The group decides whether the influence in each situation is external (things other people say or do) or internal (thoughts that put pressure on ourselves), and also whether the influence is positive or negative. Different attitudes may result in conflicting answers!

Independent or Small Group

Students demonstrate their understanding of influence (both positive and negative; internal and external) and consider positive self-talk they could use to protect their safety and wellbeing.

1. Whiteboard examples of pro-social, positive behaviour, e.g. riding on a cycle path; playing fairly; not cheating. Discuss the positive influences of family and friends to do these behaviours or the negative influences not to do these things.
2. Whiteboard examples of anti-social, negative behaviour, e.g. wagging school; not wearing a bike helmet; smoking cigarettes; writing graffiti. Discuss the negative influences of family and friends to do these behaviours or the positive influences not to do these things.
3. Explain the Student Activity Sheet: No pressure! and have students complete in pairs.

3-2-1 Reflection

1. Have students journal or write a personal reflection about the results of the graffiti sheet activity.
2. Have students form a [sharing circle](#). Using their activity sheet, complete the following:
 - Place a green tick against the things that you think help make happy, safe communities. Give reasons why.
 - Place a red cross against the things that you think don't help make happy, safe communities. Give reasons why.
3. Ask:
 - What is the most useful self-talk to 'do the right thing' in each situation?
 - Which situation do you think your friends have the most influence over your behaviour?
 - Which situation do you think your family have the most influence over your behaviour?
 - Which situations would you find the most difficult to manage? Why?
 - Which situations would you find the easiest to manage? Why?
 - Why do you think it's useful to consider who and what influences our behaviour?