

## “Peer Pressure” & Community Safety

Friends become more and more important as children grow older. As friends become a greater influence on children’s lives, we can help children make healthy choices, to stand up for their values and beliefs, without compromising their sense of belonging.

### Friends are Important!

Friends help give us a sense of **significance**.

**Significance** provides us with belonging and the sense that we are loved.

These things are an important part of growing up **healthy and balanced**.

**Friends have other benefits too!**

#### Friends:

- Provide fun and excitement
- Give advice
- Provide companionship & recreation
- Provide stability during times of stress
- Teach us conflict resolution & cooperation



In order to make sure children’s friendships are positive adults can model behaviours which are part of healthy relationships.

### Some Ideas for Ways to Model Healthy Relationships:

- Communicate **positive messages**
- Help identify your child’s **strengths and talents**
- **Spend time** with your child
- Direct your child towards **healthy activities**
- Find ways for your child **to be successful** at what he or she enjoys
- Set **limits and boundaries** with your child
- Help your child develop a **sense of responsibility**
- Get to know your child’s **friends** and friend’s parents
- Help your child develop **conflict resolution skills**
- Develop **strategies** with your child to deal with peer pressure

## Some ways you can talk to your child about his or her choices:

- 1 State your concern for your child's choices without being judgemental
- 2 Acknowledge feelings and discuss the physical sensations that go along with these emotions
- 3 Talk through the situation; really listen to your child's story
- 4 Ask questions to clarify information
- 5 Allow your child to come up with solutions for the issue
- 6 Follow up after the solution has been implemented

### Remember:

#### Peer pressure:

- May be subtle
- May feel necessary to fit in or feel accepted
- Is part of human nature

Telling children to **"just say no"** may not always work, depending on the situation.

Instead, we can focus on giving children the skills they need to **make healthy choices for themselves**.

One way we can do this is by providing opportunities for children to develop **resilience** through:

- Allowing them to experience risk
- Allowing them to make choices, increasing their sense of personal power
- Teaching them about what makes a good friend and how to support each other through healthy relationships

Some ways to help prepare children before they face peer pressure:

#### Help your child understand that his or her opinion is valued.

Ask your child questions about his or her opinion often.

#### Tell your child to listen to his or her gut.

Things like feeling uncomfortable, even if friends seem ok with something.

#### Help your child learn to feel comfortable saying "no".

Explain that with good friends, you should never have to offer an explanation or apology.

#### Allow the blame to fall on mom and dad.

Your child could say "are you kidding, if my mom found out, she'd kill me and her spies are everywhere".