

THE RECRUITING GAME: UNDERSTANDING PEER PRESSURE

- ✓ 1. To increase learners' awareness of peer pressure.
- ✓ 2. To facilitate an understanding of how peer pressure works.
- ✓ 3. To help learners explore ways in which to resist peer pressure.

🕒 45 minutes to 1 hour

★ 'Mission' Cards (provided)

PROCEDURE

- 1 To begin, tell learners that they will be playing a game to see how good their powers of persuasion and resistance are.
- 2 Ask for five learners to volunteer to be 'recruiters' for the game. (If your class is particularly small, you may want to reduce the number of 'recruiters')
- 3 Ask each 'recruiter' to pick a 'mission' card for one of these listed groups:
 - The Smoking Group - this group wants to recruit others to start smoking.
 - The Drinking Group - this group wants to recruit others to start drinking alcohol.
 - The Bunking Class Group - this group wants to recruit others to skip classes.
 - The Having Sex Group - this group wants to recruit others to start having sex.
 - The Sexy Selfie Group - this group wants to recruit others to share sexy profile pictures on the internet (or other social media).
 - Tell the 'recruiters' not to share their mission with other learners yet.
- 4 Explain to the 'recruiters' that it is their job to think of ways to persuade the other learners to join their group. Give them a few minutes to think about their 'pitch' and to prepare how they will try to persuade their peers to join their group. The box below can be used to give them some ideas, but ideally learners will come up with these on their own.
- 5 Have the other learners in the class spread themselves out across the classroom.
- 6 When the game begins, the 'recruiters' must go around the classroom trying to convince their peers to join their group by using persuasive arguments. If a learner is convinced to join the group, then that person walks with the 'recruiter' and has to help the leader to recruit more people to the group. If a learner does not want to join the group, they should resist the arguments of the recruiters with their own counter-arguments.

Pitches that may be used to pressure peers:

SMOKING GROUP

- All the cool kids smoke
- Smoking makes you feel relaxed and good
- Smoking makes you look older
- Smoking keeps you skinny
- Light cigarettes aren't as harmful
- Menthol cigarettes smell really nice
- You can chew gum - your parents will never find out

DRINKING GROUP

- Drinking makes you feel relaxed and good
- It's really fun to have a drink
- You're much less stressed
- Lots of drinks taste really good
- You're not so shy after you've had a drink
- If you drink you fit in better at parties
- Boys like girls who have a drink/Girls like boys who have a drink
- You can chew gum - your parents will never find out

BUNKING CLASS GROUP

- You won't look like such a nerd
- It's so much more fun that being in class
- You're edgy if you bunk
- We watch movies all the time
- We just relax and hang out
- Even if you get caught you only get detention
- You're boring if you don't bunk
- Everyone should bunk at least once in their life
- Who wants to be inside on such a beautiful day
- You won't look like such a teacher's pet

HAVING SEX GROUP

- It's so much fun
- Don't be a prude
- No one waits anymore
- Everyone wants to be with someone who has experience
- Your first time is terrible anyway, so you should get it over with
- You're a child if you don't
- You know you want to
- Everyone else has done it – you're the last one waiting
- You'll understand relationships and life better once you've had sex
- There's no risk, you can use a condom
- What are you worried about?
- People will think you're gay

SEXY SELFIE GROUP

- You'll attract more boys/girls
- You will be more popular
- If you have a nice body why not flaunt it?
- Everyone does it
- What are you ashamed of?
- It's only your body
- Don't be a prude
- What are you worried about?
- People will think you're a nerd
- No-one likes good boys/girls anyway
- It's only a picture
- Only your friends will see it anyway
- You can always take it down later if you change your mind

7 Explain to the class that they have fifteen minutes to recruit as many learners as possible, after which the recruits in each group will be counted and the winner announced.

8 After the recruitment activity is completed and the winning group identified, bring the class back together to debrief the activity. Ask the class the following questions:

- a.** How did the leader and the other members of the group try to persuade others to join the group? What strategies did the group use?
- b.** How easy was it to persuade others to join the group?
- c.** What were some of the reasons people gave for not wanting to be recruited?
- d.** How did the someone feel if they refused to join a group?
- e.** How did the 'recruiters' feel when their efforts were refused?
- f.** Was it easier to recruit others once there were more members already in the group?
- g.** Where there any strategy that were especially successful in pressurising to join a specific group? What were these?

9 Explain to learners that although this activity is just a role-playing game, peer pressure is something that happens in real life. Wrap up the activity by asking them to reflect on their own experiences of peer pressure, and what can be done to resist it. The following questions can be used to stimulate this discussion:

- a.** What kinds of techniques are used to pressure peers into doing what they don't want to?
- b.** How does it feel to be pressured into doing something in this way?
- c.** What can we say to our friends when we don't want to do something that they want us to do?

TEACHER TIPS



General

Learners should engage vigorously with this activity; consequently it can become quite loud. It may require a lot of space in the classroom for the learners to walk around recruiting. Depending on the size of the class, it may be advisable to carry out the exercise in an outside area, gym or hall.

If learners get very involved in the activity, or the class is very big, it may take longer to complete the task. Make sure you allow enough time for the debriefing questions after the recruitment process.

Peer groups can exert a powerful influence on adolescents. This exercise uses a list of problematic behaviours, and asks learners to try them out in an effort to convince others to join their cause. Be careful to point out that this exercise is not intended to encourage learners to use these pressuring techniques in their own lives and relationships. Emphasise that the reasons given to join the different groups are only used as an illustration of ways that people pressure others to behave as they want them to. Suggest strategies that learners can use to resist peer pressure and so avoid becoming involved in things that they don't want to do.



Making the Link with Gender and Violence

Peers become more important in learners' lives as they reach adolescence. During this period, they may be easily influenced by their friends and try things that their friends are doing, due to peer pressure. Because of peer pressure, learners may be engaging in problematic activities such as early sexual debut or risky sexual activity, substance abuse, and coercive relationship dynamics. While teens often pressure each other, they can also be powerful role models or support systems to friends who are trying to resist peer pressure. They can encourage friends to stand up against dating violence, or to stop exerting pressure on partners in ways that are worrisome or abusive.



Assessment Ideas

- 1** Learners can be required to write a personal reflection about a situation where he/she has felt peer pressure or has participated in pressuring a friend. What kinds of techniques were used to apply pressure in the situation that they describe? How could the person in question have better resisted the peer pressure that was being exerted on them?
- 2** Learners should write a short paper on the kinds of peer pressure that are most prevalent in their school, what can be done to inform learners about the harmful effects of peer pressure, and ways to reduce its impact.



Variation

This exercise can be extended by dividing the class into five small groups and asking them to brainstorm responses that could be used to decline and resist invitations to join the different groups.

'MISSION' CARDS

Print and cut out a set of these cards.
Hand one card to each of the 'recruiters' in the game.

Smoking Group

Your mission is to get your classmates to join the group who smoke at school during the day.

Drinking Group

Your mission is to get your classmates to join the group who drink alcohol.

Bunking Classes Group

Your mission is to get your classmates to join the group who bunk classes at school.

Having Sex Group

Your mission is to get your classmates to start having sex.

Sexy Selfie Group

Your mission is to get your classmates to join the group who share sexy pictures (over the internet/phones).
