

Teacher's slide

Key lesson information



Location	Classroom with no student access to internet
Recommended time	60 minutes
Objectives	By the end of the session, students should be able to: • Explain when and why they are likely to be influenced by peers or take risks • Describe and evaluate strategies for managing peer pressure minimising risky behaviour • Explain the importance of choosing a positive friendship group and accessing appropriate support
Main student tasks	1. Consider three facts about teenage injuries and deaths and explain why teenagers are more likely than adults to be involved in preventable accidents 2. Record their own opinions about peer pressure 3. Explore the science of peer pressure and why it affects teenagers more than adults or children 4. Describe the qualities of a positive peer group 5. Evaluate strategies for dealing with peer pressure 6. Reevaluate their opinions on peer pressure after all they've learned
Keywords	Peer pressure, bullying, peer group, healthy relationships, friendships.

Teacher preparation



Provide	Lined paper, exercise books or laptops to work on.
Familiarise yourself	Unifrog's Know-how library tool (Student side>Know-how library). Students can use this for independent research after the lesson.

Know-how library



Know-how library	Open the 'student side' of your Unifrog account and click these links: • Understanding peer pressure • Building healthy friendships Students can also search for these guides using the Know-how library tool.
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Tracking progress on Unifrog



Add as an Interaction	Click Advanced view>Sort by school leaving year>[filter for specific students]>+interaction.
Track on Charts	Click Usage charts>Customise and filter> 'Know-how library: Favouriting over time'.
Tracking individual students	Advanced view>Sort by>Library profiles in Favourites

Benchmarks and standards



PSHE Association	Social influences
CASEL 5	Relationship skills
ISCA	SE:A2:1, SE:A2:2, SE:A2:8, SE:B1:2, SE:B1:6, SE:C1:7, GP: A2:1, GP:D1:4, GP:D1:5, A:A2:1
Skills	Caring, Accountability

Teacher's slide – guidance on teaching peer pressure

This lesson covers the reasons why teenagers are particularly susceptible to peer pressure, and some suggestions for how to handle it. This slide gives a brief guide for teachers for handling these topics sensitively.

The first slide contains statistics about teenage death and injury. This might be triggering for students who have experienced the death of a young friend or family member. It might also be triggering for students living with anxiety.

Talk to your school or college's mental health, wellbeing, pastoral, or safeguarding lead before delivering the lesson. This will flag to them that there may be students in your class seeking further help on this issue after your lesson. They should also provide you with support and guidance for covering sensitive issues.

Do not refer to viral online challenges by name or discuss the details of what these challenges involve. Do not allow students to discuss the names or details of these challenges. This only increases curiosity about the challenges and makes it more likely that students will encounter and possibly take part in a dangerous challenge. It can also be needlessly upsetting for young people to hear explicit details of these challenges.

Peer pressure does not have to be verbal. When we think of peer pressure, we often think of young people being coerced into doing something dangerous by their peers (smoking, drinking, taking drugs) but the issue is more complicated than that. One study found that young people drove more recklessly and crashed more often in a driving game if they were simply *told* their friends were watching them in another room. Peer pressure can be about what young people *believe* their peers are *thinking* as well as what their peers are doing or saying.

The best way to cope with peer pressure is to ensure young people have a positive, supportive friendship group. It's almost unavoidable that teenagers will start to pay more attention to the opinions of their peers in adolescence, so the best way to combat peer pressure is for young people to surround themselves with people who can influence them positively. Peer pressure can be positive as well as negative, and some studies have shown that young people pay more attention to the opinions of their peers when they are giving safer (rather than more dangerous) advice.

Use ground rules for classroom discussions. This will help keep the discussion respectful. An example of a ground rule might be to remain honest and open, but to not directly discuss your own personal experiences or the private lives of others (i.e. leave out names and identifying descriptions from examples).

Encourage students to contribute, but allow them the right to pass on a question or activity. Students might feel uncomfortable discussing certain issues, so never force anyone to share or contribute.

Teacher's slide – FAQs

Students may have additional questions after completing this lesson. This page is intended to give you answers to questions that aren't covered in the main lesson.

What are the social and reward centres of your brain? The social centre of your brain makes you very aware of your social status and much more interested in maintaining friendships with your peers. The reward centre of your brain gives you a hit of a feel-good neurotransmitter called dopamine when you try new things. These parts of your brain develop early in adolescence and are more active in your teenage years than they are at any other time in your life.

What is the cognitive centre of your brain? Cognitive control is what helps humans understand risks and dangers and control their behaviour accordingly. This part of the brain develops later in adolescence.

What is the consequence of them developing at different times? If your reward and social centres have developed but your cognitive centre hasn't developed yet, it essentially means you are driven to fit in with or impress a social group but you don't have the part of the brain that allows you to accurately evaluate and assess risks. Your social/reward centre tells you - "Do THIS - you'll get a massive social reward!" and your cognitive centre isn't there to say, "yes, but here are the things you might lose..."

Why do these parts of your brain develop at different rates? The development of the social and reward parts of your brain is triggered by puberty hormones, whereas the cognitive control part of your brain is not linked to puberty or affected by hormones - it simply develops as you grow. Scientists think that these parts of your brain used to mature at roughly the same time, but, as a species, humans are now going through puberty earlier than they used to (about 4 to 5 years earlier than they did 200 years ago). This leaves a longer time period where the social and reward parts of your brain are active without the mature cognitive control network to hold it back when necessary. For some young people, this results in a period of impulsive or risky behaviour.

Are all viral challenges bad? No. Lots of online challenges are safe and just a bit of fun – but some are potentially deadly. Think carefully before you participate in any challenge and avoid anything that carries a risk of injury or death, even if you perceive that risk to be small. If you're unsure if something is safe, check with a trusted adult.

These statistics about deaths and injuries are freaking me out – how can I stay safe? Most accidents are the result of young people failing to stop and evaluate risks and dangers. If you're unsure if something is safe, listen to your gut. You could also check with a trusted adult, as they have more experience of the world and their cognitive centres are at a later stage of development than yours.

Why are you stereotyping teenagers? We're not all risk-takers or obsessed with our social status! We know that all young people are different and it's frustrating to be grouped together as if you've all got one common personality. Stereotypes become stereotypes because there is some recognisable truth in them. In this case, normal human brain development results in some common traits across a particular age group. If this generalisation does not apply to you, that's great!

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Social influences: tackling
peer pressure

Four facts (5 minutes)

Read each fact, then answer the question below.



Seizures, comas, burns, and even death occur when teens attempt online challenges.



Teenage drivers are three times more likely to crash than drivers over the age of 20.



50% of teenage deaths are caused by preventable accidents – compared to only 3% of adult deaths.



Drowning is a leading cause of accidental death among teenagers.



There are many reasons, but the main ones are to do with **peer pressure** and **teenage brain development**.

Social influences (10 minutes)

List as many social influences as you can think of. **Use the images to help you.**



How might each of these factors influence someone? List at least **one reason** for each.

What is peer pressure? (5 mins)

In your own words, write down a definition of 'peer pressure'.
You can use the key words to help you.

influence

positive

activities

behaviour

resist

temptation

negative

values

fit in

adolescence

friends



*Peer
pressure is
when...*

Peer pressure: what's your opinion? (5 mins)

Using a ruler, draw and number five lines on your page like this:



1

2

3

4

5

Peer pressure: what's your opinion?

Add symbols to create five opinion lines. **Disagree** on the left **x**. **Agree** on the right **✓**.

1	x	✓
2	x	✓
3	x	✓
4	x	✓
5	x	✓

Peer pressure: what's your opinion?

Now draw a circle somewhere on each line to show your opinion on each statement.

- 1   "Teenagers are risk takers." 
- 2  "Peer pressure is when you feel forced into doing something risky or unsafe." 
- 3  "Being influenced by peer pressure is part of human nature." 
- 4  "Teenagers care more about other teenagers' opinions than adults' opinions." 
- 5  "Confident people aren't affected by peer pressure." 

Teenage brain development (5 mins)

In your teen years, the **social** and **reward** centres of your brain develop first.



- You become more aware of your social status, and the opinions of your peer group.
- You get a bigger hit of your reward chemical (dopamine) when you experience new things.

The **cognitive** centre of your brain develops later.



This part of your brain helps with:

- Assessing risks
- Controlling impulses
- Making decisions

Does this explain any “typical” teenage behaviour? If so, what?

If our social and reward centres didn’t develop, why would that be bad for humanity?

Is all risk-taking bad? (5 mins)

List at least three **positive** risks teenagers could take.



List at least three **negative** risks teenagers should avoid.



The influence of friends (5 mins)

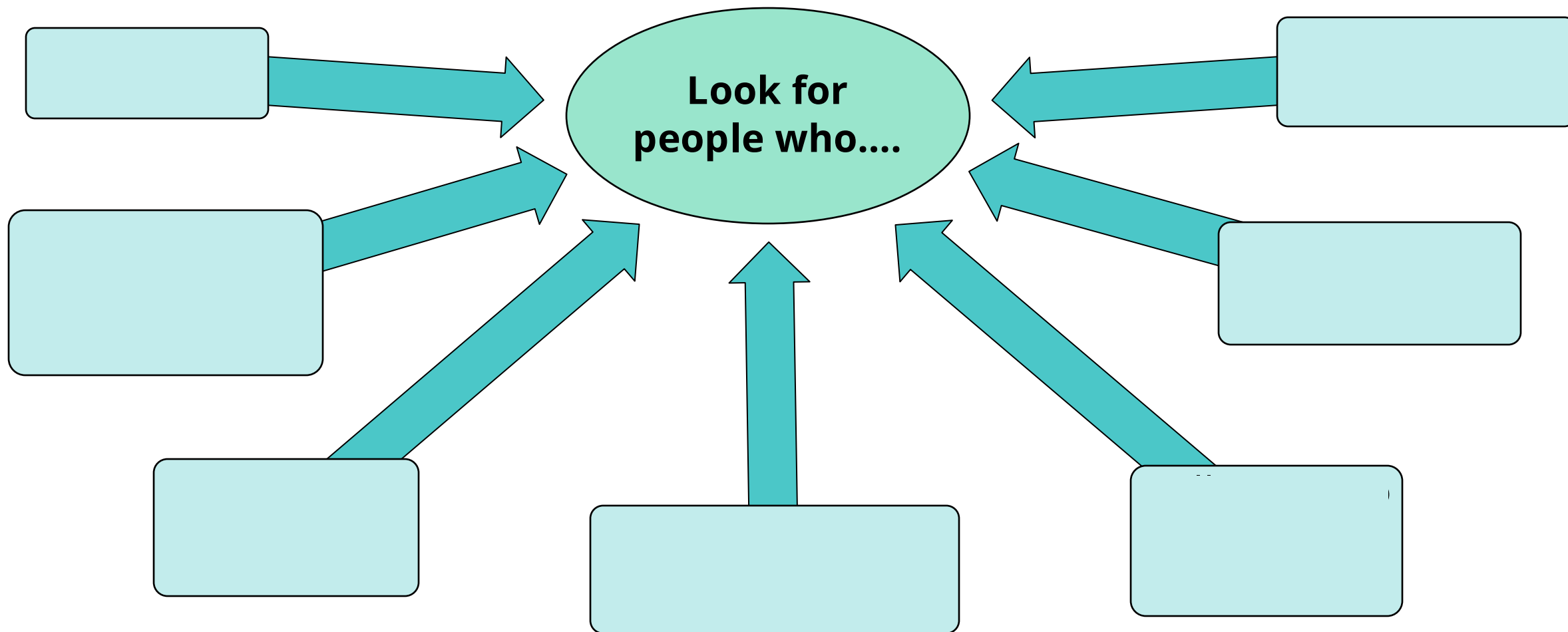
You are more influenced by your peers when you're a teenager – but this influence can be positive or negative.

Choosing your friendship group wisely is actually the best way to manage peer pressure.

Name **three** things you should look for in a friendship group. Use this sentence starter:
Look for people who....

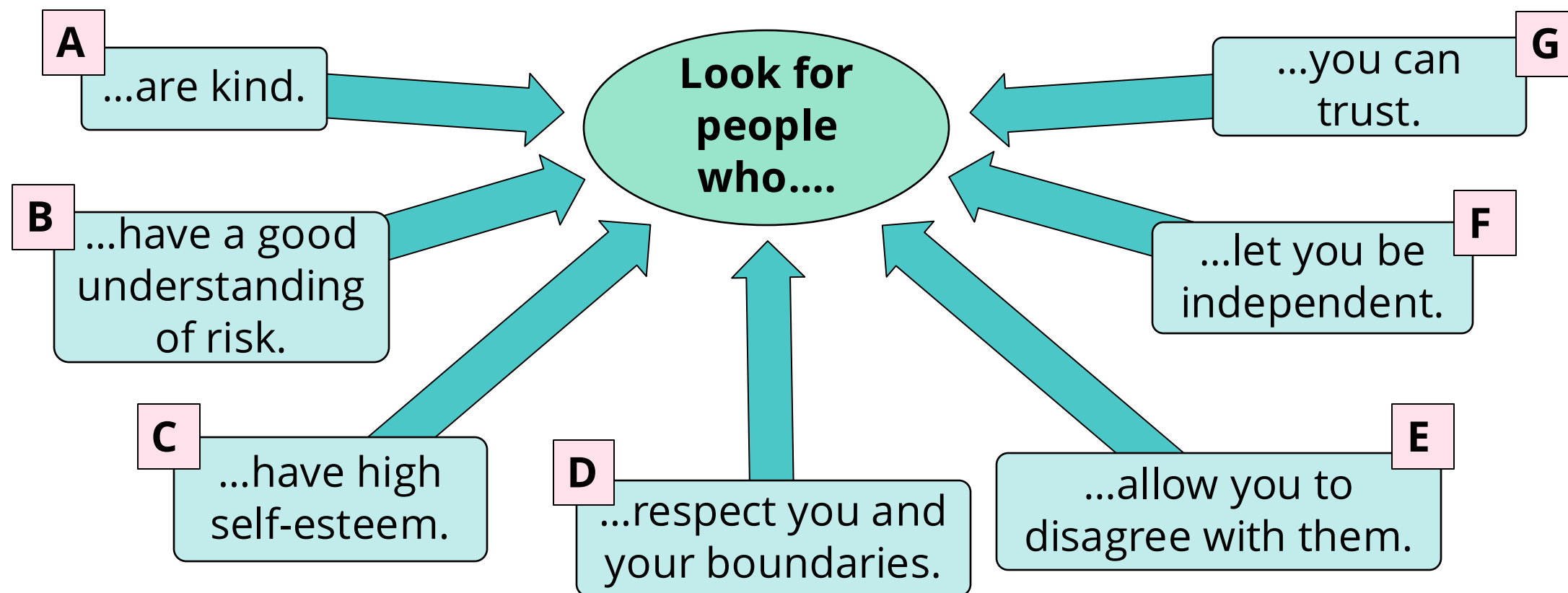


The qualities of good friends (5 mins)



The qualities of good friends

Which qualities are most important to you? **Rank** the qualities 1 – 7. **1 = most important**



Resisting peer pressure (5 mins)

Write down the numbers of the **three** techniques you think would be most effective when trying to resist peer pressure.

1 Just say "no", confidently.	2 Look online for advice about peer pressure.	3 Leave the situation or avoid it altogether.
4 Plan in advance what you will say or do if you are pressured.	5 Report dangerous online challenges / block people who post them.	6 Remember your brain is making you care about this – then decide to ignore it.
7 Find friends who share your values.	8 Ask a trusted adult for support.	9 Blame your parents/carers "Sorry, if my mum found out..."

Peer pressure: has your opinion changed? (5 min)

Look back at your opinion lines.

Draw a triangle on each line to show your opinion on each statement now.

- 1   "Teenagers are risk takers."  
- 2  "Peer pressure is when you feel forced into doing something risky or unsafe."  
- 3   "Being influenced by peer pressure is part of human nature." 
- 4  "Teenagers care more about other teenagers' opinions than adults' opinions."  
- 5  "Confident people aren't affected by peer pressure."  

Independent learning

It can be difficult to know which information you can trust online.

The **Know-how library** is a reliable source of information about this topic and lots of others.

Search by the keywords 'peer pressure' or 'friendships' in the Know-how library to find guides on this topic. Remember to favourite guides you'd like to come back to later!



Understanding peer pressure ♥

How to manage pressure from your friends

[Read the guide >](#)



Building healthy friendships ♥

How to build friendships that last a lifetime

[Read the guide >](#)

What is peer pressure? Improve your definition (5 min)

Look back at your definition from earlier in the lesson.

Rewrite your definition using **at least three more** of the key words:

influence

positive

activities

behaviour

resist

temptation

negative

values

fit in

adolescence

friends



*Peer
pressure is
when...*

Organisations that help with peer pressure

Searching 'peer pressure' or 'bullying' in your internet browser will bring up helpful resources and guide you with the first step in finding support.

- **NSPCC** – (charity supporting children and young people) nspcc.org.uk
- **Childline** – (advice for children and young people) childline.org.uk
- **Mind** (mental health support) mind.org.uk
- **National Bullying Helpline** (support for adults or children who have been the victim of bullying) nationalbullyinghelpline.co.uk
- **Childhelp** (US based support for children and young people) - childhelpline.org
- **Childnet** (International charity supporting young people with a range of issues) childnet.com/young-people
- **Reach Out** (mental health support for young people in Australia) - au.reachout.com
- **Child Helpline International** - (support for children and young people around the world) childhelplineinternational.org