

RELATIONSHIP OF PEER PRESSURE AMONG YOUTHS VIS A VIS OVERCOMING RECIDIVISM

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Youth peer pressure is one of the most frequently referred-to forms of negative peer pressure. It is particularly common because youths spent large amount of time in fixed groups (schools and subgroups within them) regardless of their opinions of those groups. Also, young people are more willing to behave negatively towards those who are not members of their own peer groups.

2 People who are in the same age group, like classmates, workmates and playmates are called peers. When they try to influence how you act, to get you to do something, it's called **peer pressure**. It's something everyone has to deal with - even adults.

3 Peer pressure—it's more than just a phase that young people go through. Whether it leads to pink hair or body piercing, peer pressure is a powerful reality and many youth do not realize its effects. It can be a negative force in the lives of adolescents, often resulting in their experimentation with tobacco, alcohol and illegal drugs.

4 Making decisions for oneself is hard enough, but when other people get involved and try to apply pressure in one way or another it can be even harder. Let's talk about how to handle it, among the youths in particular the kind of exposure, relationship and the self-management in overcoming negative peer influence and recidivism.

5 Peer pressure may be influential in a number of ways, including:

- Fashion choice
- Alcohol and other drug use (negative)

- Mischief and Crime (negative)
- Decision to have a boyfriend/girlfriend
- Choice of friends
- Academic performance

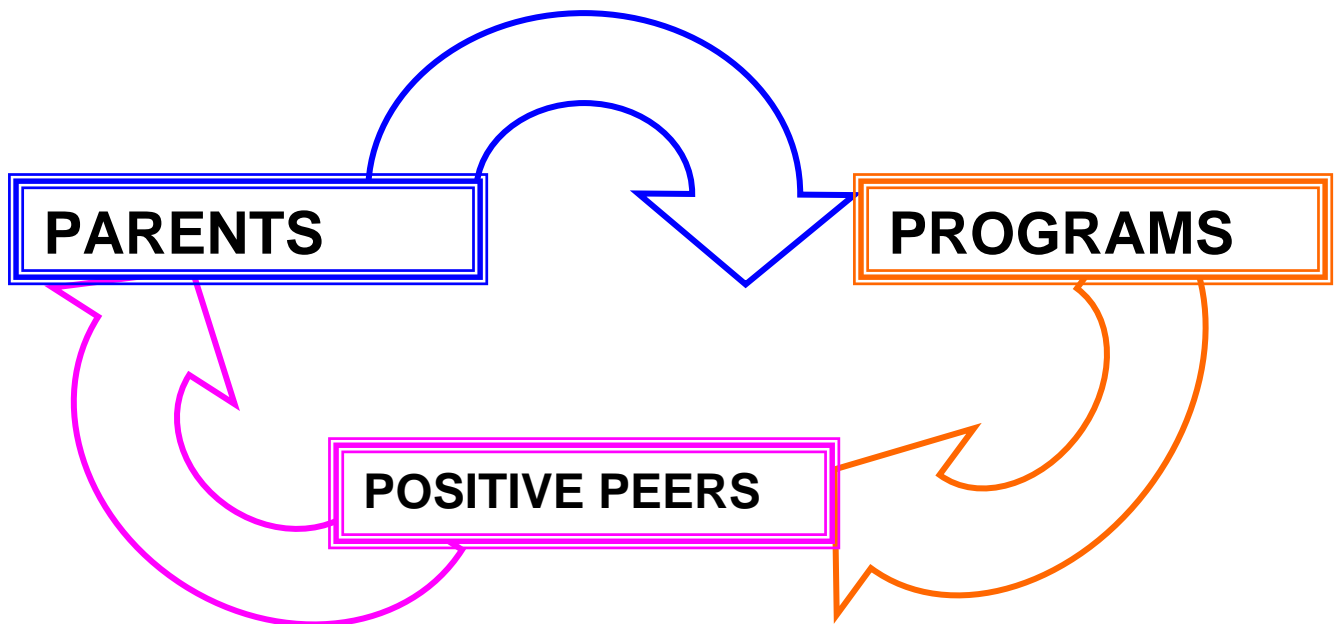
6 Let's see further on how the peer pressure is felt:

Directly – Experiencing the peer pressure as someone is being told of what one should be doing. A dominant character or a person who knows or is aware of another person's secrets, problems or weaknesses, threatens or willfully exerts pressure to influence or direct the behaviour or action of that person.

Indirectly - Peer pressure may not always be obvious to be felt. It is not uncommon for a group of friends to have particular habits or activities that they do together. It may be that what a person does when he is with one group of friends, he may not engage in similar activities when he is with a different group of friends. For example, he will smoke when he meets with certain friends or may be more likely to study when he meets with other friends.

Individual - Sometimes the pressure comes from AN INDIVIDUAL. Feeling different from the group may be hard. To avoid this, sometimes an individual do things to make sure he feel like the rest of the group and to gain acceptance. Moving to a new area or starting life after incarceration may be scary. Often it means having to make new friends, avoiding old hats and fitting into a new environment. When we are feeling unsure about ourselves we may be more likely to feel the effects of peer pressure.

7 Let's explore the three prong approaches that could deal with the relationship of peer pressure in overcoming recidivism (relapse).



PREVENTIVE ASPECTS IN DEALING WITH PEER PRESSURE

Positive Pressure

8 Youth peer pressure can also have positive effects. For example, if one is involved with a group of people that are ambitious and working to succeed, one might feel pressured to follow suit to avoid feeling excluded from the group. Therefore, the youths would be pressured into improving themselves and this would certainly be beneficial to them in the long term.

How to Walk Away From Peer Pressure

Prevention is basic and it prevents extinction!

9 It is tough to be the only one who says "no" to peer pressure, but this can be done. Paying attention to own feelings and beliefs about what is right and wrong will help you know the right thing to do. Building up inner strength and self-confidence will

help youths to stand firm against negative peer pressure, to walk away and resist engaging in activities that are improper or even illegal.

10 It can really help to have at least one other peer, or friend, who is willing to say "no" too. This takes a lot of the power out of peer pressure and makes it much easier to resist. Youths should be encouraged to have friends with values similar to theirs who will back them up when they don't want to do something.

11 You would have heard of parents and teachers advising teenagers to "choose your friends wisely." Peer pressure is a big reason why they say this. If the chosen friends, who don't use drugs, skip class, smoke cigarettes, consume alcohol or lie to their parents, then the youth probably won't do these things either, even if others do so. Helping the self first and this would encourage and give confidence to help another friend who's having trouble resisting peer pressure. It can be powerful for one kid to join another by simply saying, "I'm with you - let's go."

12 Even when faced with peer pressure while being alone, there are still things one can do. Being smart and using stay away tactics from peers who pressure to do stuff knowing is wrong. It's difficult to say "no" and walk away. It is even better yet, finding other friends and classmates to pal around with.

13 Sometimes the toughest thing about feelings is sharing them with others. Sharing the feelings helps one when feelings are good and when they aren't so good. Sharing also helps to get closer to people you care about and who care about you. When people talk about feelings, they sometimes use the word "emotions". Making a list of feelings can help. This can be done mentally or by writing them on a piece of paper or even by drawing pictures

Seeking help / assistance

14 If there's continuous peer pressure and when it is difficult to handle, it is time to seek assistance from a trusted person. Talking to a parent, teacher, learning specialist, therapist or school counselor can help and make the person feel much better and prepared for the next time when faced with negative peer pressure.

Surrogate Family Support

15 Family that prays together stays together; the counselors share spiritual and moral ethical guidance during the meetings with the youth and their families. Parents often believe that their children do not value their opinions. In reality, studies suggest that parents have tremendous influence over their children, especially teenagers. No matter the age of their children, parents and caregivers should never feel helpless about countering the negative effects of peer pressure.

16 Communications between parents and the child is yet another effective measure against negative peer pressure that the child may face. . It won't leave the youth dealing with his or her problems or worries all alone. Mom and dad want to know if problems persists because of the love and care and they want to know what's happening in the child's life. If the youth doesn't want to talk with mom or dad, then he or she can turn to another trusted adult, like a relative or a counselor at school. Maybe this person can help the youth and sensitise the parents to their child's problems or concerns.

17 Recognising the values and moral institutional guidance of the family unit that emphasizes the unity, love and care that blooms through interaction and understanding where giving and taking takes place, youths at risk are encouraged and motivated to be with their families. The youths at risk who are considered or diagnosed as high-risk are interviewed to ensure that there's family and family support to accept them for integration into the family. These processes are carried out and assessed during the incarceration prior to their release.

18 In cases where the youth is from a dysfunctional family or has poor family support, the youth is matched with an appropriate surrogate family who is willing to care for the youth. The surrogate families are those families who have love and care and who are prepared to share and nurture the youths at risk. These families are formally formed and established by the respective religious groups or community support groups.

19 The surrogate families are given moral, social, educational and other necessary support by the local groups dealing with them so that there's constant monitoring and

guidance for the progress of the youth. The youth is than re-united with the families when the youth is able to support himself and stay away from negative elements.

REHABILITATIVE ASPECTS IN DEALING WITH PEER PRESSURE

Counselors Help You Cope

20 Counselors are the professionals to turn to when help is needed. They know how to listen and can help kids with life's challenges. Counselors have special training in how to help kids solve problems, make decisions, and stand up for themselves. This doesn't mean counselor will wave a magic wand and the problem will go away. But it does mean he or she will help troubled youths to manage and cope with with their challenges and concerns. *Coping* is an important word to know. Sometimes, kids and grown-ups have difficult problems. Coping means that someone is trying to handle these problems and make things better.

21 “In *Coping with Peer Pressure*, one study reported that nearly 80 percent of high school students interviewed said that they were pressured by peers to drink. Some teens drink because their friends drink. I, myself, started drinking because my friends drank and they started drinking because their friends drank also. I didn't even like beer when I first started drinking. But I had to fit in so I drank. Other teens drink to escape family or personal troubles. I had a friend who was a drinker. I thought he drank only when the rest of us were drinking, but I found out that that was not true. He drank all the time and the reason was the death of his father. Alcohol became that man's best friend and it changed him to a point where I disowned him as a friend. It was truly sad. I don't believe he knew he was an alcoholic until it was too late”.

22 The schools in Singapore engage professional full time counselors who commence their counseling services right from the primary school till tertiary education. They provide consistent continuous support for the students who are in need of support, care and referrals for the holistic youth development where the parents, tutors and peer members of the youth are enjoined in the counseling process.

23 School counselors are available and want to make the school experience the best it can be. The counselor's job is to take the problem seriously and help find a solution. The counselor also wants to help learn as much as one can in class, be a contributing member of the school community, and be a positive influence in the youth environment.

24 For example, the counselor would discuss and give ideas and strategies on how to deal with the bullies. The counselor may also talk to the bully and maybe even to kids who saw what happened. The counselor might talk with the teacher and the parents about the problem as well. Though this may feel a little uncomfortable, facing the problem and trying to correct it is better than living with a bad situation. Having a counselor's help means it eradicates the need to face difficult school problems alone.

25 Counselors at some schools also offer programs for parents and kids or just parents alone. These preventive programmes would help the youths to stay away from drugs, alcohol and juvenile delinquency. Today, counselors are called upon to help students and the youth in various ways. They help students and youths at risk to handle any problem that could get in the way of their academic studies, to guide them to productive futures, and try to create a positive environment for everyone at school

Religious, Spiritual Counseling

26 The religious affiliates aim to support and guide recovering addicts and at risk youths in accordance with the spiritual teachings of the different religions represented by the SANA's affiliates. Experienced spiritual counselors of all faiths practiced in Singapore perform the spiritual counseling. This includes Muslim, Catholic, Christian, Buddhist, Hindu and Sikh counseling.

27 The counseling involves the youths at risk, who are juvenile criminals. The counseling focus on the rehabilitation path, which integrates the life skill components where upon release the youth would have to face the challenges of acceptance of family and peers.

28 The religious programs in the Prison for youths are geared towards dealing with peers and managing personal feelings and emotions with religious spiritual teachings. The emotional and behavioural handling of youths is managed by experienced counselors who share examples in real life and the past experiences of the involved adolescents.

Case Management Framework

29 The case management framework for the relapse cases is meant as an aftercare service providing key support lasting six months for inmates who have been released from the prison. During this critical period, an inmate, in particular a young offender is guided and helped in aspects of integrating into the family and community. The inmate is helped with securing job and managing his life meaningfully with support from the neighborhood support groups. In dealing and helping youths in their coping with life after release from prison, care is taken in peer group management and identifying potential risk and other kinds of exposed and concealed threats faced by the youth.

30 Counselors also meet up with family members of this youth either in their homes or invite them to the office to discuss and personally interact to find out more of the problems and difficulties faced by them. This enables the counselors to view the other side of the youth to address the concerns. The family members are made aware and the counselors share important skills and tips for them to assist the youth in dealing with external negative peer pressure. The families are contacted and they remain a source of information for the counselors in providing guidance and support for the youth and all information is kept and handled confidentially.

31 The Badge Scheme is intended for school uniform groups to promote and encourage students to be ambassadors against drug abuse in their respective schools. The Badge Scheme also provides opportunity for the students to display leadership qualities and increase their potential to be Speakers to promote anti drug abuse message among the students and youths at risk. They are provided training and coaching to be

leaders and speakers where they display their abilities and talent in seminars, fairs and gatherings where youths gather and share the meaningful messages.

32 The Badge Scheme provides avenue for the youth at risk to be more involved in activities. The involvement in activities, which brings about their awareness on the danger of drug abuse, increases their knowledge and therefore they are able to cope with any peer pressure by means of avoidance and seeking help.

Sports & Receptions Group formed by Enforcement Units

33 Youths with their vibrancy and much energy are channeled towards sports and recreational activities. Extracurricular activities, challenging sports recreational sports and participating in inter-constituency sports are part of the sports programs lined up for youths.

34 The objective to introduce healthy life style, staying away from drugs and thereby inculcating positive values which promotes better living and good citizens. The youths at risk are also picked for participation in various kinds of sports activities and are also channelled to the various organisations like the community clubs, corporate run sports activities and private clubs activities where the youth are encouraged to participate with their interest and potential needed for the sports.

35 The sports heroes of the country are brought in to interact with the youths during major SANA activities. The sportsmen will be the ambassadors against drugs and crimes and are the role models to inspire and encourage the youths at risk.

36 Recognition and awards are extended to the deserving sports participants. Local sports promotions bodies provides excellent opportunities for deserving youths to be developed under youth development programs and the government has started operating the first sports school in Singapore where the students stay in hostels with government subsidies for academic and sports excellence. The youth have proved their success and excellence in the institution.