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## Tackling Peer Pressure

By Bobbi DePorter

If you're in your early teens you may already have encountered peer pressure. If you're approaching your teens, it's something you may face fairly soon.

During 26 years of conducting our SuperCamp academic summer camp programs, we have learned quite a lot about the problems that teens face. Peer pressure is something that teens find very hard to deal with. So we've come up with some suggestions.

Think about this scene: you're on your way to a concert with a group of friends and someone pulls out a bottle taken from Dad's liquor cabinet and starts passing it around. You don't want to drink, but everyone else seems to be doing it and you don't want to look like an outsider by refusing. What do you do?

Maybe you've been in a similar situation – one where friends are coaxing you to do something you know is not a good idea, like drinking, skipping school, or cheating on a test. This is not to put down your friends – they are the people who listen to you and are there for you when you need them. However, it's important to remember that if someone wants you to do something that just doesn't feel right – from something seemingly minor to some scheme that could land you in the principal's office, or grounded, or even worse – it's time to stand up for your beliefs and let the person know how you feel. How do you do it?

### **Step Out and Stand Up**

Step out of your comfort zone and stand up for what you believe in. We all know this isn't easy. Many problems have occurred for many teens because no one wanted to stand up and speak out about how they felt. It takes courage.

There may be one person among your group of friends who dominates – the one who stirs others into action. That's fine. But when this person wants you to do something you're not comfortable with, you need to let him or her know. Chances are you're not the only one in your group who feels uncomfortable. Others may share your opinion, but are waiting for someone else to take the lead. They are looking for a way out, but are afraid to speak their minds. Once you speak up, they will quickly take your side and share their concerns.

So how do you "just say no"? State your position firmly, but avoid putting the person suggesting the activity on the spot. Calmly and simply stating "I don't want to drink" is better than "No, thanks, dude. I don't want to end up like you." Always avoid personal attack – make the activity the issue, not the person.

Sometimes a little humor can lighten the situation – half jokingly saying something about the consequences can get your point across and give others an easy opportunity to agree and a reason to "back out."

### **When That Doesn't Work**

Ideally, you should be able to stand up for what you believe in. But if you're having trouble saying "no" to your friends here are two alternative strategies:

**Ignore it.** When someone comes up with some crazy plan you don't want to be part of, pretend you never heard it. Turn up the radio or pretend to be concentrating on your homework or what someone else is saying. Your friend may take the hint and the whole idea may be dropped.

**Blame your parents.** This is one time when your parents' rules come in handy. Say something like, "No way! If my parents found out, I'd be grounded for the whole summer! I'm not risking it."

Whatever strategy you choose, you can feel proud of yourself knowing you have the ability to say no – you did not cave in to peer pressure.

Going against the crowd isn't easy – it takes courage and self-respect. But the more you do it, the more your courage and self-respect will grow. And respect for you will also grow among those who agreed with you and declined to participate in the activity. In fact, they may thank you for saying what they were feeling!

### **Want Some Help?**

At SuperCamp, our exceptional staff go in-depth with campers from age 9 to 18 on how to deal with peer pressure. Our Youth Forum is seven days long. It's for students going into grades 4-5 in the fall. Junior Forum and Senior Forum are 10 days long. Junior Forum is for incoming 6-8 graders and Senior Forum is for incoming 9-12 graders. We even have a college boot camp, Quantum U, eight-day programs for incoming college freshmen.

SuperCamp is held at eight beautiful colleges across the U.S. throughout the summer. Quantum U takes place at Colorado College in Colorado Springs. More information on our programs is available at [www.supercamp.com](http://www.supercamp.com) and [www.quantum-u.com](http://www.quantum-u.com).

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### **About the Author:**

Bobbi DePorter, teen motivation and accelerated learning expert, has changed the lives of over five million kids through her SuperCamp and Quantum Learning school programs. SuperCamp is a learning and life skills summer program with more than 56,000 graduates in the U.S., Europe, Asia and Latin America. Quantum Learning is an accelerated learning-based teaching and learning methodology that has helped improve thousands of schools and districts across the nation. Bobbi is the author of more than a dozen books, including *The Seven Biggest Teen Problems and how to turn them into Strengths (An Insider's Look at What Works with Teens)*. For more information, visit <http://www.SuperCamp.com> and <http://www.QLN.com>. Contact Bobbi at [bdeporter@qln.com](mailto:bdeporter@qln.com).