

**The Peer Pressure “Bag of Tricks”  
Role Playing Lesson for Middle School Students**  
[www.thecoolspot.gov](http://www.thecoolspot.gov)

**Objective:** Students will understand definitions of Pressure, Peer, Peer Pressure, and Spoken and Unspoken pressure. Students will be able to recognize different types of pressure—including three Spoken types (Rejection, Put Downs, and Reasoning) and three Unspoken types (The Huddle, The Look, and The Example).

**Overview:** This lesson should be presented after finishing the guided reading activity and extension activity on The Cool Spot Web site (<http://www.thecoolspot.gov/teachercorner.asp>). It will take approximately one 45-minute class to complete. After reviewing definitions, students will role play various scenarios, analyze the different types of pressures, then discuss what made the pressures difficult to resist in each scenario. Lastly, a discussion will be held on how the person being pressured might feel and ways they might have resisted the pressure. NOTE: It will be important to follow this lesson with the “Right to Resist—Know Your No’s” lesson, to provide effective strategies for resisting peer pressure.

**Materials and Preparation for Lesson**

1. Peer Pressure Definitions (see page 8). Copy, enlarge and laminate definitions of Pressure, Peer, and Peer Pressure, or use strip paper to write definitions, or make an overhead transparency. Students will need note paper for the think, pair, share activity.
2. Spoken and Unspoken Pressure Definitions (see page 9). Copy, enlarge and post “Spoken and Unspoken Pressure” poster on wall or make an overhead transparency.
3. Peer Pressure “Bags of Tricks” (see pages 10-11). Make six copies and cut apart (assumes 24-30 students). Place sets of tricks in small bags. You will need one bag for each group (4-5 students) for maximum participation. Label the bags “Peer Pressure Tricks.”
4. Role Play Scenarios and Discussion and Answer Sheets (see page 12-19). Make one copy of each of the six scenarios (pages 12-17) and one-per-student copies of the answer sheet (pages 18-19).

## 1. Introduction to Lesson

Time: Approximately 10 minutes  
Materials: Peer Pressure Definitions  
Spoken and Unspoken Pressure Definitions

Let's review some of the concepts we learned from The Cool Spot Web site. Afterwards, you will have the opportunity to role play and recognize different kinds of peer pressure.

### Peer Pressure Definitions

We are going to start off with a think, pair, share activity for the terms on the board/overhead.

*Write on board/overhead: "Peer," "Pressure," and "Peer Pressure."*

- **Think:** Individually write down a definition for each of these terms—Peer, Pressure, and Peer Pressure – in your own words.
- **Pair:** Then turn to the person sitting next to you, discuss what you've written, and come to some agreement as to a good definition for each term. Both of you should write your common definitions below the ones you did yourself.
- **Share:** Now we'll share with the class.

*Select definitions from several groups. Ask students willing to volunteer their definitions to write them on the board or teacher can write them on the overhead. Have class come to one consensus definition for each, and reveal laminated Peer Pressure Definitions (page 8).*

## Spoken and Unspoken Pressure Definitions

Now there are two broad categories of peer pressure, Spoken and Unspoken. Let's take a quick look at these definitions.

*Read and briefly discuss content on the Spoken and Unspoken Pressure Definitions Poster (page 9):*

**Spoken Pressure** – Also called direct pressure. It's when a person asks you directly to do something, or says things to you that push you toward a certain choice.

**Unspoken Pressure** – Also called indirect pressure. It's when nothing is actually said to you, but because you see others doing something, you feel pressure to do the same.

## 2. Role Plays: Set Up and Preparation

Time: Approximately 10-15 minutes needed for setup and preparation

Materials: Role Play Scenario Sheets

Instructions for Role Plays to be Performed Before the Whole Class: Next, we will be working in groups to role play different pressure situations in front of the entire class. Each group will be assigned a different scenario. Your job will be to demonstrate a type of peer pressure so that the rest of the class can guess what kind of pressure it is. Each person in the group will need to participate, either as a person giving pressure, or a person receiving pressure.

Some tips:

- Keep your Trick a secret. There will be six different Peer Pressure Tricks used. Some are Spoken and some are Unspoken pressure. I'll hand each group your own role play, with your particular Peer Pressure Trick. Keep your group's Peer Pressure Trick a secret – don't tell other groups! They will need to guess what kind of pressure it is.
- Have your Bag of Tricks ready for watching other groups' role plays. All the different Peer Pressure Tricks for these role plays are defined on strips of paper in these Peer Pressure Bags of Tricks. I'll hand one to each group.
- Watch other role plays and pull the right Trick from the bag. You all will watch and analyze the other role plays carefully. In your groups, you'll sort through the tricks in your Peer Pressure Bag of Tricks when a role play is over. You'll agree within your group as to which Trick matches what you observed, and one of you will hold that one up. You'll record your answers on your individual answer sheets.
- Create the skit. When you receive your scenario, read what's in the box at the top of the page carefully before you do anything else. Then read the scenario and decide who will play each part. Write out a script that clearly demonstrates the kind of peer pressure you are assigned.

- Don't respond to the pressure. Some of you will be *doing* the pressure and others will be the ones *feeling* pressured – but you WON'T be responding to the pressure. You will just FREEZE your scene after showing the pressure, so we can discuss it. We'll learn about resisting pressures in the next lesson. I will come around to help you.

*Divide class into six groups. Assign each group one of the six Role Play Scenarios (pages 12-17). Rotate around to different groups to help set up their role plays. It will take them about 10 minutes to prepare. When they seem ready, have them sit down to begin the role plays.*

### 3. Role Plays: Performing and Analyzing

Time: Approximately 20 minutes including discussion

Materials: Peer Pressure Bags of Tricks (one per group)  
Discussion and Answer Sheets (one per student)

*Give each group one Bag of Tricks (pages 10-11) for analyzing the other groups' scenarios. Give each student one Discussion and Answer Sheet (page 18-19).*

As you view each role play, think about what type of pressure is being used and how the person who is being pressured might feel during the pressure.

After the skit is over, open up your Peer Pressure Bag of Tricks and take out the Tricks. Spread them on your table and, as a group, discuss which Trick most closely matches what you observed. Choose one person to hold up that Trick. We'll discuss each role play, and you'll answer the three questions about that scenario on your answer sheet.

*Teacher will hold discussion after each. The teacher should ask*

- *whether it was Spoken or Unspoken pressure;*
- *the name of the Peer Pressure Trick, (noting that some are intentional and some Unspoken ones perhaps are not);*
- *how the person being pressured felt;*
- *why it might be hard to resist; and*
- *ideas about how they might have resisted it (note that the next lesson will give good advice about resistance skills).*

*Teacher will hold a concluding discussion restating the ideas that:*

- *peer pressure can take many forms.*

Before this lesson, did you think peer pressure was just “one big thing?” Do you now see that there are a lot of different ways that peers can pressure?

- *Recognizing peer pressure is the first step in resisting it.*

Instead of simply thinking, “Will I say yes or no?” to this pressure, you can now analyze the type of “Trick” being used. And you can tell yourself, “I won’t fall for that.”

- *Peer pressure is difficult, but there are effective ways to say no.*

In the next role play lesson, the Right to Resist, we’ll learn how to say no “assertively” and why that’s the best way to resist peer pressure.

*Lastly, the teacher should collect all scenario sheets, answer forms and the Bags of Tricks bags.*

## Peer Pressure Definitions

**Pressure** – the feeling that you are being pushed toward making a certain choice – either good or bad.

**Peer** – someone in your own age group.

**Peer Pressure** – the feeling someone your own age is pushing you toward making a certain choice, good or bad.

## Spoken and Unspoken Pressure Definitions

**Spoken Pressure – Also called direct pressure. It's when a person asks you directly to do something, or says things to you that push you toward a certain choice.**

**Unspoken Pressure – Also called indirect pressure. It's when nothing is actually said to you, but because you see others doing something, you feel pressure to do the same.**

## Peer Pressure “Bag of Tricks”

Make six copies and cut apart (assumes 24-30 students). Place sets of Tricks in small bags. You will need one bag for each group (4-5 students) for maximum participation. Label the bags “Peer Pressure Tricks.”

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Spoken pressure:

# REJECTION

Threatening to leave someone out or end a friendship.

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Spoken pressure:

# PUT DOWN

Insulting or calling names to make someone feel bad.

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Spoken pressure:

# REASONING

Giving reasons to do something or why it would be OK to do it.

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Unspoken pressure:

# THE HUDDLE

A group stands together talking or laughing, maybe looking at something you can't see, with their backs out to others.

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Unspoken pressure:

## **THE “LOOK”**

Kids who think they’re cool give a look that means: “We’re cool and you’re not.”

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Unspoken pressure:

## **THE EXAMPLE**

Popular kids simply buy or wear or do something, and because they set an example, others want to follow.

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Bag Label

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# **Peer Pressure Tricks**

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**Scenario A – Team Fans**  
(NOTE: Use your own local towns and teams!)

Don't tell the other groups! This is a SPOKEN Peer Pressure Trick called REJECTION, which is threatening to leave someone out or end a friendship. Your job is to demonstrate this to the class so they can guess what kind of pressure it is. Make a role play with a script that shows this kind of peer pressure -- without saying the term "rejection" out loud. Make sure the person being pressured does NOT respond to the pressure.

**Characters:**

- **Ronnie:** A boy who has just moved to Washington, D.C. from New York.
  
- **Four Other Boys:** Redskins fans

**Setting:** Outside of the school in the morning waiting for the bell to ring to go inside.

**Props:** Team items if available.

Two boys are standing around discussing how great the Redskins are, when Ronnie approaches. One boy asks, "Hey, who's your favorite team?" Ronnie responds, "The Giants." The two boys laugh, roll their eyes and turn away from Ronnie. "Guess you won't be invited to our Redskin's party!" Ronnie puts his head down and walks away sadly. (FREEZE here.)

*Class discusses and fills in answer sheets: Was this Spoken or Unspoken pressure? Which Peer Pressure Trick was used? How do you think the person felt who was being pressured?*

## Scenario B – Substitute Teacher Day

Don't tell the other groups! This is a SPOKEN Peer Pressure Trick called THE PUT DOWN, which is insulting or calling names to make someone feel bad. Your job is to demonstrate this to the class so they can guess what kind of pressure it is. Make a role play with a script that shows this kind of peer pressure -- without saying the term "put down" out loud. Make sure the person being pressured does NOT respond to the pressure.

### Characters:

- Abby: A girl who behaves respectfully toward teachers, including substitutes.
- Three to Four Other Students: Students who see substitutes as a chance to break rules and can get away with it.
- Ms. Miller: Substitute teacher for the 7<sup>th</sup> grade class.
- Mr. Greene: The principal

Setting: A middle school classroom

Props: Papers, desks

Students are entering the classroom as they notice there is a substitute. They excitedly tell the others. The late bell rings and Abby sits down but the other three/four students do not. Ms. Miller tells the students, "Please be seated for morning announcements." The students ignore her. Ms. Miller approaches each student and quietly asks each to sit down. They do, but one looks at Abby and calls her "teacher's pet." She quietly ignores it. Next, the three/four students begin throwing little paper wads at each other. One student notices that Abby has not joined in the misbehavior. "Come on, Abby, what's wrong? Are you chicken? Bock, Bock!" Again, Abby quietly ignores the others, and tries to hear the morning announcements. (FREEZE here.)

*Class discusses and fills in answer sheets: Was this Spoken or Unspoken pressure? Which Peer Pressure Trick was used? How do you think the person felt who was being pressured?*

## Scenario C – The Math Test

Don't tell the other groups! This is a SPOKEN Peer Pressure Trick called REASONING, which is giving reasons to do something or why it would be OK. Your job is to demonstrate this to the class so they can guess what kind of pressure it is. Make a role play with a script that shows this kind of peer pressure -- without saying the words "reasons" or "reasoning" out loud. Make sure the person being pressured does NOT respond to the pressure.

### Characters:

- Constantine: A boy who forgot to study for his math test.
- Three/Four Other Students: Friends of Constantine's that did not study, but prepared a "cheat sheet."
- Ms. Wayerski: Math teacher

### Setting: Math Classroom

### Props: Papers, pencils, and desks

Constantine enters the room and notices on the board that there is a test that day. "Oh no! My mom is going to be so mad if I flunk this test! I completely forgot to study." One friend hears Constantine, and responds, "Don't worry we'll pass you the answers. No problem!" Constantine responds, "No, my mom would really be mad if I got caught." Another friend replies, "Don't worry, you won't get caught! We do this all the time." (FREEZE here.)

*Class discusses and fills in answer sheets: Was this Spoken or Unspoken pressure? Which Peer Pressure Trick was used? How do you think the person felt who was being pressured?*

## Scenario D – The Birthday Party

Don't tell the other groups! This is an UNSPOKEN Peer Pressure Trick called THE HUDDLE, which is when a group of kids stands together talking or laughing, maybe looking at something others can't see, with their backs out to others. Your job is to demonstrate this to the class so they can guess what kind of pressure it is. Since this is UNSPOKEN pressure, you won't talk directly to the person who feels the pressure. Make sure the person being pressured does NOT respond to the pressure.

Characters:

- Sophia: A girl who wants to be popular.
- Other students: Popular girls and popular boys, including one boy that she really likes.

Setting: Someone's 14<sup>th</sup> birthday party.

Props: A picture of sushi or some trendy food that some people can't or won't eat.

Sophia enters the house and sees most of the popular kids standing close together in the living room, with their backs to her. She walks closer and sees that all of them are very excited about eating sushi (or other food item). Whatever it is, she has tried it once and hated it. But the kids are all talking very enthusiastically about it, as if this is the very latest thing that only they know about. The boy she likes sees her and smiles. He is standing by a platter of the trendy food. Sophia smiles back and, trying to act cool, she goes over to him. (FREEZE here.)

*Class discusses and fills in answer sheets: Was this Spoken or Unspoken pressure? Which Peer Pressure Trick was used? How do you think the person felt who was being pressured?*

## Scenario E – The Dance

Don't tell the other groups! This is an UNSPOKEN Peer Pressure Trick called THE LOOK, which is when kids who think they're cool give a look that means, "We're cool and you're not." Your job is to demonstrate this to the class. Since this is UNSPOKEN pressure, you won't talk directly to the person who feels the pressure. Make sure the person being pressured does NOT respond to the pressure.

### Characters:

- Judy: A shy girl going to the dance for the first time.
- Randy: Judy's good friend, who is also shy, going to the dance for the first time with Judy.
- Four other students: Popular students wearing the latest fashions. (Student's can roll up jeans, or make paper-clip bracelets or think of something else to do so they all look the same.)

Setting: A school dance

Props: Whatever items or styles that will make the "popular" kids look the same.

Judy and Randy enter the school dance. They stand alone in the corner for what seems like the longest time. The group of popular students all seem so cool to Judy and Randy. Their group is all dressed similar, but Judy's outfit is different. It is pretty but not the latest trend. Randy is wearing an outfit that used to belong to his older brother. Judy and Randy eventually approach the popular group. But when they do, Judy notices one girl look her up and down, roll her eyes, and turn to talk to her friend. Randy notices that another boy looks him up and down and nudges his friend when he sees him coming closer. Randy looks at Judy and says, "You know, I think we should just stick to ourselves." (FREEZE here.)

*Class discusses and fills in answer sheets: Was this Spoken or Unspoken pressure? Which Peer Pressure Trick was used? How do you think the person felt who was being pressured?*

## Scenario F: The Hair Style

Don't tell the other groups! This is an UNSPOKEN Peer Pressure Trick called THE EXAMPLE, which is when popular kids simply buy or wear or do something, and because they set an example, others want to follow. Your job is to demonstrate this to the class so they can guess what kind of pressure it is. Because this is UNSPOKEN pressure, you won't talk directly to the person who feels the pressure. Make sure the person being pressured does NOT respond to the pressure.

### Characters:

- **Molly:** A girl who wants to fit in. Her hair is wavy and long. (Or different in another way from the others. The teacher can help the students decide what to do.)
- **Four Girls:** Popular girls that are all wearing their hair straight and long. (Or another way as the group decides.)
- **Mrs. George:** Molly's mom

### Setting: The mall

**Props:** Rubber bands, ribbon or bobby pins to change hairstyles if needed.

Molly's mom dropped her off at the mall to do some shopping. Molly is walking through the mall when she sees the group of popular girls. They are all wearing their hair the same, straight in pony tails, but Molly's is curly and down. She feels different so she just walks by with her head down hoping the group doesn't notice her. She decides instead of spending her money on clothes, she want to spend it on a straightening iron. When her mom picks her up she asks her mom, "Please, can we go buy me a hair straightening iron instead of clothes?" (FREEZE here.)

*Class discusses and fills in answer sheets: Was this Spoken or Unspoken Pressure? Which Peer Pressure Trick was used? How do you think the person felt who was being pressured?*

**Peer Pressure “Bag of Tricks” Discussion and Answer Sheet**  
[www.thecoolspot.gov](http://www.thecoolspot.gov)

Name(s):

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**Scenario A – Team Fans**

Was this Spoken or Unspoken pressure? \_\_\_\_\_

Which Peer Pressure Trick was used? \_\_\_\_\_

How do you think the person felt who was being pressured?

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**Scenario B – Substitute Teacher Day**

Was this Spoken or Unspoken pressure? \_\_\_\_\_

Which Peer Pressure Trick was used? \_\_\_\_\_

How do you think the person felt who was being pressured?

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**Scenario C – The Math Test**

Was this Spoken or Unspoken pressure? \_\_\_\_\_

Which Peer Pressure Trick was used? \_\_\_\_\_

How do you think the person felt who was being pressured?

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**Scenario D – The Birthday Party**

Was this Spoken or Unspoken pressure? \_\_\_\_\_

Which Peer Pressure Trick was used? \_\_\_\_\_

How do you think the person felt who was being pressured?

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\_\_\_\_\_

**Scenario E – The Dance**

Was this Spoken or Unspoken pressure? \_\_\_\_\_

Which Peer Pressure Trick was used? \_\_\_\_\_

How do you think the person felt who was being pressured?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Scenario F – The Hair Style**

Was this Spoken or Unspoken pressure? \_\_\_\_\_

Which Peer Pressure Trick was used? \_\_\_\_\_

How do you think the person felt who was being pressured?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_