

TIP SHEET FOR PARENTS

Teach Your Children How to Say 'No'

There are lots of ways to say NO when it is appropriate to do so. Children are more likely to stand up for themselves and their beliefs if they can do so without embarrassing themselves or offending their friends.

One of the things that youngsters have to learn—and parents can teach them—is that it's all right to be different once in a while, that real friends will respect their individuality and honesty. You can point out that bucking the crowd can actually be a source of strength—and so can speaking up in an effort to change minds among their friends.



How Peer Pressure Works

Discuss with your child how peer pressure works. Suggest that friends who are pressuring may be feeling pressure themselves and may even be relieved if someone else has the courage to say NO and to explain why.

What Makes a Leader?

Talk about qualities that make a leader. Explain that saying NO doesn't have to mean being left stranded by friends and peers. One can disagree and gain support by offering a better idea. People admire those who offer new ideas and seem confident of themselves and their beliefs.

Say No Gracefully

Discuss ways of saying NO gracefully. A polite “No, thank you” will have a better effect than a rude or insulting refusal. Giving a reason without being critical is less threatening to the other person. Using humor eases the tension and takes the spotlight off a refusal. And, suggesting alternatives will let friends know that you still want to be with them—even if you don't want to do what they have suggested.

Source: NSPRA Resource Files.

Setting Limits -When Parents Must Say No

Firm, fair, clear and consistent guidelines are especially helpful when children are wavering and unsure about what to think or do. Your rules can serve as an excuse for them not to go along with the crowd. (“I can't, my mom would kill me.”)

- State the rule calmly. An angry order is often taken as a direct challenge on your child's friends or taste.

- State your reasons for the rule. Children want to know why. Even if they don't agree, they will understand that the rule is based on your concern for them, not on your wish to keep them from having fun.

- Assure them there will be new privileges as they get older. Explain that trust is earned. And be sure to keep the promises you make. Few things will undermine your relationship faster than unkept promises.

- Listen with respect. React to your child as you would to an adult friend. Grown-ups tend to do most of the talking when conversing with young people. LISTEN as much as you talk. After speaking for thirty seconds or so, stop and let your youngster have a chance. Let them get their grievances off their chests.