Peer Pressure

Objective

To help 6th graders understand what peer pressure is and how to combat it.

Memory Verse

“Do not be deceived: Evil company corrupts good habits. Awake to righteousness, and do not sin; for some do not have the knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame.” (1 Corinthians 15:33-34)

“Now when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed; for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision. And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy.” (Galatians 2:11-13)

"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." (Romans 12:2)

Introduction (Background Research for Servants)

Things to keep in mind as preparing for a lesson but not to be included in the lesson.
Read the various links and familiarize yourself with the various facts about peer pressure and realize that it is a serious subject. Even if the examples that the students are giving are not reasonable or seem insignificant- please remember that this is dramatic for them and seems like the end of the world. It is important to create a safe space for them to share their feelings and fears.

Lesson Outline

1. What is Peer Pressure? (Middle School Definition)

- Peer pressure is when we feel compelled to act a certain way because we want to fit in and be accepted by certain people
- Peer pressure is the powerful feeling of pressure from someone your own age that can push you toward making certain choices, good or bad.
- Peer pressure can take number of different forms, spoken and unspoken and can lead to risky, disapproved, or personally unwanted behavior

2. What are the pressures we face

- Unspoken Peer Pressure
  The Huddle: group stands together talking or laughing, maybe looking at something you can't see, with their backs out to other
- 'The look: Kids who think they're cool give a look that means: “We’re cool and you’re not.”
  - The Example: Popular kids simply buy or wear or do something, and because they set an example, others want to follow.
- Spoken Peer Pressure
  - Rejection: Threatening to leave someone out or end a friendship
  - Putdown: Insulting or calling names to make someone feel bad.
  - Rationalizing: Giving reasons to do something wrong or why it would be OK to do it.

3. How do we combat them?

Role Play Scenarios in separate groups

Activity

Split the students up into groups and have them act out a variation of this skit and let the other students guess which kind of pressure this is. Feel free to change the names or scenarios to make it more appropriate for your students.

Scenario A-Team Fans (don’t tell other groups this “Trick” is “Rejection”)

Characters: Josh, a boy who has just moved to the area. Several other boys who are local team fans Setting: Outside the building before or after school or in the cafeteria during lunch

Action:

- Several boys are standing together discussing their favorite team. Josh walks past.
- One boy calls out to him and asks who his favorite team is.
- Josh answers with the name of another city team.
- All the boys laugh and turn away from Josh.
- Another boy calls out, “I guess you won’t be at our (team name) party Sunday!” Josh walks away.

Scenario B – Substitute Teacher (don’t tell other groups this “Trick” is “The Put Down”)

Characters: Brianna – a polite, respectful middle school student. Other less respectful and somewhat rowdy students Mr. /Ms. Morgan – substitute teacher

Setting: A middle school classroom

Action:

- Brianna enters the class, greets the substitute, sits down, and prepares to work.
- Other students enter, notice the substitute, and start spreading the word that there's a sub.
- The bell rings, and other students continue to stand and talk, etc.
- The substitute asks each of the other students to take their seats and quiet down for the morning announcements.
- Brianna remains seated quietly while other students continue laughing, messing around, and throwing paper wads, some directed at Brianna.
- Brianna ignores the disruption.
- One student calls Brianna a chicken and adds noises.

Scenario C – The Math Test (don't tell other groups this "Trick" is "Reasoning")

Characters: Pete, a kid who didn't study for a math test. Friends of Pete, who did not study but have a "cheat sheet" Mr. /Ms. Smith – the math teacher

Setting: A middle school classroom

Action:

- Pete comes into the classroom and hears the teacher says there's a math test.
- Pete mutters something about his mom's reaction to another failed math test.
- Friends overhear Pete and tell him not to worry; they've got him covered with the "cheat sheet."
- Pete hesitates and expresses concern about cheating and getting caught.
- Friends give him reasons why they think it's fine—such as everyone does it, they've done it before, and they didn't get caught.

Scenario D – The Party (don't tell other groups—this "Trick" is "The Huddle")

Characters: Katrina – a nice girl who likes a cool boy and wants to be popular. Mike – the cool boy that Katrina likes. Other cool kids

Setting: An end of school year party.

- Mike and other kids are gathered in a huddle around one student who is showing them a new music video on a portable media player. They are enjoying the video.
- Katrina walks in.
- A few in the group turn and briefly look at her and then at Mike. They don't acknowledge her and turn back to the video.
- Mike smiles at her and then gives his attention back to the video and the group.
- She approaches the group, but they don't turn to include her.

Scenario E – The Dance (don't tell other groups—this "Trick" is "The Look")

Characters: Diana a shy girl is wearing simple, plain clothing. Diana's shy best friend Mark also dressed in a plain way. Other "popular" students are wearing stylish jeans and casual shirts.

Setting: A school dance.

Action:

- The students in stylish clothes are dancing and laughing.
- Diana and Mark enter and stand apart, watching the others.
- One or two of the popular students notice Diana and Mark and give them “the look,” which can include looking them up and down, rolling their eyes, slightly shaking their heads in disapproval, and the like. They also nudge their friends—without saying anything—to look as well.

Conclusion

After each group acts out their skits, ask the students how the situation could have changed. How could they combat pressure? Write out the examples on a poster or big sheet where everyone can see it.

Remind the students that Christ is always with them. That they should always feel supported and be ok to approach a trusted adult to talk about their problems.

Application

Help the students come up with a plan that they can use to combat peer pressure by taking some of the examples they learned about and discuss how to react in the best way to

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