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## **GFWC'S SIGNATURE PROGRAM: DOMESTIC AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE AWARENESS AND PREVENTION**

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8 Tools to help teens and adults cope with peer pressure.

- Understanding Peers
- Impact of Negative Peer Pressure
- Sign of Peer Pressure
- Initiating Conversations with teens, co-workers, family
- Open Communications
- How to Approach the tough Topics
- Coping Strategies for teens, co-workers, family
- Assertiveness and setting Boundaries

Understanding Peer Pressure-attitudes, values, or behaviors to conform to those of the influencing group or individual. This phenomenon is particularly prevalent during adolescent years when teenagers are trying to fit in and establish their identity.

Impact of Negative Peer Pressure - Negative peer pressure can lead individuals to engage in activities they might not agree with, leading to feelings of guilt or disappointment. Often, teenagers succumb to pressure by engaging in activities such as smoking, drinking alcohol, or drug use to appear cool in front of their friends. Such actions not only lead to potential risks but also pave the way for unhealthy habits. This desire to conform stems from fear of not fitting in or being different from their peers, which can further lead to a sense of isolation in teenagers.

Signs of Peer Pressure - Recognizing the signs of peer pressure is a crucial step in helping your teenager and young adults navigate through these challenging times. Changes in behavior, such as alterations in speech, actions, and activities, when around particular groups of friends, can indicate that a teenager is experiencing peer pressure. An emphasis on image, peer pressure and societal expectations often trickle down from social media and magazines. Teenager and young adults will change to meet the social norms of dressings style, preference to certain clothing brands, to imitate a specific look to fit in. Parents, caregivers and co-workers can help to develop coping strategies to deal with peer pressure.

Initiating Conversations with teens, co-workers, family - It can be challenging to initiate conversations with teens about difficult topics such as peer pressure. However, these discussions are crucial in equipping teens and young adults with the tools they need to navigate through challenging situations. We start our communication with children before the age of one. Open communication fosters an environment where teens feel comfortable sharing their experiences and concerns. It is one of the most important tools we have in making the conversations a regular occurrence, fostering an atmosphere where they can express themselves freely and

honestly. This step is very crucial for the parent, coworker and caregiver to maintain composure without yelling or overreacting.

**Approaching Tough Topics** - When addressing sensitive issues with teens and young adults, parents, caregivers and co-workers should acknowledge their own feelings and opinions and approach the conversation calmly. Teens and young adults may be less willing to engage in a discussion if they feel they already know the adult's stance.

The approach to these conversations should be positive and non-judgmental. Using negative language or a condescending tone can put them on the defensive and hinder the conversation. Instead, the parent, caregiver, or co-worker should try to use open-ended questions and "I" statements to express their concern. Privacy is very important to teens and young adults even though they put everything onto social media. Have a one-on-one conversation in a private setting and make the environment a non-confrontational place.

**Coping Strategies for teens, co-workers, family** - Equipping teens and young adults with the right tools to handle peer pressure can greatly impact how they navigate these situations. Two critical strategies: assertiveness and setting boundaries, and role-playing and skill development.

**Assertiveness and Setting Boundaries** - Assertiveness is a valuable skill that can help teens navigate peer pressure effectively. Teens should be taught to say no only when they truly mean it, enduring that "no" always means no and isn't open for negotiation. They should state their position clearly and firmly in a non-confrontational way.

Peer Pressure effects not just children we see it in the schools, work place and in families.

Peer Pressure is where alcohol, drug use, bullying, sexual activity, porn, gambling, theft begins, experimental pranks that are violent and deadly and many addictions.

Please check out programs in your local school, churches and community that will help our youth with current day peer pressure.

References and resources:

U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. Mental Health: <https://profiles.nlm.nih.gov/101584932X120>

U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. Youth Mental Health:

<https://www.hhs.gov/about/news/2021/08/27/samhsa-awards-74-2m-in-grants-to-strengthen-youth-mental-health-html>

American School counselor Association. (2021) School counselor Roles & Ratios. Accessed on November 23, 2021.

<https://www.schoolcounselor.org/About-School-Counseling/School-Counselor-Roles-Ratios>