

Shore Up Your Kids Against Peer Pressure



As the parents of a teenager, you've undoubtedly noticed that your influence is fading just as the influence of your child's peers is growing. Teenagers have always sought cues and direction from people their own age and attempted to blend in with the "crowd."

According to youth-culture expert Walt Mueller, peer pressure used to involve verbal invitations to do something you knew was wrong. But today, it "typically takes the form of an unspoken expectation to participate in behavior that the vast majority of the peer group believes to be normal and right." These days, Mueller adds, it's much more difficult for kids to go against the flow when the behaviors promoted are no longer sneaky but celebrated.

Teenagers are prone to peer pressure not just because they want to fit in but because their brains are still developing. The pre-frontal cortex, which regulates self-control, emotions, and judging consequences is the last part of the brain to develop. In other words, your adolescent is not yet an adult, so expect an interesting mix of adult thinking ability tainted by immaturity, impulsivity, and inconsistent logic.

Although teenagers are socially and physically vulnerable to peer pressure, you don't need to stand back, hold your breath, and hope for the best. By communicating with your kids and modeling godly behavior, you can help them stand firm against all kinds of temptations.

Use these strategies from author Walt Mueller to encourage and equip teenagers in the midst of their pressure-cooker lives:

- 1. Recognize that negative peer pressure is a spiritual battle that we all fight constantly.** Our behavior can be baffling (see Romans 7:14-24), but Jesus has overcome our struggle with sin (verse 25).
- 2. Model a lifestyle of discipleship.** This shows that following Christ isn't always the easy choice but is always the right choice.
- 3. Listen before offering advice.** Teenagers who sense they've been respected and heard are then more prone to hear you out.
- 4. Encourage kids to get involved in a positive peer group, such as a church youth group.** Leaders and members of these organizations celebrate the narrow path that leads to life.
- 5. Affirm kids' worth in your eyes—and God's.** Remind kids that they're "in process," and show them the grace that God has shown you.



If all that people knew about teenagers came from media reports, they probably would speculate that kids are wild risk-takers headed for certain disaster. But consider the flip side of some recent statistics:

- Just more than half of teenagers will experiment with alcohol. That means nearly half won't experiment.
- About 40% of teenagers will try drugs at least once. That means 60% won't try them at all.
- Fewer than 25% of teenagers who try illegal substances regularly use them. That means the majority don't use them.



Great Questions to Ask Your Kids

Let teenagers know you're available to talk about the pressures they're facing. Then be ready to really listen. Start a discussion with these questions:

1. What types of expectations do kids have for one another these days?
2. What are some of the biggest pressures you've faced so far? How easy or difficult has it been to say "no" to each, and why?
3. Do you consider yourself to be a leader or a follower, and why? Have you ever pressured someone? Explain.
4. When you're faced with choices, what decision-making process do you follow? Do you consider all the possible consequences?



Focus on Prayer

PRAY THAT:

1. God will protect your teenagers against negative peer pressure, poor judgment, and harmful consequences.
2. Your teenagers will use their faith to help them resist temptations and pressures to sin.
3. Your teenagers will be influenced by positive peer pressure and will have godly friends who make wise choices.
4. Your teenagers will be positive examples for other young people who wish to live godly lives.

Verse of the month

"You can enter God's Kingdom only through the narrow gate. The highway to hell is broad, and its gate is wide for the many who choose that way. But the gateway to life is very narrow and the road is difficult, and only a few ever find it." (Matthew 7:13-14)

The world is so seductive because it offers a wide variety of pleasures and pursuits. Jesus realizes the temptations we face on earth—and has faced them himself as a man. But he also promises to provide "a way out" so we can "endure" (see 1 Corinthians 10:13). With Jesus' help, we can remain faithful and enter through the narrow gate to heaven.

What's Up With Kids

At SimplyYouthMinistry.com, Jane Dratz, editor for Dare 2 Share ministries, discusses the importance of making wise choices:

The questions teenagers wrestle with on a daily basis are incredibly challenging, because these days many choices come with lifelong consequences. Choose poorly in the realm of Internet porn and distort God's blueprint for sex for a lifetime. Go too far and find yourself with an incurable STD or 18 years of child-support payments. Make a wrong choice about drinking or drugs, and risk arrest and a criminal record that can potentially block you out of future college or job opportunities.

When peer pressure seems unbearable and the urge of the moment is battling to reign supreme, how do you respond? As a Christian, the battle is daunting. But take courage in knowing that you aren't entering the battle alone. If you've made the ultimate choice of all choices, to surrender your life to Jesus and live life to the max for God's glory, then you fight the battle with Jesus by your side, guiding, strengthening, and empowering you to take your stand and fight. A real and vibrant relationship with God that serves as the driving force behind your lifestyle choices is the most powerful motivation you can find for owning your choices and choosing wisely.

And consider this piece of good news: The consequences for *good* choices have a ripple effect as well. Your choice to follow Jesus is a great example of this! Let your relationship with Jesus impact the lives of people around you by sharing his truth and grace with others.



MUSIC SPOTLIGHT



Mainstream Artist

Background: Kid Rock, born Robert Ritchie, has sold more than 23 million albums in the past 18 years. The 37-year-old rap-rocker from Detroit had mostly a local fan base during the '90s. After much touring and teaming with MTV, Kid Rock became a chart-topping superstar. For his next album, the singer plans a return to his hip-hop roots.

Albums: *Rock N Roll Jesus* (2007), *Live Trucker* (2006), *Kid Rock* (2003)

What Parents Should Know: Kid Rock's style is a wide mix of rap rock, Southern rock, hip-hop, and blues- and country-tinged ballads. Foul language and crude themes permeate much of his music. Kid Rock is also known for angry outbursts and a rocky relationship with ex-wife Pamela Anderson.

What Kid Rock Says: "My kid's grandchildren are set for life. But I also tell my son, 'You see how your dad is; if you think any of this is going to get left behind, you're nuts, because I'm going out with a bang, buddy.'"

Discussion Questions: What do you think it would be like to be "set for life"? What, if anything, do you expect your parents to leave you? What do you want to be known for? What type of legacy do you hope to leave for your children?

Christian Artist

Background: Todd Agnew, 37, is a contemporary Christian singer-songwriter with a rock-indie sound. He has a laidback style and even performs barefoot, but his lyrics are serious and insightful. Agnew's hits include "Grace Like Rain" and "My Jesus," and his latest album features "Our Great God," a duet with fellow Christian artist Rebecca St. James.

Albums: *Better Questions* (2007), *Do You See What I See?* (2006), *Reflection of Something* (2005), *Grace Like Rain* (2003)

What Parents Should Know: Agnew's songs will make kids think. *Better Questions* is a passionate response to tough questions about God, such as "Why does God still care for us when we keep messing up?" It's obvious that Agnew wrestles with the very questions he poses.

What Agnew Says: "I'm just trying to get some questions out there, the questions people are afraid to ask in church, but also to get the questions asked sincerely and without anger."

Discussion Questions: What questions do you have about God, faith, and heaven? Do those questions ever scare you? How comfortable are you answering your friends' questions about God? Is it okay to admit when you don't know the answers?

FILMWATCH

Movie: *My Best Friend's Girl* (releases Sept. 19)

Genre: Comedy

Rating: R (for strong, graphic language and sexual content, including some nudity)

Synopsis: Tank (Dane Cook), a master at offending women, hires himself out when guys get dumped. He takes the ex-girlfriend on the worst date of her life so she'll run back to her boyfriend. While trying to help his best friend, Tank meets Alexis (Kate Hudson), whom he ultimately falls for. Tank is torn between loyalty to his best friend and love for his best friend's girl.

Discussion Questions: How loyal are you to your friends? Would you do anything for them? Why or why not? What would you do if your best friend asked you to do something you know is wrong? Which is more important to you: love or friendship? Explain.



September 2008

	1	2	3	4	5	6
				7:00PM Parent Confirmation Meeting @ SHEL HAPPY BIRTHDAY AUGUSTE LAFRENIERE	4:30PM Senior High Hammon 08'	Senior High @ Hammo 08'
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
8:00AM &10:30AM Worship Services 9:15 Jr. & Sr. High Sunday School Classes			3:00PM- 5:00PM Confirmation Class			
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
8:00AM &10:30AM Worship Services 9:15 Jr. & Sr. High Sunday School Classes		HAPPY BIRTHDAY BILLY LORENZEN	3:00PM- 5:00PM Confirmation Class			
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
8:00AM &10:30AM Worship Services 9:15 Jr. & Sr. High Sunday School Classes	HAPPY BIRTHDAY PAUL WOODMAN		3:00PM- 5:00PM Confirmation Class		4:30PM MIDDLE SCHOOL FALL FLING @ CAMP CALUMET	MIDDLE SCHOOL FALL FLING @ CAMP CALUMET
28	29	30				
8:00AM &10:30AM Worship Services 9:15 Jr. & Sr. High Sunday School Classes						

SUMMER FUN IN THE SUN 08' ENDS WITH A BANG

Summer Fun in the Sun 08' at SHELC ended with a bang. This summer we had plenty of fun, lots of laughs, and we met many new friends that we hope to see at our future events. Our summer activities included cook outs, swimming, volleyball, mini-golf, bowling, laser tag, and ice-cream. As we look ahead to next summer we are thinking of adding to our list of fun activities a baseball game and a fun yack trip.

CONFIRMATION NEWS AND UPDATES

Parents be reminded of the Parent Confirmation meeting on Thursday September 4th at 7:00PM at the church. Also, Confirmation Class kicks off on Wednesday September 10th at 3:00PM and concludes at 5:00PM.

Final Details for Senior High Hammo 08'

- 1) Dates: September 5th-7th – Plan on meeting at SHELC on Friday September 5th at 4:30PM and we will return around 2:00PM on Sunday September 7th.
- 2) What to bring- Pack light, clothing for 2 days, shorts, bathing suits, towels, toiletries, warm clothes for evenings, sleeping bag, and pillow.
- 3) WHAT NOT TO BRING- CELL PHONES, IPODS, MP3 PLAYERS. If I see or hear anything they are mine.
- 4) Meals- Please bring \$5.00 for pizza on Saturday night, Lunch on Saturday will be provided by The Hartford Chapter of Thrivent. You will receive a phone call from me asking to donate something for the rest of our meals.
- 5) Connecticut Food Drive- Every year at Sunday morning worship canned goods are collected to be donated to local Connecticut Food Banks. This year I am asking parents to donate any canned goods that they would like to share in this love offering. Please go to www.nesynod.org, click on events, click on Hammonasset, click on food drive to see a list of food items to donate.
- 6) Cost: \$40.00 due on Friday September 5th. Please make checks payable to SHELC.

- 7) Forms- Please go to www.nesynod.org, click on events, click on Hammonasset, print out youth health and permission forms, fill them out, and bring them on Friday September 5th.
- 8) Sleeping Arrangements: The girls are in the Chambers 8 person camper and the Lafreniere's 6 person camper. The senior boys (Christian O'Neil, Ronny Sundstrom, and Auguste Lafreniere with Paul Lafrenier) are in The Winnabago. The rest of the boys must bring an air mattress because they are in tents.(Garrett Crowe, Adam Svinland, Spencer Leganani, Ryan Blejewski).
- 9) Any Questions do not hesitate to call Scott- 651-8691.

MIDDLE SCHOOL FALL FLING @ CALUMET

Our middle school Fall Fling at Camp Calumet is scheduled for September 26th-28th. While on this retreat there will be inspirational worship and teaching on the theme "One Way! Jesus". We will be able to share our faith stories in small group discussions and activity sessions with other youth from throughout New England. There will be games, campfires, ice-cream socials, and free time recreational options on Saturday afternoon. You will be able to make new friends and enjoy awesome Calumet meals. The total cost for this weekend is \$95.00. I am asking for the \$95.00 registration fee to be due on Sunday September 14th. Please make checks payable to SHELC and submit them to Scott.