

Ten Ways to Help Your Child Deal With Peer Pressure

Peer influence begins when children are young—and increases as they grow older. It is natural and healthy for children to rely more on friends as they mature. Sometimes peer pressure can be harmless, but sometimes it can cause children to do poorly in school or to experiment with drugs or alcohol.

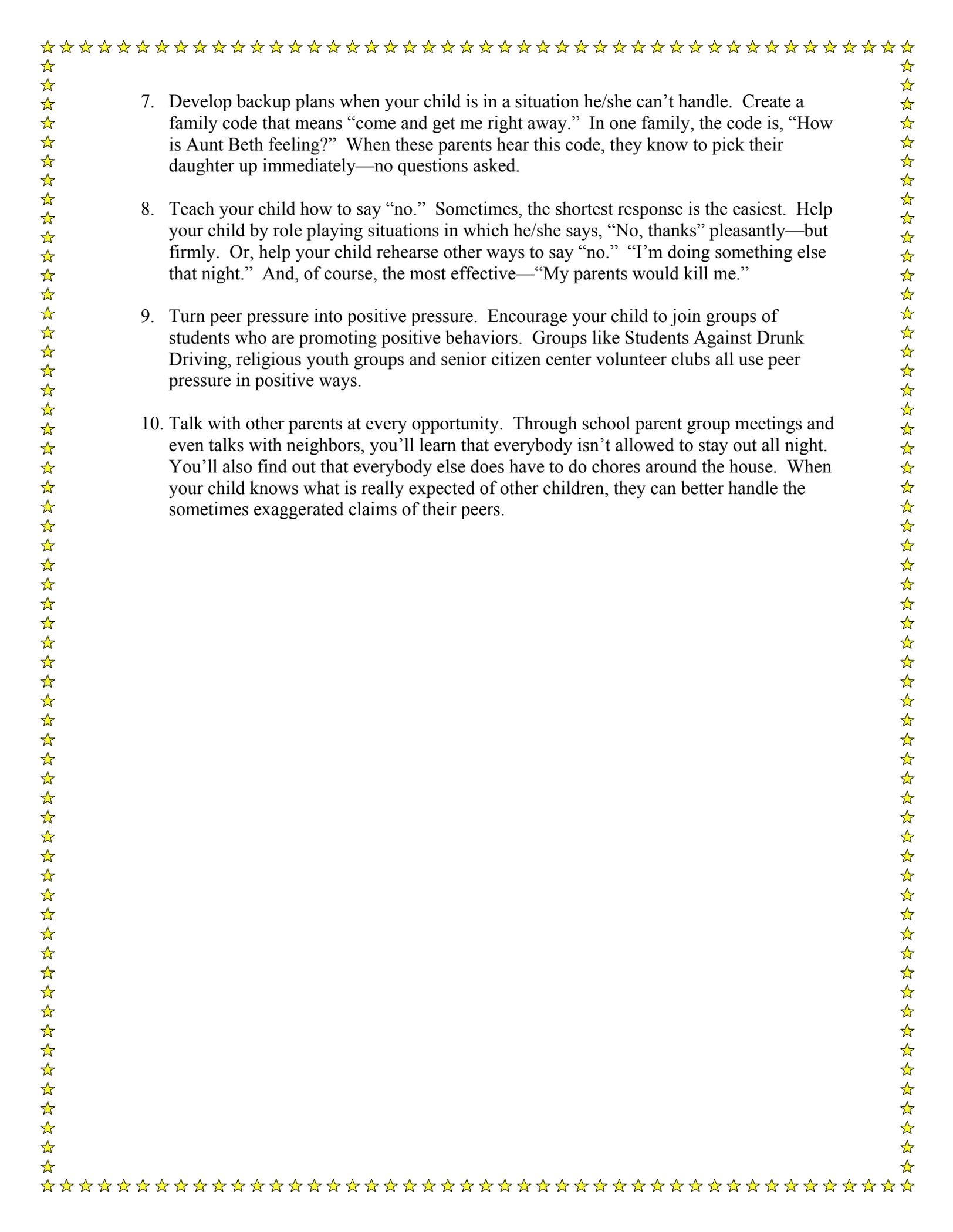
How Can You Help Your Child Deal With Peer Pressure?

1. Help your child develop self-confidence. Students who feel good about themselves are less likely to give in to pressure from others.

Ask your child for his/her opinion often. “What do you think we should do tomorrow?”
“I need to decide who to vote for in the election next week. Help me look over these articles and figure out who I should support.”

When parents show children that they value their opinions, children’s self-confidence grows. Help your child see that he/she is capable of making good judgments for himself/herself. He/She will be less likely to be blindly swayed by peer pressure.

2. Encourage your child to take part in positive activities. Activities like music, athletics, Scouts or other youth groups can boost your child’s self esteem. Your child will be surrounded by peers who share these positive interests. After-school activities can also occupy the time your child might otherwise spend in negative pursuits.
3. Listen to your child. Our goal is for our children to make wise decisions because they want to do the right thing. That means parents have to help children develop responsible attitudes about important issues. The best way is to spend time talking with children about important issues. If you watch a television program that deals with peer pressure, talk about it later with your child.
4. Encourage your child to suggest other things to do. If a friend is offering alcohol or drugs, it’s tough to say no. Instead, your child can make other suggestions. “Let’s go see a movie.”
5. Get to know your child’s friends. Turn your house into the after-school or weekend hangout. For the price of some pizzas or popcorn, you can learn who is influencing your child.
6. Teach your child to foresee situations that may lead to trouble. An invitation to a place that will have no adult supervision, or hanging around with kids who use drugs can lead to “sticky” situations.

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7. Develop backup plans when your child is in a situation he/she can't handle. Create a family code that means "come and get me right away." In one family, the code is, "How is Aunt Beth feeling?" When these parents hear this code, they know to pick their daughter up immediately—no questions asked.
 8. Teach your child how to say "no." Sometimes, the shortest response is the easiest. Help your child by role playing situations in which he/she says, "No, thanks" pleasantly—but firmly. Or, help your child rehearse other ways to say "no." "I'm doing something else that night." And, of course, the most effective—"My parents would kill me."
 9. Turn peer pressure into positive pressure. Encourage your child to join groups of students who are promoting positive behaviors. Groups like Students Against Drunk Driving, religious youth groups and senior citizen center volunteer clubs all use peer pressure in positive ways.
 10. Talk with other parents at every opportunity. Through school parent group meetings and even talks with neighbors, you'll learn that everybody isn't allowed to stay out all night. You'll also find out that everybody else does have to do chores around the house. When your child knows what is really expected of other children, they can better handle the sometimes exaggerated claims of their peers.