Today, we will talk about . . .

• Peer pressure & common perceptions
• What it means for different ages
• How it fits with injury prevention
• Strategies for working with parents & youth
• Resources
Where do you work?

1. Rural
2. Suburban
3. Urban
Which one describes your work?

1. Public health
2. Emergency responders
3. Law enforcement
4. Pediatricians
5. Child care
6. Fire safety/fighters
7. Red Cross
8. Water safety
9. Other
Friends are important at every age!
Peer Influence: 8 - 14 years of age

- Exists to some degree for all ages
- Greater independence
- Sharp rise in concern about peer acceptance in middle childhood
- Typical teen characteristics appear earlier
- Becomes more important in early adolescence
- Peer pressure peak – about 9th grade
Common Perceptions of Peer Pressure

Are they true or false?
Teens are not all the same in their susceptibility to peer influence.

1. True
2. False
Teens are not all the same in their susceptibility to peer influence.

*True*

- What makes a difference
  - Individual characteristics
  - Gender & age
  - The situation
Peer pressure can be both positive and negative.

1. True
2. False
Peer pressure can be both positive and negative. **True**

“The real question is not *whether* adolescents will feel peer pressure, but *what kind* of pressure they will feel.”

(Steinberg, 2011)
Peers lead the adolescent astray.

1. True
2. False
Peers lead the adolescent astray. *False*

- If there is negative peer influence, we need to look at why the teen chose those friends.
- Teens choose friends based on similar interests.
- Younger children select best friends with similar levels of tolerance for risk taking.
Teens are influenced far more by peers than by parents on every issue.

1. True
2. False
Teens are influenced far more by peers than by parents on every issue. **False**

- Teens are influenced by *peers* on current pop culture choices.
- Teens are influenced by *parents* on long-term choices.
Peer pressure for teens is very direct, in your face.

1. True
2. False
Peer pressure is very direct, in your face.  

False

• Peer pressure occurs in many forms.
  – Verbal, non-verbal
  – Influence will vary by who the source is
  – Self-induced

“All the guys are going to try it. But….I don’t know. I’m worried I won’t be able to.”

(6th grade boy talking about a skateboard trick)
Fig. 1. Hypothetical graph of development of logical reasoning abilities versus psychosocial maturation. Although logical reasoning abilities reach adult levels by age 16, psychosocial capacities, such as impulse control, future orientation, or resistance to peer influence, continue to develop into young adulthood.

(Steinberg 2007)
Knowledge

↓

Behavior
Working with Parents

• How would parents respond to these statements?
• Do parents blame children’s actions on peer pressure?
• Is there a gap between how parents might answer (knowledge) and how they will parent their child (behavior)?
• What information do parents need?
What can you encourage parents to do?

• Share values & standards
• Encourage independence & decision making at home
• Talk with children about possible situations
• Be a good role model in safety behaviors
• Know children’s friends
• Build their own confidence
Working with Youth

• Focus on healthy exploration that facilitates positive youth development
• Provide a safe, supervised environment
• Provide a support system for youth to fall back on
• Target groups as opposed to individuals
• Foster a shared sense of responsibility
• Encourage self awareness & problem solving
• Consider other teaching models
“Stepping Out”

- Cross – age teaching
- Youth teaching youth
- Curriculum;
  - Health, nutrition, & physical activity
  - 10 lessons
Cross – age teaching

• Committed adult mentor
• High expectations for the teen teachers
• Quality training of youth teachers
  (Lee, Murdock, & Paterson, 1996)
• Strong curriculum, attention to detail, team building, feedback, evaluation, recognition & reward
The Big Picture of Childhood Risk-taking

Cognitive

Emotional

Brain Dev.

Social

Risk-taking
Peer Influence & Injury Prevention

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Resources

• University of Minnesota Extension Online resources:  www.extension.umn.edu/family
  – Teen Talk free fact sheets
  – Parenting younger children
• Parent Further – Search Institute
  www.parentfurther.com/parenting/friends
• Parenting 24/7 – University of Illinois Extension
  http://parenting247.org
References:


