

ACTIVITY: HOW TO HAVE A FUN AND HEALTHY LIFESTYLE WITHOUT SUBSTANCES

Grade Levels: 7–9

Activity Overview:

Students explore situations where there might be pressure to use substances and get creative to develop and pitch solutions for reducing this pressure and having fun without consuming substances.

Materials:

- Types of Peer Pressure page from [Responding to Risk](#)
- [Fun Up, Pressure Down Judging Sheet](#)



Activity Description

Part 1: Substance Settings Brainstorm

- Tell students this activity will support them with developing strategies for how to be more comfortable and have fun in spaces and settings where people may be using substances, even if they choose not to use substances themselves.
- Ask your students to think about one type of setting, context, or situation where they might find people using substances like alcohol, cannabis or other drugs.
 - In case students are stuck, you can suggest parties (try to be specific: birthday party, backyard party, field party, house party, pre-prom party or end-of-year party), music concerts, BBQs, park visits, dinnertime, bars or restaurants, sleepovers, camping, walk home from school, recess, school or community dance, etc.
- Invite students up one by one to play a game of charades. Explain the following:
 - Students will act out one situation where they might see the use of alcohol, cannabis or other drugs occurring. Everyone else in the class will try to guess the setting they are acting out.
 - Once someone guesses correctly, the setting will be written somewhere everyone can see it like a blackboard, whiteboard or chart paper.
 - The next student will act out a new setting, the rest of the class will guess until someone is correct, and the setting will be written down.
 - Continue until you have a list of at least 10 different settings, or students have no more ideas.

- As a full class, review the list of settings and talk about pressure to use substances in these settings. Use the “Types of Peer Pressure” handout from [Responding to Risk](#) activity to discuss the different types of peer pressure (spoken, unspoken, direct, indirect) and how pressure can be positive or negative. You can also highlight that it may not be pressure from other people but the personal desire to fit in that applies pressure to use substances.

Part 2: The Pitch

- Share with students that they are going to develop an idea for an activity, strategy, or product that would help reduce pressure to use substances and increase their fun in social situations where substances may be present.

Note: To give students an introduction to an “invention pitch,” you might want to watch a quick video (for example, the first 1.5 minutes of this [Shark Tank](#) pitch for [The Measuring Shovel](#)).

- Divide students into small groups of 4–5 and explain the following:
 - Your goal is to work together to develop a “pitch” for an invention — this can be an activity, strategy, or product to take the pressure off using substances while still participating and boost fun (for example, bringing a “fortune teller” origami to start conversation, taking on a role or job at the event [like a greeter], learning a card trick to entertain people, etc.).
 - First, you will decide on the setting or context for your invention. Review the brainstorming sheet for ideas.
 - Then, you will work together to decide on the invention you want to develop and pitch.
 - Next, gather the props and materials you need for your pitch, and work as a group to practice how you will sell your invention to the rest of the class. Everyone must be involved somehow in the pitch presentation.
- When all groups are ready, hand out the [Fun Up, Pressure Down Judging Sheet](#) to all students.
- Explain that students will individually rate all the inventions. Look at the criteria on the sheet and prepare to give each invention a rating out of five for each criterion.
- Invite each group up one at a time to present their pitch to the rest of the class.
- Once all groups have completed their pitches, ask the small groups to come back together to compare their ratings for all the other groups’ inventions. Decide together on a final score that you will give each invention.
- As a class, you can identify the top three inventions and discuss how you can use them to reduce different kinds of pressure using the reflection questions below.

Want to take a deeper dive into practicing how to say no when offered substances?

Check out this activity: [Refusal Skills](#)



Inclusion Considerations

- **Content:** Acknowledge that everyone is different, and while some people might experience feelings of pressure in certain settings or situations, others may not; people with various skills, abilities, and personalities will feel included and a sense of belonging through different types of activities and strategies.
- **Activity Format:** Provide options for how students can participate in the charades brainstorm part of the activity if they are not comfortable acting out the situation (coming up with ideas for other students to act out, writing down the brainstormed settings, etc.)



Reflection Questions

1. In which settings do you feel the most pressure to use substances? Why do you think that is?
2. How could some of the inventions discussed today help you in social settings? Which ones do you like best? Which are the easiest to use?
3. What are some other ways you can have fun with friends that don't include using substances at all?

Fun Up, Pressure Down Judging Sheet

Name of Invention	Original Idea (1–5)	Fun (1–5)	Social (1–5)	Reduces Pressure (1–5)	TOTAL Score (# / 20)
#1:					
#2:					
#3:					
#4:					
#5:					
#6:					