

Hope for Children International



Youths: Resisting Peer Pressure and Being Assertive

Planning for the future

Training Manual for Peer Advocates For Life Skills (PALS)

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Total Time:	110 minutes
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Main Objectives

1. To develop youths' skills in communicating assertively in order to resist peer pressure.
2. To help youths appreciate how it feels to be harassed.
3. To develop youths' skills in building self-esteem.

Expected Outcomes

1. Youths understand consequences of peer pressure and know how to resist it.
2. Youths can empathize with those harassed.
3. Youths will appreciate the importance of high self-esteem.

Top Five List

Below are the top five messages or facts that we must want youths to remember from today's session. Be very enthusiastic every time you talk about the Top Five List. It is important stuff!

1. **Have high self-esteem and self-respect so that your peers will respect you and not influence you negatively.**
2. **Learn to act assertively to resist peer pressure.** Acting assertively means standing up for what you want or believe in.
3. **Just because your peers are doing something, does not make it the right choice for you.** Rely on your own values and make your own decisions.
4. **It is wrong if a person touches you against your will, tries to force you into sex or spreads rumors about you.**
5. **Do not engage in sexual harassment because it is destructive and hurtful.**

Dream Team ***(10 minutes)***

PAL 1:

“It is time to pick a Dream Team for this session. We need 3 – 5 volunteers to share their dreams with us and tell us about even the smallest thing someone might have done towards achieving his or her dream. Who wants to be on this Dream Team?”

Choose 3 – 5 volunteers and ask them to stand up in front of the class.

PAL 2:

“Welcome Dream Team members. Please take turns sharing your dream and something you have done this week towards reaching that dream. After you have taken your turn sharing, we will give you a Dream Team necklace to wear. Please continue standing up here with us until the entire Team has had their turn and received a necklace.”

“Who can go first?”

Give each volunteer a necklace to wear right after they share with the group. All Dream Team members should remain standing until the activity is completed. Once all Dream Team members have shared, read the following statement.

PAL 1:

“Thank you to all of our Dream Team members for sharing your dreams and accomplishments. Please wear your Dream Team necklaces for the rest of the session to show that you take your dreams seriously. We are so happy to see that you are all taking your dreams seriously and making an effort to reach them. Keep it up!”

Puppet Theatre & Discussion (10 minutes)

PAL 2:

"Today we are going to talk about peer pressure, that is, pressure from one's friends or age mates to do things that you do not really want to do. We will also be developing skills to handle peer pressure and to clearly communicate one's needs and desires.

"Susan recently experienced some peer pressure. Let us listen as Susan is pressurized by one of her friends to skip school, hang out, and smoke with some older boys."

PALS perform the skit using the dialogue below:

Dialogue:

Esther: Susan, I am glad I found you! You **MUST** come with me... we have been invited by a group of Form 4 boys to skip school and go to the bar this afternoon.

Susan: Oh, I do not know... I have classes until 4 o'clock, and then I have tasks to do at home.

Esther: Oh Susan, you are such a child! Come on, don't you want to spend time with these mature boys? That is why you have never had a boyfriend. You are like a big baby!

Susan: I am not a child. I am 16 years old. I just do not know. What if we get caught?

Eunice: You do not have to worry, it will be fine! You will be home in time for work. Come on, do not be such a coward. You are already a mature lady, and you have never even kissed a boy.

Susan: Ummm.... Well....OK.

"Later, in the bar..."

Esther: I am so glad you came, Susan. Here take a puff of this cigarette. It will make you feel great.

Susan: I am not sure I want to try it.

Esther: Ha ha! You silly girl. You are the only one here who has not smoked any. What are you afraid of? It is very sweet. Trust me.

Susan: I guess I can try a puff. (she takes a puff, and then swoons from side to side, coughing.) Oh, I feel so sick. I wish I had not done this.

PAL 1:

Ask youths the questions below. Call on volunteers after each question. Allow about 5 minutes for discussion.

“Why do you think Esther is pressurizing Susan?”

If youths have trouble thinking of ideas, suggest the following options:

- She knows what she is doing is bad and she thinks she will feel better if she is not the only one.
- She wants Susan to be like her.
- She thinks what she is doing is fun so her friends should enjoy it, too.

“How do you think Susan could have resisted the pressure?”

If youths have trouble thinking of ideas, suggest the following options:

- She could have told Esther the repercussions of smoking.
- She could have walked away instead of staying for arguments.
- She could have recognized that those activities would distract her from her goals and make her lose focus.

PAL 2:

“From this skit, we can see that resisting peer pressure is very challenging, but that giving in can have serious outcomes. Unfortunately, Susan learned this the hard way when she set aside her goals and responsibilities and gave in to Esther’s pressures. Susan, like all of us, must remember that just because her friends are doing something, it does not mean that she has to do it. By learning how to assert ourselves, we will be able to resist peer pressure in the future.”

Top Five List

(5 minutes)

PAL 1:

“The role play brought up a lot of important points about peer pressure and trying to stand up for what you want. This Top Five List has more important information on resisting peer pressure and being assertive.

PAL 2: Number 1: Have high self-esteem and self-respect so that your peers will respect you and not influence you negatively.

PAL 1: Number 2: Learn to act assertively to resist peer pressure. Acting assertively means standing up for what you want or believe in.

PAL 2: Number 3: Just because your peers are doing something, does not make it the right choice for you. Rely on your own values and make your own decisions.

PAL 1: Number 4: It is wrong if a person touches you against your will, tries to force you into sex or spreads rumours about you.

PAL 2: Number 5: Do not engage in sexual harassment because it is destructive and hurtful.

Lecturette & Discussion

(5 minutes)

PAL 1:

“Most people want company when they are doing something they know is not quite right. They feel that the ‘wrongness’ is somehow less if someone else is doing it with them. When their friends do something daring with them, they feel less worried about the risks involved and can just relax. That is why they can put so much pressure on you.”

PAL 2:

“What can you do if your friends are pressurizing you?”

Look for the following answers from youths. Read those they do not mention.

- “Tell your friend that what he or she is doing is risky.”
- “Be clear to your friend about what you want.
- Show your friend that you know your own mind and no amount of pleading will make you change your mind.”
- “Walk away if your friend continues to pressurize you or starts to abuse you or laugh at you. A good friend should not do this.
- Do not bother trying to discuss it further.”
- “Reconsider whether you want to stay friends with this person or group. It is hard to lose a friend, but it is better than doing something risky or against your values.”

Group Activity: Being Assertive

(15 minutes)

PAL 1:

“Today’s session is focusing on peer pressure and how to resist being talked into doing something that you do not want to do. To begin, we are going to talk about being assertive, which means communicating your ideas with clarity and strength.

PAL 2:

“In previous sessions we have learned about many things like pursuing your dreams, avoiding STIs, and using family planning methods. To do all of these things, you need to be able to resist peer pressure and sexual pressure. One way to do this is to communicate assertively.”

PAL 1:

“Now we are going to measure our levels of assertiveness. I will read about a situation. Listen carefully, then turn to your neighbour and discuss what would be your response. Then wait for more instructions.”

Situation:

“Edith has been standing in the queue at the post office for 30 minutes. She is getting anxious because she knows her mother is waiting for her to bring home meat for dinner and the post office is about to close. Then three boys enter the post office, spot one of their friends in the queue ahead of Edith, and join him. Each boy has a parcel. What do you think Edith should do? You have two minutes to discuss this with your neighbour.”

PAL 2:

Give students 2 minutes to discuss their response with their neighbour. Then ask youths to stand up and move around the room to form three groups based on the following criteria:

“All who agreed that they would do nothing, move to the right side of the room. That is Group 1.”

“All who agreed they would be annoyed and say something rude to those three boys, move to the left side of the room. This is Group 2.”

“All who agreed that they would politely ask the three boys to go to the end of the queue, move to the center of the room. This is Group 3.”

Have the youths all move to their parts of the room before reading the next section.

“Group 1, you engaged in passive behaviour.

“Group 2, you engaged in aggressive behaviour.

“Group 3, you engaged in assertive behaviour. Congratulations!”

Have everyone return to his or her seat.

PAL 1:

“What do you think is meant by passive?”

Call on 1 - 2 volunteers, then read the definition of passive.

“A passive response means that you say or do nothing. This is not usually in your best interest, because it allows other people either to ignore you or to violate your rights. However, sometimes a passive response is the most appropriate because it would be dangerous to draw attention to yourself. It is important to assess whether a situation can be dangerous and choose the response most likely to keep you safe.”

PAL 2:

“What do you think is meant by aggressive?”

Call on 1 - 2 volunteers, then read the definition of aggressive.

“An aggressive response means asking for what you want or saying how you feel in a threatening way that may hurt the feelings of other people. Such a response could lead to increased conflict and could unnecessarily harm another person’s feelings.”

PAL 1:

“What do you think is meant by assertive?”

Call on a 1 - 2 volunteers, then read the definition of assertive,

“An assertive response is usually the best response. An assertive response allows you to stand up for what you want or believe in, without putting the other person down or being rude. It means speaking in a firm, honest and respectful way that does not threaten someone else.”

PAL 2:

“Think about a recent situation in your own life where you have been passive or aggressive. How might you have been assertive instead? Let us first have some ideas about how you might have been more assertive with friends.”

Call on 3 – 4 volunteers.

“Now let us consider how we might have been more assertive with our relatives, such as older sisters or brothers.”

Call on 3 – 4 volunteers.

“Next let us think about how we might have been more assertive with our parents, while still showing them our respect.”

Call on 3 – 4 volunteers.

“Finally, let us consider how we might have been more assertive with our teachers, while still giving them our full attention.”

Call on 3 – 4 volunteers.

PAL 1:

“We hope that this activity has helped you to see that there are many situations where it is good for you to be more assertive. You should practice being more assertive with your friends, relatives and teachers. Remember that an assertive person is also polite and respectful.

The Blindfold Game

(20 minutes)

[NB: The nature of the Blindfold game should NOT be revealed to youths ahead of time. The success of the game depends on the youths not knowing what is going to happen next.]

PAL 2:

“Now we are going to play a game that involves blindfolding. For this game we need a large group of volunteers. First everyone will count off ‘1’ or ‘2,’ starting now.

Have youths count off “1” or “2.”

“All the 2’s, please come to the front of the room and turn around to face the rest of the group. Cover your eyes with your hands. Who is ticklish? By ticklish, I mean that you laugh or giggle when someone touches, or tickles, you on your tummy, feet, neck or other places. If you are not ticklish, you can sit down.”

Give youths who are not ticklish time to return to their seats.

“Where are you most ticklish? Tell us if it is under your feet, neck, ribs...?”

Have each youth say where they are most ticklish. Remind them to keep their eyes covered.

“Who wants to be tickled right now? If you do not, take one step backward.”

If any youths seem willing to be tickled, have them return to their seats.

PAL 1:

Move near to the group and say:

“Are you sure you do not want to be tickled?”

Let the youths respond, then ask the audience:

“What do the rest of you think? Should we tickle them?”

Silently encourage the audience to say, “Yes”. But do not allow anyone from the audience to tickle anyone who is blindfolded. Move a little closer to the group and say:

“I think you really want to be tickled. Don’t you think it would be fun?”

The discomfort of those who are blindfolded should be more apparent. Move closer so that you are very close to them, then say:

“I think you really do want to be tickled and you are just saying ‘No’ for fun. I am just going to tickle you since I know that is what you want.”

Give youths time to react to you, then let them return to their seats.

PAL 2:

“OK, you can uncover your eyes now and return to your seats.”

PAL 1:

“Thank you very much to our volunteers for taking part in this activity. Now, let’s talk about our reactions and feelings to this activity, and how we feel about being pressurized to do something we do not want to do.”

Begin a discussion with the group by asking the questions below. Allow time for youths who were “blindfolded” and youths who were not “blindfolded” to share their opinions of the situation. Start with those who were in the audience.

“For those who stayed seated,

- what were you thinking as you watched?”
- “Did you think that the ones standing wanted to be tickled?”
- “Why or why not?”
- “Did you think this activity was fun for them?”

“For those who were blindfolded,

- would you agree that it was fun or did you find it to be uncomfortable?”
- “How did you feel when the entire group said you should be tickled? Did this make you nervous at all?”

- “How did it feel when we said we were going to tickle you, even though you had clearly stated that you did NOT want to be tickled?”

PAL 2:

“This game is meant to help everyone to appreciate that you may be assuming that others are having fun when they are not. In fact, nobody should be touched when they do not desire it. When you insist on touching an unwilling person, you actually hurt them physically and psychologically. It can be a very traumatic experience. If a person says no, it means No! We all need to remember this.”

Activity: Building Self-Esteem

(10 minutes)

PAL 1:

“Now, let us talk about something that can help us to be assertive. It is self-esteem. Self-esteem describes how people feel about themselves.

High self-esteem means people feel good about themselves and are confident. Persons with high self-esteem will be less likely to fall under another person’s pressure. They will feel more confident that their own decision is the right one and will make choices based on their own desires, and not the desires and values of others.”

Low self-esteem is the opposite. People with low self-esteem lack confidence and often feel very badly about themselves. Persons with low self-esteem will be more likely to fall under the influence of others and be submissive, not trusting their own values or decisions.”

PAL 2:

“Take a minute to think about someone you know that has high self-esteem.”

Allow youths about 30 seconds to think of a person.

“Now we would like 2 – 3 volunteers to describe the person you thought of and share with us why you think that person has high self-esteem. Who will go first?”

Let 2 – 3 volunteers share, then continue.

PAL 1:

“Having high self-esteem helps us resist peer pressure. Unfortunately, there are so many times when our self-esteem is lowered.”

“How do you think a person’s friends can damage their self-esteem?”

Call on 3 – 4 volunteers. If youths have trouble thinking of ideas, offer the following suggestions:

- They make fun of you.
- They do not invite you to go someplace with them.

PAL 2:

“How about a boyfriend or girlfriend? How do you think they can lower a person’s self-esteem?”

Call on 3 – 4 volunteers. If youths have trouble thinking of ideas, offer the following suggestions:

- They do not ask your opinion.
- They have many other boyfriends or girlfriends.

PAL 1:

“What about one’s parents?”

Call on 3 – 4 volunteers. If youths have trouble thinking of ideas, offer the following suggestions:

- They do not comment when you have done something well.
- They shout at you in front of your friends.

PAL 2:

“What about a person’s teachers?”

Call on 3 – 4 volunteers. If youths have trouble thinking of ideas, offer the following suggestions:

- You try hard but your teacher does not recognize it.
- Your teacher accuses you of cheating.

PAL 1:

“It is easy to see how one can develop low self-esteem. But how do we build high self-esteem? Remember, we need to build self-esteem so that we stay focused on our goals, avoid risky behaviours and resist peer pressure.”

“Let us begin by thinking about how we can help others build their self-esteem. How would you help build a friend’s self-esteem?”

Call on 3 – 4 volunteers. If youths have trouble thinking of ideas, offer the following suggestions:

- Encourage them to be focused to reach their goals.
- Let them know how important they are to you.
- Congratulate them when they do something good.

PAL 2:

“Lastly, how can we build our own self-esteem? How can we build the self-esteem we need to avoid distractions, protect our health, and stay focused on our goals?”

Call on 3 – 4 volunteers. If youths have trouble thinking of ideas, offer the following suggestions:

- Remind ourselves of our accomplishments.
- Ask the people that are close to us to encourage us and to remind us of those things that we are good at.
- Do not take unkind things that people say so seriously.

PAL 1:

“Now, think about all the things that have made you feel good about yourself lately, including people and situations. Write down five of these things in your Journal. You have five minutes to complete this activity then we will have a few volunteers share their experiences with us.”

Give youths at least 5 minutes to write in their Journals five things that recently made them feel good. Then call on 2 – 3 volunteers to share with the group.

PAL 2:

“It is easier to communicate your wishes and ideas clearly when you have high self-esteem. Remember that having high self-esteem and respecting yourself is the first and most important step towards dealing effectively with peer pressure.”

Lecturette: Sexual Harassment

(5 minutes)

PAL 1:

“Pressure can come in many forms. As we saw with Esther and Susan, it can come from friends. As we saw with the blindfold game, it can come from your peers or a romantic partner. One form of pressure is called sexual harassment. Who can define sexual harassment?”

Call on 1 – 2 volunteers. Then read the following definition:

“Sexual harassment includes sexual remarks or touching in a sexual manner that cause physical or emotional discomfort. If a girl is constantly whistled at by boys, so that she hesitates to walk somewhere that is sexual harassment. If a teacher threatens to give a student bad marks if he or she does not engage in sex that is sexual harassment. If a boss at work or a relative or neighbour touches a person in a sexual way against his or her wishes that is sexual harassment.”

PAL 2:

“In many situations, someone who experiences sexual harassment may think they have encouraged this behaviour, and may not realize that they are not to blame. A person being sexually harassed is not to be blamed. They are being victimized.”

PAL 1:

“If we think we are being sexually harassed, what could we do?”

Ask 3 – 4 youths to give examples of what could be done. Then read the following.

“There are many things you can do.

- First, if you think you are able, you can tell the harasser directly that his or her actions are unwelcome and inappropriate, and that you should not be treated like that.

- If this does not work, or you are in a difficult situation, we recommend that you tell those whom you trust what is happening to you. They could accompany you in confronting the harasser.
- If the harassment continues, you should inform someone who can help you take action against the harasser. This might be a parent, school master, or police officer. The most important thing is not to be passive about it, and to deal with the situation immediately when it arises.”

Positive Behaviour Modeling: Being Assertive

(20 minutes)

PAL 2:

"It is time for puppet theatre. Let us welcome Esther and Susan to perform a skit for us."

PALS perform the skit using the dialogue below:

Dialogue¹:

Esther: Hi, Susan! I want you to come to a party with me tonight. I told you about this new guy, James, didn't I?

Susan: Yes, you did.

Esther: Well, he is going out with us tonight. The guy is so rich. And he is quite generous, too.

Susan: Well, I do not care if he is rich, because I am going to make a lot of money myself.

Esther: Yeah, right. That is in 10 years' time. When are you ever going to link up with the right guy if you do not start going out?

Susan: Esther, I do not want to end up depending on a guy for everything. Anyway, I need to study tonight.

Esther: Don't you want to have a boyfriend? They can give you so many nice things.

Susan: Look, I have always wanted to be a scientist. Right now I need to stay focused on my dream. I have my own agenda and I feel good about it.

¹ This dialogue is based on a skit from the *Stepping Out: Video and Discussion Guide*, by Family Care International © 2000.

Esther: I do not believe this! I do not believe you can be so green sometimes.
OK, see you tomorrow.

PAL 1:

Ask youths the following questions. Call on 2 – 3 volunteers.

- "How did Susan resist pressure from Esther?"

Call on 3 – 4 volunteers. If youths have trouble thinking of ideas, offer the following suggestions:

- Susan was assertive with Esther.
- She stood firm on her values.
- "Of the two girls, whom do you admire and why?"

PAL 2:

"Now we are going to have a chance to practice being assertive, and asking for what we want or need, or standing up for what we believe. This can be done through two basic ways of communicating:

- asking clearly for what you want
- refusing clearly what you do not want

"We will be asking for volunteers to role play these situations. Here is the first situation, involving a student, Grace, and her teacher."

Role Play 1:

Grace

- Grace is in Form 1.
- Grace is a good student.
- She prefers to earn her marks through hard work.

Teacher

- Grace is your student.
- You would like to kiss her.
- After class you tell her that her grades will suffer if she does not kiss you.

"Who will be Grace? Who will be the teacher?"

After the role play, call on 2 – 3 volunteers to answer the following questions.

- "Do you think this student can resist this harassment on her own?"
- "If not, what could she do to get help?"

Call on 3 – 4 volunteers. If youths have trouble thinking of ideas, offer the following suggestions:

- Tell her parents or another teacher.
- Report the matter to the school principal.

PAL 1:

"Here is the second situation, involving two boys, Kevin and James."

Role Play 2:

Joe

- Joe is having an affair with an older woman who gives him gifts and pocket money.
- That woman has a friend who also wants a young boyfriend.
- Joe wants his friend, James, to have an affair with this other woman.

James

- Joe says he has a girlfriend for you.
- You are not interested in a relationship where money is exchanged for sex.

"Who will be Joe? Who will be James?"

After the role play, call on 2 – 3 volunteers to answer the following questions.

"What is the danger of being in this kind of relationship?"

"What else could James say to convince Joe he is not interested?"

Call on 3 – 4 volunteers. If youths have trouble thinking of ideas, offer the following suggestions:

- Explain that he has enough money from his parents.
- He does not want to worry about contracting an STI, including HIV.
- He prefers to work hard to get his own money.

PAL 2:

"We now see clearly how to communicate assertively and not be the victim of peer pressure. Practice these techniques with your friends and build your self-esteem."

Top Five List (10 minutes)

PAL 1:

"Our lesson today has been about resisting unwanted pressure by being assertive and stating clearly what you want. Now we will review today's Top Five List for you. We will say it slowly so that you can write it down in your Dreams & Goals Journal."

PAL 2: Number 1: **Have high self-esteem and self-respect so that your peers will respect you and not influence you negatively.**

PAL 1: Number 2: **Learn to act assertively to resist peer pressure.**
Acting assertively means standing up for what you want or believe in.

PAL 2: Number 3: **Just because your peers are doing something, does not make it the right choice for you.** Rely on your own values and make your own decisions.

PAL 1: Number 4: **It is wrong if a person touches you against your will, tries to force you into sex or spreads rumours about you.**

PAL 2: Number 5: **Do not engage in sexual harassment because it is destructive and hurtful.**

PAL 1:

"Remember that the Y4Y PALs are always available to answer your questions. Please put any questions you may have in the Question Pocket, so that we can tell you the answers later. Also remember to write down in your Dreams & Goals Journals anything you do that brings you closer to achieving your goals."

"And do not forget, there are now adolescent friendly services in your community. Please ask a PAL if you have any questions about these facilities."

Read aloud the information in the box below. If they have further questions, ask the youths to write them down and put them in the Question Pocket.

Special Topics: Alcohol and Drug Use

Drug use is a bad problem. In fact, some drugs like alcohol and cigarettes are so common in society that we do not even think of them as drugs. But alcohol and cigarettes are drugs, and people often misuse them.

Alcohol is the most common drug in Africa and all over the world. It may not seem frightening because it can be found in your community. Alcohol makes it difficult to think clearly. Sometimes you become angry and aggressive or you cannot communicate clearly. If you are not used to alcohol or drink too much, you may vomit or become unconscious.

The long-term impact of heavy alcohol use is very serious. You can become addicted, and find that you cannot live without it. It can destroy families, wreck careers, and lead to health problems such as brain damage and liver disease.

People also abuse other drugs like marijuana, heroin or glue. These drugs can cause sleepiness, vomiting, and make you confused. The effects are dangerous. You lose your ability to make good choices.

As one African teenager said, "When I drink or smoke to get high, I forget about the dangers around me. I forget all about condoms. Therefore, I just have unprotected sex because of alcohol influence."

Adapted from You, Your Life, Your Dreams: A Book for Adolescents. Family Care International, 2000.

The End Folks!!!