

It's natural to want to fit in and to be a "part of the crowd." For some, being accepted by their peers comes easily. For others, it takes a greater effort.

There may come a time when your friends ask you to do something you know is wrong. Young people often are pressured to use alcohol or other drugs, to have sex, or participate in criminal activity. Learning good refusal skills and knowing how to use them can help you take control in a difficult situation and avoid trouble. Knowing what to do and say gives you confidence and the ability to assert yourself without fear of losing your friends.

Although saying "No" to your friends may seem difficult, it can be made simpler by using E. S. P.

E

Examine Your Surroundings

Sometimes it's hard to decide that "No" is the right answer, especially when you feel outnumbered. That's when it's important to observe the situation carefully.

WATCH for signs of danger. Start by asking yourself these questions:

- | Yes | No | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Do you see alcohol or other drugs? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are there kids who have a reputation of getting into trouble? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Is the party or event unsupervised? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Do you really know all the people involved? |

LISTEN for phrases that mean danger. Have you heard these before?

- | Yes | No | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | "Grow up." |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | "What are you waiting for?" |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | "If you were my friend, you'd say yes." |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | "If you loved me, you would." |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | "It's no big deal." |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | "Do you think you're too good for us?" |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | "What are you afraid of?" |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | "No one is going to find out." |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | "Don't be a chicken." |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | "Don't worry. We won't get caught." |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | "Everybody is doing it." |

*If a situation makes you feel uncomfortable or seems risky, **LEAVE!***

S

Select The Smart Choice

To make a smart choice, you first must weigh the outcome, good versus bad. Ask yourself:

- | Yes | No | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Will this hurt my reputation? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Does it break the law? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Can it harm my body? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Will it make my parents angry? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Can it have a negative impact on my future education or job opportunities? |

If you still find it difficult to make a decision you should **Ask For Help**. Advice from an older person who has already dealt with many of the problems you face can help you make a responsible decision. Try talking to an

older friend, a teacher, a relative, a neighbor, a coach, a member of the clergy or a school counselor.

If you've checked "Yes" to any of the questions or statements under "Examine Your Surroundings" or "Select the Smart Choice," then your best answer may be "No!"

P

Plan A Creative Response

There are many ways to say "No" without losing your friends or feeling left out. Be creative. Use your imagination!

Think of Something Better To Do

When faced with a friend who wants to do something harmful or illegal, suggest an alternative activity that will keep everyone out of trouble.

- "Let's go see a movie."
- "How about going to the game instead."
- "Isn't that great show on TV tonight."
- "Let's play basketball. I could use the practice."
- "I just bought a new CD. Do you want to hear it?"
- "I hear they just opened a new store in the mall. Let's go."

Give Your Friend A Compliment

Giving your friend a compliment can help make him think twice about his own decision. Try these;

- "I like you much better sober."
- "You're too smart to use drugs."
- "I'd hate to see someone with so much talent blow it."
- "A person with your brains should be a lawyer not a criminal."

Examine Your Surroundings

Select the Smart Choice

Plan a Creative Response