

4-H Grab and Go: My Social Life

Concept:

Family, peers, and culture influence and affect decisions.

Age/Grade Level:

Middle school: Ages 12-15

Education Standard:

National Health Education Standard 2: Analyze the influence of family, peers, culture, media, technology, and other factors on health behaviors.

Life Skill:

Decision Making, Healthy Life Choices, Self-Discipline, Self-Responsibility

Success Indicator:

Youth can identify social groups they belong to and how these groups influence their decisions.

National 4-H Curriculum:



**Health
Rocks!**

4-H ■ HEALTHY LIFE SERIES

PREPARATION

Time: 30 – 45 minutes

Space:

Large open classroom

Materials:

- 2 pieces of heavy string/yarn/rope (each about 10 feet long)
- Chalkboard/chalk or Flip-chart/markers

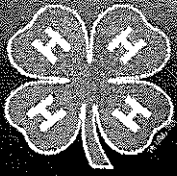
Background Information:

Youth are part of a very complex social structure. They often spend a great deal more time with peers and friends than with family. Peers have a lot of influence on how they act, think, and make choices. In this complex structure, there can be several levels, or social categories (See **Additional Notes/Extension/Glossary**).

Youth can belong to several different groups within each of these social categories, and they are influenced in some way by all of them. For instance, if a person hangs out occasionally with a member of a neighborhood gang, he or she may be considered a gang member. The stereotype of gang members is not necessarily positive, so the youth is influenced by not only the gang, but by what others think of that gang. To help youth avoid risky behavior such as the use of tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs, they need to learn how they are influenced and how those influences affect their choices.

Instructions:

1. Discuss with participants the different social categories (stereotypes, peers...). Have participants take turns sharing specific groups that might be in each social category until all have been shared. Write the group names on a chalkboard/flipchart under the specific social category.
2. Discuss the following questions:
 - Are groups listed where they should be?
 - What other groups need to be added?
3. Place the two pieces of heavy string in straight lines parallel to each other on the floor. The pieces should be far enough apart so all of the group can stand between the lines. Participants need to pretend they are on the "social bus" by standing between the two lines of string. They are going on a trip. When they reach a site, everyone must get off. They will have two choices and they need to get off on the side of the bus corresponding to their choice.
4. The first choice is pepperoni pizza on the left side of the bus or cheese pizza on the right side of the bus. So, if they choose pepperoni pizza, they get off on the left. If they choose cheese pizza, they get off on the right. Why did you make that choice?
5. Participants are to get "back on the bus." Ask them which they would choose: Chocolate ice cream - off on the left; strawberry ice cream - off on the right. Why did you make that choice?



Youth Development Tips:

One technique for getting more answers is to stop and wait for several seconds (count slowly to 10) for participants to think. Then ask for more answers several times. Don't be in a rush.

Open Ended Questions:

- Do you choose to be with certain groups because of similar interests or because of something else?
- The groups you belong to really define who you are. How do you feel about that?
- You are in a group that sometimes makes poor choices. Can you still make good choices and be part of that group? How?
- In the social bus activity you had to make choices. Were you influenced to make certain choices because of what others were doing? Why or why not?
- Why would it be easy to be influenced by a group to drink alcohol or use tobacco?
- How can you use what you learned to help others avoid risky behaviors?

6. Now, you will get "on and off the social bus" making the following choices:

<u>Left</u>		<u>Right</u>		<u>Left</u>		<u>Right</u>
6 th grader	OR	Current grade		Brain	OR	Techie
Art	OR	Honor student		Skater	OR	Goth
Preppie	OR	Techie		Bully	OR	Brain
Druggie	OR	Preppie		Band	OR	Drama
Jock	OR	Nerd		Nerd	OR	Druggie

As you make your choice, why did you choose as you did? Most of the groups that were called out have stereotypes associated with them. What is the stereotype you have of the different groups?

7. Discuss the following questions on who influences you:

- What classes to take in school?
- What to do after graduation?
- Whether to go out drinking?
- Whether to smoke or use smokeless tobacco?

8. Review the **Open Ended Questions**.

Additional Notes/Extension/Glossary

Stereotypes – broad sweeping statements, generalization about an entire group of people without regard for individual differences.

Peers – groups of people roughly the same age and same maturity (classmates, religious groups, clubs).

Cliques – small groups (between 2 and 12) who are the same age, and generally the same sex. The group is defined by common activities or friendship (friends, drama club, science club, cheerleaders, band members, long-time friends, study group).

Friendships – supportive, positive relationships. A friend may or may not be in the same clique (could also be someone from other times in your life that you don't hang out with now).

Cohorts – a group of individuals born during a certain era. (Millennia, Generation X, Baby Boomers, Matures)

Crowds – groups whose identification is based on similar reputation or image, those who have a common features (jocks, druggies, brains, nerds, tough guys)