

LESSON 1

PEER PRESSURE: FINDING THE COURAGE WITHIN YOU



Today's Lesson: Lesson 1

In today's lesson, your child learned about **peer pressure** and how students need to find the **courage** within themselves to make safe and smart choices to protect themselves and others. As your child gets older, acceptance into peer groups is becoming more important and can sometimes lead them into situations where they are faced with difficult choices. Sometimes children feel pressured to make a decision that is not right for them. The emphasis on finding their **courage** – facing something that is intimidating or makes them feel unsafe or uncomfortable – begins in this lesson and continues throughout the program. Your child will observe several scenarios where they see a group of students who are faced with a situation that requires them to find their **courage** and make a decision that is both right for them and the right thing to do.



Human Trafficking Prevention

Did you know that each year, more than 300,000 school-aged children are lured into a type of exploitation called human trafficking? Human trafficking occurs when someone is recruited, hidden, or transported against their will for services and the financial gain of another person. Though you may think of trafficking as a danger that only threatens children in other countries, it is a very real problem in all 50 states. Any child can become a victim – no matter their location, socioeconomic status, race, or religion.

Children are inherently vulnerable, and traffickers are skilled at targeting kids in person and online. That's why schools around the country are choosing to include developmentally appropriate human trafficking prevention into a comprehensive personal safety education curriculum. Human traffickers use psychological manipulation to gain and maintain control by identifying children's vulnerabilities and working to fill whatever needs they may have. This could be a need for belonging, material items, or basic necessities like protection, food, or shelter.

To help your child avoid exploitation and the traps traffickers set, we have extended the safety concepts they are learning in each lesson of the 5th grade **Safer, Smarter Kids** curriculum to encompass protective principles specific to trafficking prevention – while continuing our commitment to presenting information in a manner that is age-appropriate for your 5th grader.

This lesson extends the concepts of **peer pressure** and the desire to fit in with a group to introduce the idea of why a **balance of power** is important in a **safe relationship**. Students will be introduced to the elements of a **safe relationship** and an **unsafe relationship** in order to recognize and protect themselves from unsafe situations. Since **recruiting** is an important aspect of human trafficking, students will develop an understanding of how misleading and manipulative it is.

Know The Signs

Parents and community members must pay close attention and stay alert to the signs of human trafficking. A few warning signs that are indicators of human trafficking are listed below.

Does the child:

- Have unexplained absences from school?
 - Suddenly change in usual attire, behavior, or relationships?
 - Suddenly have more (and/ or more expensive) material possessions?
 - Chronically run away from home?
 - Act fearful, anxious, depressed, submissive, tense or nervous, and paranoid?
 - Defer to another person?
 - Describe an adult as a friend or boyfriend/girlfriend?
 - Show signs of physical and/ or sexual abuse, physical restraint, or other serious pain or suffering?
 - Have new branding/tattoos?
 - Appear to have been deprived of food, water, sleep, medical care, or other life necessities?
-



Student Disclosure

How to Respond to Disclosure of Abuse

An adult's reaction to disclosure plays an important role in the beginning of the healing process for the child. Resist the urge to react strongly to the news or display anger toward the abuser. Instead, consider the following:

What to Say

- "I believe you."
- "I'm really glad that you told me. It took a lot of courage to tell me."
- "It's not your fault."
- "We will work together to get you help. I will need to tell some other people who help protect children."
- Be cautious with telling a child who has disclosed that "everything will be all right." There are many uncertainties that surround disclosure, emotions, and steps to recovery. Consider, instead, telling a child that they are important, people care about them and their safety, and that people will work to be with and support them moving forward.

Action Steps

- If you know or suspect a child has become the victim of sexual abuse, you must should make a report immediately. Find your [local reporting agency](#) or call **1-800-4-A-CHILD** (224453).
 - Access and share [The Guide to Hope and Healing](#) for guidance to recognize, report and respond to a child who discloses.
-



Caregiver Connection

This lesson sets the stage for the entire program by introducing the idea that we all have the **courage** inside of us to make choices and decisions that keep us safe. Each lesson will involve a video scenario depicting a situation that 5th graders may encounter. Your child will see how the 5th graders in the video

resolve that situation with the guidance of trusted adults Lauren and Rodney. Today's video dealt with **peer pressure** and how a group of friends tried to pressure Maria into excluding her friend from her birthday party. The pressure created a conflict for Maria because this friendship was important to her, and so was the friendship of her peer group. Maria finds her **courage** and makes the decision that is not only right for her but also the right thing to do.

Ask your child about how Maria resolved the situation. Ask if your child has ever encountered an **unsafe relationship** like that. How did it make them feel? How did they handle and resolve it? Parents need to know how the pressure of their child's peers impacts their ability to make decisions that are not only right for them but also the right thing to do. Children who know the strategies to withstand **peer pressure** from their peers or others will be better positioned to make safer, smarter choices.

Activities to Try at Home

You are encouraged to use the following resources with your child at home. All activities may be downloaded and printed.

- [Steps-to-Safety: Helping Your Child Deal with Peer Pressure](#)

Try out this interactive web-based activity to learn the vocabulary words for Lesson 1.

- [Let's Practice: Lesson 1 Vocabulary](#)



Tips to Further Today's Lesson

Today's lesson is important because entering adolescence is a very challenging time for children and parents. As children strive to "grow up" and become independent, an important developmental step, they don't have the emotional maturity or the strategies to handle many situations they will encounter with their peers. Keeping the lines of communication open with your pre-adolescent is an important step in being one of your child's **trusted adults**.

For more ways to talk to your students about staying safe, visit [Safer Smarter Schools](#). For additional resources, visit [Lauren's Kids](#). To report abuse, call the [ChildHelp National Child Abuse Hotline](#) at 1-800-422-4453, and you will be referred to your local reporting agency.

