

The spectrum of disruption that peer pressure presents

Though it is primarily perceived as a force of obstruction, peer pressure has the potential to be inspiring.

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Most of the decisions we make on a day-to-day basis are heavily influenced by the decisions of our peers — from how we choose to dress and what we binge-watch to what we eat. Peer pressure affects people of all ages in various forms. However, when it decides what you do in your school-life, the impacts can be long-lasting.

Having to choose your own subjects for high school can be a daunting task. This single decision will, in all likelihood, dictate how your future takes shape. All this fear and confusion make people even more prone to giving in to peer pressure. If society hadn't already convinced them to take a science track with the promise of a "secure" future, seeing non-STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) classes full of unfamiliar faces further discourages them from choosing subjects they genuinely enjoy. The companionship and comfort of close friends often triumph over personal aspirations. After all, if everyone is doing it, it couldn't be bad for you, right?

Just because everyone else is doing it, doesn't mean it's the right fit for you. Many students, unfortunately, realise this once it's already too late to change their minds. Peer pressure also impacts what clubs you join and what activities you do outside of the classroom. A catastrophic consequence of this choice manifests when applying for universities abroad. It may feel like grasping at straws when trying to demonstrate your proficiency and passion for said activity, and how it aligns with your subject choice.

One of the most significant disadvantages of peer pressure is its potential

to encourage risky behaviour. Many students feel compelled to engage in activities they would otherwise avoid simply to gain acceptance. Even if they aren't necessarily drawn to said activity, and perhaps even views it as being at odds with their beliefs, the fear of social rejection can lead students to compromise their values, which can have long-term consequences.

Constantly trying to fit in can be mentally exhausting. The pressure to conform to social norms, maintain a particular image, or meet unrealistic standards can result in anxiety, low self-esteem, and even depression. Students who struggle to keep up with their peers may feel isolated or inadequate, negatively affecting their mental health and academic performance.

But, is peer pressure really the villain everyone paints it to be?

School life can be overwhelming, especially when your options are numerous and you have no clue what you're doing. Peer pressure often originates from the outcomes of the trial-and-error cycles the seniors before you walked through — helping you know which choice is truly worth your time. Sure, it might not cater to your passions, but are you even sure what your passion is? Peer pressure can, thus, actually keep you from making rash decisions that you could regret down the line.

When overwhelmed with choices, in fear of making the wrong choice, many make no choice at all. Peer pressure is crucial to ensure they don't waste the little free time they have doing nothing. Joining the science club might not have been their thing, but at least now they don't have to regret leaving their resume blank. Peer pressure also often pushes individuals out of their comfort zones,

encouraging them to engage in social activities, make new friends, and express their opinions. This social exposure boosts confidence and helps students navigate different social situations effectively, preparing them for future interactions in both personal and professional settings.

Peer pressure has the capacity to guide you. What must be ensured, of course, is that it doesn't completely dictate your life. Trust your instincts and stand firm.

When you are truly sure what you wish to do in life, take that leap of faith. Maybe you will no longer be able to gossip with your best friend when the teacher isn't looking, but you can always catch up after classes. Compromises are a necessary part of growing up. Not everyone chooses the same path but that doesn't mean you have to walk alone. You'll always find new companions along the way.

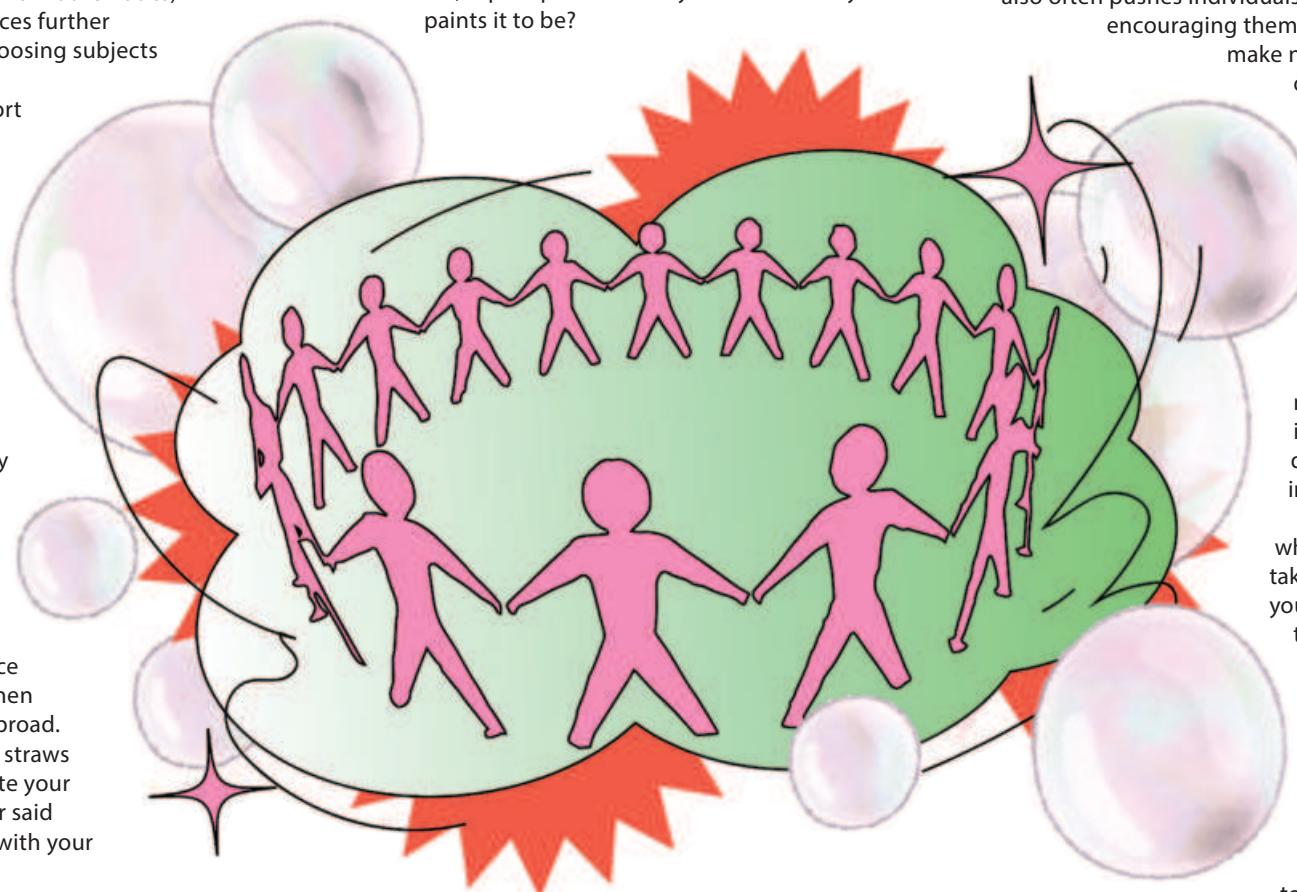


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