REFUSAL SKILLS FOR TEENS

Personal Credit—The Power to Refuse
Refusals are like charges against a personal credit account. Too often young people feel that a single refusal will bankrupt a relationship. Friends have a value to one another, which is why friendship is like having money in the bank. Even though a refusal costs something it draws down on the credit, but it doesn’t empty the account.

1. Make Your Position Clear
The best solution to social pressure is to say "NO" clearly, distinctly, and with conviction. While this is probably the best strategy, it is one of the hardest things to do. However, the advantage of making your position clear is it usually puts an end to the pressuring.

2. Adding Emphasis
Sometimes there is a need to reinforce the word "NO" with an extra word like absolutely, never or no way.

3. Stating Facts or Consequences
“My parents will ground me for a whole month”, “No way, that stuff can really mess you up”, or “I’ve got to drive home and there’s no way I’m going to risk losing my license.”

4. Excuses
“The stomach flu has been going through my family and I think I’ve got it.” “My parents are picking me up early” or “My mom just text messaged me and my sister is sick and she needs me to come home”

5. Reversing The Pressure
“Why is it so important to you that I drink? “Why do you want me to change my decision?” Why does a person have to drink to have fun?”

6. Proposing an Alternative
Let’s play cards instead, or let’s go to the movies.
7. **Planning Ahead**
   Anticipate what some of the issues might be, what could come up and how they’ll safely get out of the situation.
   - have back up transportation, go with a friend who shares your values,
   - have a prearranged change of plans that can “come up” all of a sudden,
   - a promise from parents to come get you if you need them too, calling a friend at a specified time.

8. **Leaving the Scene**
   Have a plan ahead of time for how you could leave the situation safely

9. **Sharing the Responsibility**
   Borrow the power from a known authority such as coaches or parents.

10. **Buying Time**
    Saying something like, “Not now, maybe later” can give you a little time to figure out how to get out of the situation.

11. **Recruiting a Friend**
    Use other friends who can reinforce your position. Plan ahead.

12. **Using Humor**
    Humor can reduce the tension created by refusal.

13. **Helping a Friend**
    If you see a friend who is making or about to make a bad decision you can help them make a better decision.

14. **Saving the Group**
    The values of holding out against the group can be enormous. Providing guidance, supervision and assistance when someone is at risk of being hurt.

---

Prepared by Julie Fenn, LICSW for the Lexington Public Schools. For more information contact Lexington Public Schools Prevention Specialist Julie Fenn, LICSW at jfenn@sch.ci.lexington.ma.us or at 781-861-2320 x6033