

Asserting yourself  
against social influences

Target competency	<b>Assert oneself against social influences</b>
Cross-curricular competencies (QEP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Exercise critical judgment</li><li>• Construct their identity</li></ul>
General objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Identify positive and negative influences in one's daily life</li><li>• Position oneself in the face of these influences</li></ul>



## REVIEW OF THE PREVIOUS WORKSHOP

In the last workshop, we talked about ways to calm yourself down when you're feeling stressed. Do you remember the challenge I gave you? Tell me how it went.

\* The challenge was to use one of the methods taught to calm themselves in their daily life.

## THE ADVENTURES OF LEO AND CHARLIE

The sun is shining, and the campers are enjoying the gentle breeze as they ride through the forest. The bike ride is perfect. Everyone is having a great time on the marked trails of Camp OFF-TRAIL. Even though they're ready for adventure and biking is a safe activity, Charlie and Leo still have to follow Ms. Nathalie's instructions, which were: "It's very important to follow the marked trails. Make sure to stay with the group. I don't want you to get lost in the big valley."

Charlie and Leo end up a little behind the group. In the distance, they spot the red sign announcing a fork in the trail for Grey Friars forest.

Charlie tries to influence Leo: "Follow me. We'll cut through the forest. It's going to be great."

Leo, thinking of the rules, replies: "We can't! We're not allowed in there without an adult."

But the daring Charlie doesn't give up: "Come on, Leo! We've been in this forest with adults before, and it was great! We're the last ones... no one will see us!"

Leo hesitates, whispering: "The instructions are clear, Charlie. If there's no adult with us, we can't go..."

Charlie insists: "I've been wanting to go for so long! Please, just a quick look, Leo. Come on!"

The pair races the last few metres to the fork to Grey Friars forest. What will they do now? Rejoin the group and continue riding on the marked trails? Or turn into Grey Friars forest and go off on their own, into a strictly forbidden area, without an adult?

Financial contribution from

Public Health Agency of Canada Agence de la santé publique du Canada

Centre intégré de santé et de services sociaux de la Montérégie-Centre Québec

UDS

Université de Sherbrooke



Centre RBC  
d'expertise universitaire  
en santé mentale

## DID YOU KNOW?

"It's normal for children to be influenced by the people around them. It's all part of a healthy process of evolution. Indeed, a child's identity is largely formed by observing those around them. For example, they will imitate their parent in the way they manage their relationships with others. So being influenced isn't necessarily a bad thing. Throughout their lives, children will admire certain people who will have a positive influence on them.

As long as a child adopts behaviours that help them in their relationships with others, or if those influences are a source of motivation to them, there's nothing to worry about. However, if a child is being influenced in a way that doesn't correspond to their values, or if they no longer seem to have the freedom to think and act as they wish, it's best to intervene. This is also the case if the child's behaviour is inappropriate or age-inappropriate."

Children can let themselves be influenced for various reasons:

- **To avoid conflicts;**
- **To adapt to others** rather than putting themselves first and acting as a leader;
- **To make friends;**
- **To avoid rejection by** not doing things differently from the others;
- **To seek attention;**
- **Because they have difficulty asserting themselves and saying no,** due to a lack of confidence.

(Naître et grandir, 2016g)

## INSTRUCTIONS

1. Take up the two scenarios that confront Leo and ask the students to answer the following question by a show of hands: "If you were in Leo's shoes, what would you do?" Invite them to raise an open hand if they would join the group to continue along the marked trail, or a closed hand if they would turn into the forest! P 8
2. Divide the group into two debating teams, by which scenario they voted for. You don't have to balance the teams if they're not the same size.
3. Give the students in each team a few minutes to discuss their reasons for making this choice. The idea is to pool their ideas and arguments.
4. Then, ask each team to explain its choice, in the style of a debate. Students will present their arguments to make their point and try to convince members of the other team. You can use the *Facilitation Strategies for the Debate* supplementary sheet and the blank sentence on slide 9 to help them structure their ideas: "I think Leo should (e.g., respect the rules), because he (e.g., could get hurt)." If necessary, here are some questions you can use to fuel the debate: P 9
  - What are the risks and benefits for Leo of following Charlie?
  - What are the risks and benefits for Leo of not following Charlie?
  - Why is it so important to follow the rules?
  - What could Leo learn from exploring the forest?
  - Why should following Charlie make the ride more fun?
  - Have you ever been in a similar situation? If so, how did you manage it?
5. When both teams have spoken, ask if any students would now like to change their minds. If so, invite them to change teams.
6. Now prompt a discussion about their experience during the debate, based on the following questions. P 10
  - Was it easy or difficult to assert your choice in front of the other team? Why?
  - Did the other team's arguments influence your choice? Why?
  - What ways can you use to resist influences? If necessary, refer to the *Ways of resisting influences* supplementary sheet.
7. Explain to the students that it can happen that you're influenced, and that influences can be positive or negative. A positive influence occurs when it results in feeling good. For example, a student who lets himself be influenced by his friend to go and play a game of soccer in the park, and who ultimately has fun, has let himself be positively influenced. Conversely, a negative influence makes us feel bad. For example, a student making fun of a teammate in order to fit in with the rest of the group. It's important to assert yourself when you're not feeling good! P 11
8. Invite the students to fill in the *Asserting Yourself* handout and keep it for future use.
9. Conclude the story of Leo and Charlie by explaining that, in the end, Leo asserted himself to Charlie despite his fear of disappointing her, and told her he wouldn't follow her into the Gray Friars forest. Instead, Leo suggested that Charlie join the group and ask Miss Nathalie to organize a special outing soon to check out the forest, with adult accompaniment. Charlie enthusiastically accepted Leo's idea!

## CHALLENGE

Suggest the following challenge:

- Before the next OFF-TRAIL workshop, try to have a positive influence on a friend.

## ENABLING REINVESTMENT

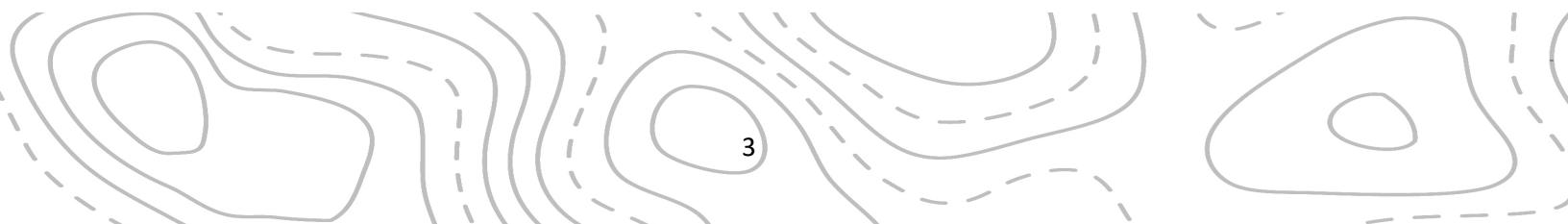
To encourage students to reinvest what they've learned, you can create a poster with them on ways to assert themselves in the face of social influences, based on the means they identified during the workshop. This poster can be displayed in the classroom. It's also possible to give each student a copy. You can also reuse the debate format with your students to exercise their assertiveness and develop their critical thinking skills.

## READING SUGGESTIONS

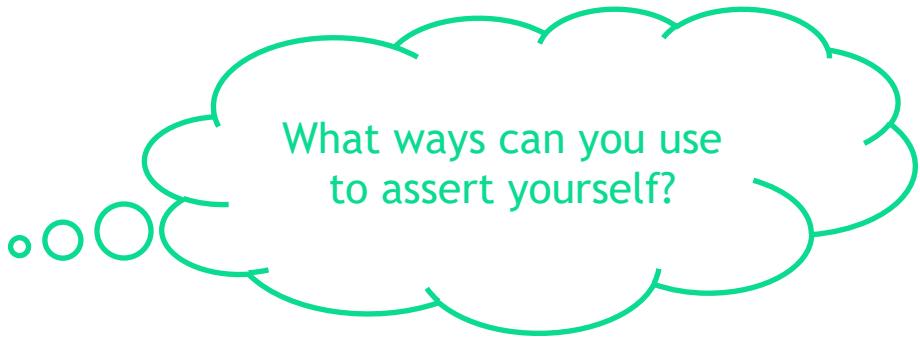
- Byers, G. (2018). *I Am Enough*. HarperCollins.
- Choi, Y. (2003). *The Name Jar*. Random House Children's Books.
- Munsch, R. (2018). *The Paper Bag Princess*. Annick Press.
- Reynolds, P.H. (2019). *Say Something!* Scholastic Canada.



Text is under a [CC BY-NC 4.0](#) licence. Graphics designed with Canva are under [Canva's content licence](#). © [OFF-TRAIL program](#) by Centre RBC d'expertise universitaire en santé mentale (2025), Université de Sherbrooke.



**HANDOUT TO PRINT**  
**Asserting yourself**

A large, empty rectangular box with a green border, intended for the user to write their responses to the question in the thought bubble.

## **SUPPLEMENTARY SHEET**

### **Facilitation strategies for the debate**

- Introduce the rules of debate: raise your hand, wait your turn to speak, speak with respect, etc.
- Create specific roles within the group: moderator, timekeeper, secretary, etc.
- If necessary, give each student a turn to speak, or provide a speaking object.
- Allow the teams to ask questions.
- Summarize the points discussed by the students.
- Ask open-ended questions.

## **SUPPLEMENTARY SHEET**

### **Ways to resist influences**

- Say no.
- Use humour, make a joke or a pun.
- State your case:
  - “I would choose this scenario because...”
  - “I think we have to do this because...”
- Listen to other people's arguments, and ask questions.
- Join like-minded students.
- Propose another opinion or idea.
- Get help from others.
- Compromise.
- State your needs and expectations.
- Trust yourself.