

INFLUENCES THAT WEIGH YOU DOWN

Asserting yourself against social influences

| Target competency | Assert oneself against social influences |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Cross-curricular competency (QEP) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Construct their identity |
| General objectives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand the influence of others on one's choices and actions Identify certain peer influences Assert oneself in the face of these influences |



INTRODUCING THE CHARACTERS AND THE PROGRAM

If this is the first year your students are participating in the program, introduce the characters and the program using the materials provided for this purpose on the [OFF-TRAIL website](#), under [Workshops and tools for students/Basic workshops/Introduction to the program and the characters](#).

THE ADVENTURES OF LEO AND CHARLIE

It's the start of a new school year, which means our two adventurers will soon be back at Camp OFF-TRAIL. This year, Charlie and Leo aren't in the same class, but they call each other every night to chat.

After discussing their day, Leo, tells Charlie how excited he is for camp: "I guess you're getting ready for Camp OFF-TRAIL! I'm all set - I've been ready since yesterday!"

Charlie is silent.

Leo gets impatient on the other end of the line: "Hello? Charlie, are you there?" he asks.

Charlie replies: "Yes, I'm here, Leo... but I don't know if I'm going to camp this year."

Feeling confused, Leo questions her: "What do you mean?"

Charlie decides to confide in him: "The other kids say it's not cool to go to camp, especially when you're in grade 5. I really don't feel like being judged."

Leo insists: "No way! Don't do that to me. Camp won't be the same without you. Plus, you always have so much fun at camp."

DID YOU KNOW?

Students are regularly exposed to pressures. To help them deal with these pressures, you can lead them to think about various elements:

1- Each student has the right to express their own point of view and is not required to react like the rest of the group. By adopting their own opinions and reactions, each student helps others get to know them better and facilitates communication with them.

2- When a student expresses an opinion that differs from that of others, or refuses to agree, they may feel torn between a desire for self-respect and the fear of being rejected by the group.

3- When arguments exist to resist pressure, they can more easily take a stand. When their arguments have all been swept aside, it's harder to maintain their position.

4- It can be difficult for a student to assert themselves when there's a risk of being excluded from the group. Sometimes, the fear of rejection can lead them to adopt behaviours that go against their will.

(Infor-Drogues, 2016)

INSTRUCTIONS¹

1. You'll need the following materials to run the workshop: some candies (or other foods to share), paper plates, and paper to write down the students' roles. Before starting, put a few treats aside for other students who resisted during the activity. Also, print copies of the *My mission* teaching aid (below) and cut out enough slips to give one to each student.
2. In the large group, ask students to answer the following questions:
 - What should Charlie do? Go to camp or not?
 - Should she let her friends influence her?
3. Once the discussion is over, form groups of four or five. Place paper plates and some treats in the centre of each group. Using the *My Mission* slips, give each student a slip with the role they'll be playing on it. One half get the message "I must not eat sweets" and the other half receive the message "I want everyone to eat a sweet treat." Tell the students to read their own paper without revealing what's written on it to the rest of the group.
4. Explain that each paper corresponds to a mission. The students must try to complete their mission. Some of them will try to verbally persuade the other students in their group to eat sweets. Other students must try not to let themselves be influenced. The activity should last between five and ten minutes.
5. Once the activity is complete, invite the students to discuss the experience in the large group:
 - How did you feel about the role you had to play?
 - Did all the students in your group eat sweets? Did any of them resist?
 - Was it hard to resist? Did you succeed? How?
6. Broaden the discussion with the group, using the following questions and info from the *Did you know?* section:
 - Can you describe a situation where you let others influence you?
 - Can influences be positive? Can you give an example?
 - Do some people have more influence on you than others (close friends, parents, siblings, etc.)?
 - Why is it sometimes difficult to resist the influence of others?
 - What helps you stand up to others?
7. Hand out the *Pros and Cons* worksheet to students and encourage them to fill in the advantages and disadvantages that might arise if Charlie allowed herself to be influenced by her friends.
8. To conclude, tell the students that Charlie decided to go to camp with Leo. She was afraid of being rejected by her classmates, but in the end they followed Charlie's influence and went to camp too.



7



8



9



10

¹ Inspired by Infor-Drogues (2016) and Instance régionale d'éducation et de promotion (2016)

CHALLENGE

Suggest the following challenge:

- Before the next OFF-TRAIL workshop, try to identify a situation where you feel pressure to act in a certain way. Use your *Pros & Cons* worksheet to help you make a decision.



ENABLING REINVESTMENT

When you witness a situation where a student is experiencing peer pressure or allowing themselves to be influenced, you can help them draw up a list of the advantages and disadvantages of allowing themselves to be influenced, like the one on the *Pros and Cons* worksheet (e.g., “If I let myself be influenced, I’ll be part of the ‘gang’, but I’ll be in conflict with my parents”). You can also help them find ways to assert themselves in the situation.

Work with your students to create a classroom poster or notebook where students can record the times they have positively influenced another person over the course of the year.

READING SUGGESTIONS

- Brière-Haquet, A. (2017). *Nina: Jazz Legend and Civil-Rights Activist Nina Simone*. Charlesbridge.
- Parr, T. (2016). *Be Who You Are*. Little, Brown Books for Young Readers.
- Reynolds, P.H. (2020). *Be You!* Orchard Books.
- Romain, T., & Verdick, E. (2018). *Cliques, Phonies & Other Baloney*. Free Spirit Publishing.
- Silei, F. (2022). *Rosa's Bus*. Darf Publishers.



Text is under a [CC BY-NC 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/) licence. Graphics designed with Canva are under [Canva's content licence](https://www.canva.com/brand/content-licensing/). © [OFF-TRAIL program](#) by Centre RBC d'expertise universitaire en santé mentale (2025), Université de Sherbrooke.

TEACHING AID TO PRINT

My mission

[illegible]

HANDOUT TO PRINT

Pros and Cons?

| Letting yourself be influenced... | Asserting yourself... |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Advantages (pros) | Advantages (pros) |
| Disadvantages (cons): | Disadvantages (cons): |




