

# PEER PRESSURE VS PARENTAL INFLUENCE

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Teen years, it seems, are when aliens come and abduct your adolescent, remove their brain for a few years, and return sometime later to re-implant it. The abduction is swift and thorough, but the implanting can take anywhere from 1 to 10 years. In some cases you may fear the aliens forgot where you live because the child you reared still hasn't 'come back'! You are left wondering where that dear compliant, happy child went and who the moody, weird stranger is sleeping in their bed. Parents are left wondering where they went wrong and whether there will ever be a happy ending. It is called 'Growing up and out'.

None of us want tumultuous years. None of us want to be treated as if we were the aliens. We don't want to see our children hit skid row, pick them up from Juvenile, or send them to rehab for addictions. We don't want to live in a house with a surly, ungrateful, non-contributing family member where every day it's a battle of the wills. The influence you had on their early years vs whom they hang with seems to determine the outcome. The following are some helpful tips to avoid 'alienation'.

Kids will gravitate towards and be influenced by their peers when they feel insecure at home. When they don't feel loved or accepted, when they have no boundaries and when they are not getting training and guidance from their parents they will reach out to like-minded souls. When they don't have simple life skills to know how to handle situations or when circumstances are dangerous, they are easily sucked into harmful situations because they think others are having more fun than they are. When others have more input into kids lives than their parents do, the level of parental influence is greatly lessened.

So the question is, how can parents make sure they have more influence over their teens than other teens do? The first thing is to be proactive by talking to your kids well before they hit teen years. Make sure there is an open communication line by encouraging your kids to tell you what they are feeling. Listen to their opinions and ideas and praise their wisdom and good decisions.

Prepare your kids by telling them the kinds of temptations they are likely to face. Tell them and show them how to say, "No" to propositions put to them like smoking, drinking, drugs and sexual experimentation. Help them understand how their bodies are changing and how their moods will be affected by changes in hormones. Remind them of what your family values are and the need to adhere to them for their own safety, comfort and security. Praise them and encourage them for good decisions made. Keep your teens busy.

Encourage healthy physical activities like team sports, membership in service clubs, Scouts etc. This way they expend their energies in activities that often stretch their own ability. When they feel good about their achievements are

much less likely to be swayed by negative peer pressure. Give your kids responsibilities to build accountability and trust in them. Monitor their friendships and if you find others influencing them negatively, tell them so in a non-judgmental way. Make your home a great place for them to bring their friends home to. Join in with some of their fun and you will find all their peers will want to hang around with you!

If you have any comments or questions on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact us at [sally@forefrontfamilies.org](mailto:sally@forefrontfamilies.org). We invite you to also check out our website at [www.forefrontfamilies.org](http://www.forefrontfamilies.org) and our blog site at [www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com](http://www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com) for further assistance.