

Drug education

Year 10-11, Lesson 2: Managing influence



Managing influence

This is the second of three drug education lessons, for year 10-11. This lesson explores how different sources of influence affect decision-making; strategies to manage peer influence; and ways to act as a positive influence on peers.

Classroom-ready PowerPoint versions of the lesson plans are available to [members](#) of the PSHE Association.

Learning objective

To learn how to manage influences in relation to alcohol and other drug use.

Learning outcomes

Students will be able to:

- explain how different internal and external influences can affect decision making
- describe strategies for managing peer influence in contexts where young people are increasingly independent
- evaluate ways to be a positive influence on peers in relation to substance use

Climate for learning

Make sure you have read the accompanying teacher guidance notes before teaching this lesson. These include relevant subject knowledge for this topic, guidance on creating a safe learning environment, and curriculum links.

Resources required

- Box or envelope for questions
- Resource 1: *Influence chart* [one per pair]
- Resource 2: *Influence cards* [one cut-up set per pair]
- Resource 3: *Festival timeline* [one per pair]
- Resource 3a: *Festival timeline – key moments* [support option, as required]

Baseline assessment

Introduction (Slides 10–11, 5 mins)

Ensure ground rules are established with the group before teaching this lesson and make students aware of the question box, which will be available throughout the lesson. Explain that if they have worries or questions during or after the lesson, that they do not want to raise in front of the class, they can write their question on a piece of paper, anonymously or with their name, and put it in the question box.

Introduce the learning objective and outcomes and explain that today's lesson explores how to manage influences in relation to substance use.

Baseline assessment activity (Slide 12, 10 mins)

In pairs, ask students to sort the influence cards from **Resource 2: Influence cards** onto **Resource 1: Influence chart**, assessing whether they think each is an internal or external influence and how weak or strong the impact of the influence is likely to be on a person's behaviour. Explain that internal influence relates to someone's own thoughts, feelings, perceptions, attitudes etc., while external influence relates to other aspects which affect someone's ideas, such as those coming from others, the media, or the environment around them.

Next, share their responses as a class. Draw out common ideas about influences and what influences they believe have the strongest impact on behaviour. Note that there may be considerable differences in how strong an impact individual students consider an influence will have on someone's behaviour. Religion, for example, may be identified as a very strong influence for some but not at all for others. If time allows, ask students if there are any other types of influence that they think are common for young people that are not mentioned on the cards.

Use the discussions from this activity to gauge students' understanding/perception of influences relating to the use of alcohol and other drugs. Use this to prioritise and adapt discussions in the lesson.

Core activities

Festival timeline (Slide 13, 15 mins)

As a class, read the timeline of Max's experience of preparing for and going to a festival, in **Resource 3: Festival timeline**.


In pairs, ask students to identify the potential influences on Max and the other characters at each stage, and analyse the potential impact of acting based on these pressures and influences.


Finally, ask students to state whether the influences on Max at each stage are internal or external, i.e. are they coming from Max himself or from an outside source?

Take feedback, drawing out key learning:

- *At the start of the timeline, it is likely that Max is excited about going away with his friends, although he may start to feel external pressure to engage in alcohol/drug-taking activity when he receives the group messages about drugs and alcohol. While he may be going to the festival because he wants to (internal), the assumption of his friends might be that they will all be using drugs/alcohol (and Max may not want to).*
- *At stage 2, Max may be feeling happy and relaxed and perhaps less obvious pressure to take drugs/alcohol, as there is a positive, relaxed vibe. He may feel internal influence to join in as the atmosphere is friendly and may feel safe, but external influence to join in from his friends and others attending the festival. This could be because he wants to “fit in” or feels that he is expected to.*
- *Stage 3 of the timeline may begin with an excited and energetic mood, but Max may soon be feeling external pressure from friends and other festival goers to engage in drinking or drug-taking. They may also feel some external influence from musicians/celebrities. Max also thinks someone may have added something to (‘spiked’) his non-alcoholic drink without telling him. The people Max is with might be trying to pressure him to consume alcohol or other drugs, but spiking means that Max has not consented to consuming alcohol or other drugs. Spiking is illegal and can carry a sentence of up to ten years (this can be higher if the spiking is linked to further crimes against the person).*
- *At stage 4, Max may be feeling pressure to ‘stay quiet’ in case he ruins the ‘good mood’ of the others – this might be internal or external. The use of nitrous oxide (identified in the story as ‘balloons’ but also known as ‘Noz’, ‘Nos’ or ‘laughing gas’) has become more prevalent amongst young people, but can be dangerous with heavy use or unsafe inhalation practices and result in effects such as headaches, breathing problems, nerve damage, unconsciousness. Nitrous oxide became a class C controlled substance in 2023. The Office for National Statistics reported 45 registered deaths involving nitrous oxide in England and Wales since 2010 (Office for National Statistics, 2022).*

To sum up, explain that if a person can identify an influence as external, they may have a greater opportunity to evaluate whether it benefits them to act on it or not. If they recognise that the pressure is only coming from within themselves, then this can help them to resist the pressure and make more autonomous and authentic choices.

 **Support:** Ask students to identify the influence at each stage and whether it is internal or external, using the timeline in **Resource 3a: Festival timeline – key moments**.

 **Challenge:** Ask students to discuss what they think most often has the greatest impact: external or internal influence? Are there any contexts in which this balance changes?

Strategies for Max (Slide 14, 10 mins)

Remind students that sometimes people might be going along with others because of the influences we have been considering, but it can just take one person to ‘break ranks’ for others to admit they feel the same about what is happening.

In their groups, ask students to identify opportunities for Max to be a positive influence on others in the timeline, and what strategy he could use e.g. could he encourage the friend to drink water between alcoholic drinks? Should he find help or a first aid tent at any point?

Then, ask for at least one strategy from each group. You may wish to collate these strategies on a whole class mind map.

Key learning:

- *In situations where they are increasingly independent, it is important that students know how to help keep themselves and others safe. For many students, festivals or similar weekends away will be the first time they feel independent, and this can be a very exciting time. It is easy for young people to get caught up 'in the moment', especially when with their peers and in a place where there is less direct adult supervision.*
- *It is important that young people know that they have options and that using substances or drinking alcohol is not the norm, even if it feels like it is in environments such as music festivals.*
- *Strategies might include: establishing expectations with friends before going to the festival; saying a polite but assertive 'no thanks' to offers of alcohol or other drugs; agreeing to respect others' decisions not to use substances; drinking water between alcoholic drinks; arranging designated meeting points or meeting times in case they lose one another; finding appropriate help such as going to the first aid tent if needed; always staying in at least pairs throughout the weekend; not leaving drinks unattended; being aware of drug testing facilities which are present at some festivals (these tests may show the contents of a drug, and how frequently these are not the same as 'advertised', but do not remove the risks of taking the drug).*



Challenge: Ask students to discuss if they think festival organisers should do more to keep young people safe and if so, how?

What if..? (Slide 15, 10 mins)

Reflecting on who or what is influencing Max and his friends at each stage, assign groups a different part of the story each and ask them to rewrite that stage, considering what decisions might have been made if the pressures/influences (internal or external) had been ignored or challenged.

Ask each group to feedback their part of the story in order of the timeline.

Elements of the timeline that might have been different include:

- *The group deciding not to take alcohol or other drugs with them to the festival (e.g. if somebody spoke out against doing so at the start)*
- *The group sticking together, returning together and creating a plan for the day together, without the use of drugs or alcohol*
- *Telling others in the group how they are feeling about what is happening*
- *Contacting a first aider if concerned about a friend*

Reflection and endpoint assessment

Reflection and endpoint assessment (Slide 16, 10 mins)

Ask students to come up with a list of at least five top tips for a 'festival survival guide' on a website about how to keep the experience enjoyable and safe for all, e.g. create a system to check on one another at various points in the day, aim to drink a certain amount of water to stay hydrated etc. They should include tips that show what they have learnt about the effects of different internal and external influences, strategies for managing peer influence and ways to be a positive influence on peers in relation to substance use.

Ask students to feedback what they think is their most important tip from their list. This is an opportunity for you to gather evidence of the learning that has taken place and to inform your planning for subsequent learning.

Signposting support

Signposting support (Slide 17, 5 mins)

Ensure that students know where they can seek help and further advice, both now and in the future, if they are concerned about substance use, including drugs and alcohol, or peer influence. Students wishing to seek further guidance can:

- Speak to a tutor, pastoral lead or other trusted member of staff in the school
- Contact Childline www.childline.org.uk 0800 1111
- Visit <https://www.talktofrank.com>

Extension activity

Script-writing (Slide 18)

Ask students to select a stage of the timeline and create a script/role-play, modelling how an individual could communicate their decision to challenge or ignore an influence.