

### Shore Up Your Kids Against Peer Pressure



As the parents of a teenager, you've undoubtedly noticed that your influence is fading just as the influence of your child's peers is growing. Teenagers have always sought cues and direction from people their own age and attempted to blend in with the "crowd."

According to youth-culture expert Walt Mueller, peer pressure used to involve verbal invitations to do something you knew was wrong. But today, it "typically takes the form of an unspoken expectation to participate in behavior that the vast majority of the peer group believes to be normal and right." These days, Mueller adds, it's much more difficult for kids to go against the flow when the behaviors promoted are no longer sneaky but celebrated.

Teenagers are prone to peer pressure not just because they want to fit in but because their brains are still developing. The pre-frontal cortex, which regulates self-control, emotions, and judging consequences is the last part of the brain to develop. In other words, your adolescent is not yet an adult, so expect an interesting mix of adult thinking ability tainted by immaturity, impulsivity, and inconsistent logic.

Although teenagers are socially and physically vulnerable to peer pressure, you don't need to stand back, hold your breath, and hope for the best. By communicating with your kids and modeling godly behavior, you can help them stand firm against all kinds of temptations.

#### Use these strategies from author Walt Mueller to encourage and equip teenagers in the midst of their pressure-cooker lives:

1. **Recognize that negative peer pressure is a spiritual battle that we all fight constantly.** Our behavior can be baffling (see Romans 7:14-24), but Jesus has overcome our struggle with sin (verse 25).
2. **Model a lifestyle of discipleship.** This shows that following Christ isn't always the easy choice but is always the right choice.
3. **Listen before offering advice.** Teenagers who sense they've been respected and heard are then more prone to hear you out.
4. **Encourage kids to get involved in a positive peer group, such as a church youth group.** Leaders and members of these organizations celebrate the narrow path that leads to life.
5. **Affirm kids' worth in your eyes—and God's.** Remind kids that they're "in process," and show them the grace that God has shown you.



**If all that people knew about teenagers came from media reports, they probably would speculate that kids are wild risk-takers headed for certain disaster. But consider the flip side of some recent statistics:**

- Just more than half of teenagers will experiment with alcohol. That means nearly half won't experiment.
- About 40% of teenagers will try drugs at least once. That means 60% won't try them at all.
- Fewer than 25% of teenagers who try illegal substances regularly use them. That means the majority don't use them.



## Great Questions to Ask Your Kids

**Let teenagers know you're available to talk about the pressures they're facing. Then be ready to really listen. Start a discussion with these questions:**

1. What types of expectations do kids have for one another these days?
2. What are some of the biggest pressures you've faced so far? How easy or difficult has it been to say "no" to each, and why?
3. Do you consider yourself to be a leader or a follower, and why? Have you ever pressured someone? Explain.
4. When you're faced with choices, what decision-making process do you follow? Do you consider all the possible consequences?



## Focus on Prayer

### PRAY THAT:

1. God will protect your teenagers against negative peer pressure, poor judgment, and harmful consequences.
2. Your teenagers will use their faith to help them resist temptations and pressures to sin.
3. Your teenagers will be influenced by positive peer pressure and will have godly friends who make wise choices.
4. Your teenagers will be positive examples for other young people who wish to live godly lives.

### Verse of the month

**"You can enter God's Kingdom only through the narrow gate. The highway to hell is broad, and its gate is wide for the many who choose that way. But the gateway to life is very narrow and the road is difficult, and only a few ever find it." (Matthew 7:13-14)**

The world is so seductive because it offers a wide variety of pleasures and pursuits. Jesus realizes the temptations we face on earth—and has faced them himself as a man. But he also promises to provide "a way out" so we can "endure" (see 1 Corinthians 10:13). With Jesus' help, we can remain faithful and enter through the narrow gate to heaven.

## What's Up With Kids

**At SimplyYouthMinistry.com, Jane Dratz, editor for Dare 2 Share ministries, discusses the importance of making wise choices:**

The questions teenagers wrestle with on a daily basis are incredibly challenging, because these days many choices come with lifelong consequences. Choose poorly in the realm of Internet porn and distort God's blueprint for sex for a lifetime. Go too far and find yourself with an incurable STD or 18 years of child-support payments. Make a wrong choice about drinking or drugs, and risk arrest and a criminal record that can potentially block you out of future college or job opportunities.

When peer pressure seems unbearable and the urge of the moment is battling to reign supreme, how do you respond? As a Christian, the battle is daunting. But take courage in knowing that you aren't entering the battle alone. If you've made the ultimate choice of all choices, to surrender your life to Jesus and live life to the max for God's glory, then you fight the battle with Jesus by your side, guiding, strengthening, and empowering you to take your stand and fight. A real and vibrant relationship with God that serves as the driving force behind your lifestyle choices is the most powerful motivation you can find for owning your choices and choosing wisely.

And consider this piece of good news: The consequences for *good* choices have a ripple effect as well. Your choice to follow Jesus is a great example of this! Let your relationship with Jesus impact the lives of people around you by sharing his truth and grace with others.



# MUSICSPOTLIGHT



## Mainstream Artist

**Background:** Kid Rock, born Robert Ritchie, has sold more than 23 million albums in the past 18 years. The 37-year-old rap-rocker from Detroit had mostly a local fan base during the '90s. After much touring and teaming with MTV, Kid Rock became a chart-topping superstar. For his next album, the singer plans a return to his hip-hop roots.

**Albums:** *Rock N Roll Jesus* (2007), *Live Trucker* (2006), *Kid Rock* (2003)

**What Parents Should Know:** Kid Rock's style is a wide mix of rap rock, Southern rock, hip-hop, and blues- and country-tinged ballads. Foul language and crude themes permeate much of his music. Kid Rock is also known for angry outbursts and a rocky relationship with ex-wife Pamela Anderson.

**What Kid Rock Says:** "My kid's grandchildren are set for life. But I also tell my son, 'You see how your dad is; if you think any of this is going to get left behind, you're nuts, because I'm going out with a bang, buddy.'"

**Discussion Questions:** What do you think it would be like to be "set for life"? What, if anything, do you expect your parents to leave you? What do you want to be known for? What type of legacy do you hope to leave for your children?

## Christian Artist

**Background:** Todd Agnew, 37, is a contemporary Christian singer-songwriter with a rock-indie sound. He has a laidback style and even performs barefoot, but his lyrics are serious and insightful. Agnew's hits include "Grace Like Rain" and "My Jesus," and his latest album features "Our Great God," a duet with fellow Christian artist Rebecca St. James.

**Albums:** *Better Questions* (2007), *Do You See What I See?* (2006), *Reflection of Something* (2005), *Grace Like Rain* (2003)

**What Parents Should Know:** Agnew's songs will make kids think. *Better Questions* is a passionate response to tough questions about God, such as "Why does God still care for us when we keep messing up?" It's obvious that Agnew wrestles with the very questions he poses.

**What Agnew Says:** "I'm just trying to get some questions out there, the questions people are afraid to ask in church, but also to get the questions asked sincerely and without anger."

**Discussion Questions:** What questions do you have about God, faith, and heaven? Do those questions ever scare you? How comfortable are you answering your friends' questions about God? Is it okay to admit when you don't know the answers?

# FILMWATCH

**Movie:** *My Best Friend's Girl* (releases Sept. 19)

**Genre:** Comedy

**Rating:** R (for strong, graphic language and sexual content, including some nudity)

**Synopsis:** Tank (Dane Cook), a master at offending women, hires himself out when guys get dumped. He takes the ex-girlfriend on the worst date of her life so she'll run back to her boyfriend. While trying to help his best friend, Tank meets Alexis (Kate Hudson), whom he ultimately falls for. Tank is torn between loyalty to his best friend and love for his best friend's girl.

**Discussion Questions:** How loyal are you to your friends? Would you do anything for them? Why or why not? What would you do if your best friend asked you to do something you know is wrong? Which is more important to you: love or friendship? Explain.



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