

Climbing Out

Introduction

Key Concept:

When you put the tools from the visual metaphor into action, and when you develop an awareness of the positive and negative ways that others can influence you, you will be prepared to avoid negative behaviors and their consequences.

Climbing Out

1 What is the "pot" that you are in?

2 When you get in trouble (or in the pot) are you keeping others in, or yourself? How?

3 What are the reasons for staying in the pot?

4 What will your future be like if you don't get out?

5 What are the reasons for getting out of the pot?

6 How do friends (others) affect you in both positive ways and negative ways?

7 Who wants to see you climb out? Why?

8 Why is it difficult for the crabs to climb out of the pot?

9 What will your future be like when you climb out?

10 What are the tools you can use to get out?

Warning: If you try to get out, you will be attacked! Why?

Vocabulary

- Peer pressure
- True friends
- False friends
- The Pot
- Characteristics
- Change
- Influence
- Attacked
- Control

Secondary Concepts:

- If you are in trouble at home, at school, or with friends, you are in the pot.
- To climb out of the pot, you must follow certain steps and not let others pull you down.
- The visual analogies give you the tools you need to stay out of the pot and find opportunity, freedom, and self-respect.

Personalize your Lesson:

- Do you have an example of a time when a positive friend influenced you for good? What were the characteristics of this friend?
- What is an example of a pot that students might be in at home? At school? With friends?
- What tools or resources are available in your community that help youth "climb out"? You may want to incorporate these into your lesson plan.
- How do you avoid negative peer influence in your own life?

Activity:

To introduce this lesson, complete the attention activity "Make me Laugh." (See the "Learning Activities" section under "Climbing Out.")

Climbing Out

Lesson Plan: Introducing Climbing Out

Sometimes people around you will try to keep you from changing. They will want you to continue to do the same things that you have been doing. Like crabs in a pot, they will keep

pulling you down if you try to get out. That can make it especially hard to change.

To climb out of the “pot” you are in, you will need to be

strong, have a plan, and get some help. The people that help you climb out are your real friends.

Climbing Out

Lesson Plan: Visual Analogy Walkthrough

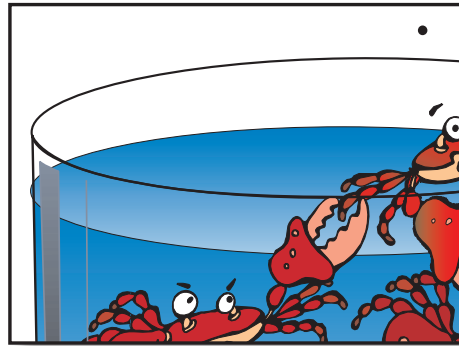
Discussion Point 1:

Question

Why is it difficult for the crabs to climb out of this pot?

Discussion

To cook crabs, you put them into the pot alive. Crabs will try to climb out, but rarely succeed because the crabs at the bottom often pull those crabs that are at the top, ready to escape, back into the pot. Ask the students to relate this visual analogy to their own lives.



You could ask, “Is there anyone in your life who is trying to pull you down or get you into trouble?” Or, “Have you ever noticed that when you are with certain people you get into trouble?”

Explain that the pot represents challenges or problems. A reality of life is that to overcome challenges, we cannot let others hold us down and keep us in the pot. On the other hand, emphasize that positive peers can help them climb out of the pot and deal with challenges. Stress that if they are going to stay on the track to opportunity, freedom, and self-respect, they must overcome peer pressure. This is the focus of climbing out.

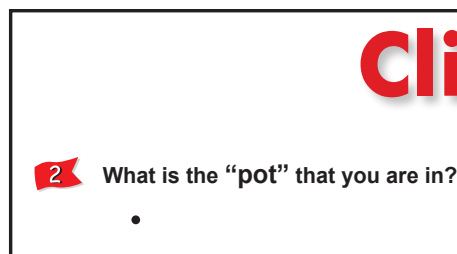
Point 2:

Question

What is the pot that you are in? Or, what are the problems that are causing you to crash?

Discussion

The first step in overcoming peer pressure and getting out of the pot is knowing what the problems are and whether



others influence or help cause the problems. Emphasize that they are ultimately responsible for their own problems. Others can try to pull them down, but

they make their own choices. Show empathy about the difficulty of peer pressure.

Some of the most difficult problems to overcome are those that are greatly influenced by peers, such as drug use, gangs, school attendance, sexually acting out, and so forth.

One way students can know whether their peers are help-

ing them or pulling them down is if their friends are having similar problems. As the adage goes, misery loves company. It is often easier to deal with frustrations with the help of others. It is also easier for people to rationalize negative behaviors in groups. For example, some people say, "It's OK to smoke or use drugs; everybody is doing it. But popularity does not change the reality that smoking and using drugs are harmful.

Warn the students about why peer pressure is so danger-

ous—because it's difficult to detect. We don't notice peer pressure because it usually comes from people by whom we want to be accepted. Peer pressure is like the water in the pot: the exact temperature may be hard to detect until the water is boiling or steaming. When we are in the water (among our peers) from the beginning, we may not notice the changes in temperature (pressure) until we are burned!

Challenge

Ask the students to test the water of peer pressure with

these questions: How do I feel about myself when I am with my friends? How do I feel about myself after I am with them? Do I have more or less self-respect? How do people who really care about me feel about my friends?

Remind students that they will know that peer pressure is positive when they do things with their friends that don't hurt themselves or others and that don't take away their opportunities, freedom, and self-respect!

Point 3:

Question

When you get in trouble (or in the pot) do you keep yourself or others in the pot? How?

Discussion

Another reality of life is that where, how, and with whom we spend our time impacts us positively or negatively. For example, if we hang out with peers who smoke or use drugs, we are much more likely to do the same. If we hang out with peers who don't try in school, we are more likely not to try either. On the other hand, if we hang out with friends that put effort into their home life, school life, and friendships, we are more likely to do the same. (Sometimes we can't control our environment, so we have to keep our positive defenses up. Briefly review the general ideas of the last visual analogy

3 When you get in trouble (or in the pot) are you keeping others in, or yourself? How?

-
-

– Defense Mechanisms.) Stress again that our environments can influence us, but they cannot control us or make decisions for us.

Discuss with students that they too have the ability to pull their peers down or to be a true friend and help others climb out of the pot. Ask the students to share an example of a time when they helped a friend or when a friend helped them. Point out that real friends stop us from crashing and help us get out of the loop. (Briefly review the Reality Ride.) Emphasize that one of the greatest experiences in life is helping others climb out of the pot.

Ask the students to identify anyone who has overcome peer pressure (a relative, sports hero, celebrity, etc.). Discuss that most people who are successful in life don't let negative people pull them down, and surround themselves with positive influences.

Challenge

Challenge the students to pay more attention to how they influence others. Encourage and motivate them to take the risk and start climbing out, preferably with someone else. This makes overcoming the challenge easier and more fun. For example, they can identify someone with a similar challenge and work out a deal that when they feel weak and want to give up, they call each other. Discuss other ways they can support each other. Be creative.

Point 4:

Question

How do others influence you in positive and negative ways?

Discussion

Brainstorm with the students about what would motivate them to stay strong in the face of negative peer pressure. Their goals on the Reality Ride can be part of their motivation. The goal of Tearing Off Labels can also be part of their motivation. Another motivation could be controlling their defense mechanisms so they are in control of their world, not others. Emphasize that motivation can come from a desire to overcome peer

How do friends (others) affect you in both positive ways and negative ways?

-
-

pressure and from respect for people who care about them.

One of the greatest motivators is the desire to have positive relationships with others. One positive relationship can change a life. Ask the students, "Imagine that you wake up tomorrow and peer pressure has no control or influence on you. How would your relationships with others change?" Or ask, "Identify one person who has believed in you. How and why did this motivate you to try in

life? Or ask, "What motivated you to go to school today and what motivates you to socialize with peers?"

Challenge

Challenge the students to try to develop at least one positive relationship a month. Brainstorm with the students creative ways that they can do this. Point out the reality, that negative behaviors usually attract negative people, whereas positive actions usually attract positive people. Behavior works like a magnet. Discuss why this magnet effect occurs. Challenge the students to notice the behaviors that connect them with positive people.

Point 5:

Question

Who wants to see you climb out of the pot? Why?

Discussion

Point out that you are teaching them why and how to climb out of the pot because you want to see them overcome their challenges. Have them identify as many people as they can, including yourself, who want them be successful. This list may include parents, siblings, aunts, uncles, grandparents, family members, teachers, principals, friends, counselors, religious leaders, and so forth. Emphasize that the most important person they should be identifying is themselves. If they don't have the desire to climb out, it's harder for others to help them.

5

Who wants to see you climb out? Why?

-
-

Note: Often students will respond with, "No one wants to see me climb out." This is a good opportunity for you to emphasize that you want to see them succeed.

The people who help students climb out see potential in them that they may not currently see in themselves. They have to trust people who point out their strengths and potential. Many people who want to see them climb out love and care about them and have invested time and effort in them. Discuss the best way to pay these people back: by trying to climb out and by refusing to let those who

don't believe in them pull them down.

Challenge

Challenge the students to use the respect they have for people who believe in them and care about them as motivation to climb out. They should also use the respect they have for themselves as motivation to not let others pull them down. If they don't feel like they have self-respect, point out that they can respect themselves for making the difficult decision to not let others pull them down. Their self-respect will grow each time they stay in control of their world. Point out that the people who want them to climb out are the same people who can help them stay on the track to opportunity, freedom, and self-respect. (Briefly review "Who can support me?" on the Reality Ride.)

Point 6:

Question

What are the reasons for staying in the pot?

Discussion

Tell students that you understand that peers and friends are very important to them, and that it is very difficult to

6 What are the reasons for staying in the pot?

•

overcome negative peer pressure. Once we are accepted by a group of peers, walking away is extremely hard. Even a negative peer group can become comfortable, because its members accept us. The group may

even provide protection, money, and fun. The idea of making new friends is scary. Show empathy and understanding about why it may be difficult to give up their current situation. Use Point 7 to give the students insight and motivation into why it would be worth taking the risk, stepping out of their comfort zone, and putting effort into climbing out!

Point 7:

Question

What will your future be like if you don't get out?

Discussion

Emphasize that one of the biggest, yet easiest, mistakes people make is believing that what they do today will have little or no impact on their future. Ask the students to think about the last time they gave into peer pressure or got into trouble. How did this incident affect them in the following days, week, month, etc.? Discuss with them how it affected

7 What will your future be like if you don't get out?

•

•

the following:

- Their mood. Did they feel anger, frustration, or anxiety?
- Their relationships with family members and friends. How did they treat others?
- Their freedom. Were any of their freedoms taken away? Were they restricted, required to come home earlier, monitored more, trusted less, put in detention, etc.?

- Their school life. Did they get lower grades, get behind, give up, etc.?

Have students identify as many decisions as they can, both positive and negative, that will impact their life in one year and after they graduate from high school. (These should be decisions they make daily, such as attending school, doing schoolwork, studying, listening to parents or caregivers, using drugs, etc.) You might want to share a story about how one decision can impact the future.

Point 8:

Question

What are the reasons for getting out of the pot?

Discussion

For every reason for staying in the pot, there are at least ten reasons to overcome negative peer pressure and climb out!

8 What are the reasons for getting out of the pot?

•

•

For each reason to climb out that they identify, ask, "Does this reason give you opportunity, freedom, and self-respect in life?"

Challenge

Brainstorm with the students for creative ways to remember these identified reasons when they feel like giving up. For example, they could draw a picture that shows all the reasons to hang up in their room, write a poem or a song, or come up with a key word that they can say to themselves to remind them to keep trying.

Point 9:

Question

How will climbing out benefit your future? (Explain that the future can be as soon as tomorrow.)

Discussion

Have the students identify as many dreams and goals as they can for their future. You may want to have them break these goals down by asking, "What do you want to see happen tomorrow as a result of climbing out? What is your goal for this school year? What do you want your life to look like in five years? Ten years?" Point out that right now some of these dreams may seem impossible, but they can reach their goals more quickly if they make decisions today that will get them on the road to accomplish what they want. (Remind them that

9 What will your future be like when you climb out?

you don't care what their goals are, as long as they don't hurt themselves or others.) Encourage them to be creative in making a mental picture of what they want their future to look like. Have them identify decisions they can make today or even in the next hour that will help make tomorrow or the next week better. If you are comfortable, share an example of a good decision you made in the past that is affecting you positively today.

Challenge

Brainstorm with the students for creative ways to remember their goals for the future. For example, they could draw a picture to hang up in their

room, write a poem or a song, make a picture collage, or come up with a key word that they can say to themselves to remind them to keep trying.

Encourage the students to ask themselves the following question at the end of each day:

"What did I do today to help create the future I want, and how can I do more of this tomorrow?"

The secret of climbing out is repeating good decisions and behaviors. Challenge them to identify what these good decisions and behaviors are, and to keep repeating them. As they do this, their blurry dreams will become more focused and clear and their motivation to do difficult things will increase.

WARNING:

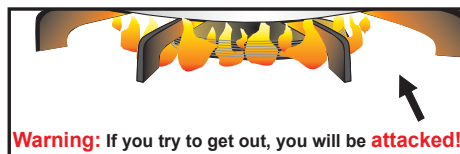
Question

Warn the students, "If you try to climb out, you will be attacked! Why?"

Discussion

Discuss with the students why some of their peers or others will tease, criticize, or ridicule them if they try to do positive things with their life, such as graduating, refusing drugs and fights, and respecting parents and teachers.

Tell the students that often the same people who try to pull



them down will respect them when they climb out, but may never let them know about this respect. WARN the students that as they begin to climb out, they may feel more peer pressure than ever before, but if they can be strong through this initial, intense pressure, they will likely notice that the people trying to pull them down will move to an easier target. The people who don't believe we can make it will stop laugh-

ing or mocking as we near the top. Tell the students that as they start to climb out, they will find positive peers who will help because they have also climbed out and overcome negative peer pressure. Let them know that sometimes this takes time, and they may even feel alone for a while.

Challenge

Challenge them to start climbing out and see for themselves the changes in their home life and school life and the growth of their self-respect.

Point 10:

Question

What strategies or tools can you use to get out?

Discussion

Brainstorm possible strategies for dealing with intense peer pressure. Encourage the students to come up with creative strategies by asking, "What has worked for you in the past in dealing with peer pressure?" The following is a list of some strategies you could discuss:

- Identify friends who will support you when the pressure is on! Use positive peer pressure to crush negative peer pressure.
- For every negative behavior you stop doing, replace it with something positive. This could be a passion, a hobby, a cause, or an interest.
- Create an Emergency Peer Pressure Escape Plan. For example, if you know you may be at a party or situation that could turn bad, have someone you trust on-call to come get you.
- Avoid places and situations in which you commonly experience negative peer pressure. Identify positive places and try to spend more time there.

10 What are the tools you can use to get out?

-
-
- Since you already know the different types of negative peer pressure you face each day, make your positive decision today and keep it in your mind, so you are prepared with the right decision when the negative situation occurs. Your response should be like a reflex. If someone asks you to use drugs, steal, skip school, or so forth, you don't have to make a decision because you've already made it.
- Remind yourself that people who put negative pressure on you don't know or understand your life situation, challenges, goals, or true identity, so they are not in a position to influence or think for you!
- Switch from defense to offense. When you are defensive, you are usually just trying to stop what is happening to you, and you have very little control. On the other hand, when you are offensive, you are making things happen, and you have more control. Be creative in influencing oth-

ers positively before they influence you negatively! (Discuss game plans to accomplish this.)

- When confronted with peer pressure, state back the negative consequence of the behavior you're being asked to participate in. For example, "That's illegal." Then invite your peers to participate in an alternative, positive activity.
- Remind yourself daily that the most popular decision is not always the right one.

Point out to the students that the last three pictures you taught them, the Reality Ride, Tearing Off Your Label, and Defense Mechanisms, are all strategies to help them climb out and deal with peer pressure. If needed, briefly review the last three visual analogies. Note: The other visual analogies in this manual are also great tools to enable students to climb out.

Challenge

Encourage the students to apply the above strategies as well as their own. Challenge them to pay more attention to whether they are pulling their peers into the pot or helping them to climb out. Anyone can pull down, but it takes strength to push up!

NOTE:

Remember: after you teach each visual metaphor, ask the students to explain back to you what the picture is trying to teach them. Point out that to stay on the track to opportunity, freedom, and self-respect, they must climb out and not let negative peer pressure control their decisions.