



Friends, cliques and peer pressure

- What's the difference between a group of friends and a clique?
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- Do all people in cliques bully?
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- How will I know if I am part of a clique?
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- What's the difference between teasing and taunting?
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- Is peer pressure like bullying?

Q. What's the difference between a group of friends and a clique?

A.



Being part of a group is an important part of growing up and helps you develop your relationship and communication skills. It helps you feel like you belong and gives you opportunities to learn about yourself and others.

In some friendship circles there may be one thing in common, for example an interest in a type of sport, fashion or music. People feel relaxed and welcome in the group.

Some young people may be part of several different types of groups as their interests grow or change.

Other groups or 'cliques' can have a strict membership code and may restrict people from joining. They may be more about being popular and the group itself may decide they are 'cooler' or better than others.

When people are in a clique, they tend to do everything together and may refuse to let other or 'new' people be part of their circle. There may be one person who seems to be the 'leader' and what he or she says goes.

People in cliques may jeer at others, humiliate people or choose to exclude. The 'rules' of the clique may be kept hidden from outsiders.



Do all people in cliques bully?



- Not everyone in a clique bullies but there may be one ring leader who will choose to exclude others, spread rumours or target someone.
- The others, who are the 'followers', may not be directly involved but instead they are a bystander to bullying and feel they have to follow the strict rules of the clique.
- People in a clique may spread rumours about others or refuse to let someone be part of their circle. The clique may gang up on or target someone. They may be unfriendly to people outside of their circle and exclude others, giving the message that they are 'not good enough'.
- There may be some peer pressure within the clique with everyone having to follow the rules. An individual in a clique may feel under pressure to do things so they get the approval of the rest of 'the gang'.
- Someone with low confidence who knows that the clique is wrong may feel that they have to stay in the gang because, if they leave, they too may be bullied.



How will I know if I am part of a clique?



Maybe now that you have read about cliques, you realise that you are part of one.

Think about

- Is your group based around a common interest, such as a hobby, activity or type of music?
- Is it an open group where anyone with similar interests can join in?

- Do you like being with the people in your group? Do you look on them as friends? Are they people who accept you for who you are? Do they openly accept others?
- Can you speak your mind in the group and say what you really feel? Are the things that you say accepted and respected by others?
- Are the people in your group fair? Are they treating people outside of the group in a fair way?
- Do you feel good or bad about being part of this group?
- Is it acceptable or okay for people to have mixed opinions, to change their mind and to act like an individual? Or do you feel under pressure to say what you think is the right thing (even if deep down you know it's not)?
- Is it okay for you to be part of other groups also?
- Do people in the group come and go between different interest or hobby groups or does everyone HAVE to stay in just one group?

In a 'healthy' friendship group:

- **You feel accepted for who you are.**
- **You can have your own opinion.**
- **You can enjoy different types of activities together and have a laugh.**
- **There aren't strict 'rules'.**
- **People are fair and respectful of others.**

If you think you have become part of a clique, maybe its time to leave it and find a group that has less rules and which is more fun to be part of. By leaving a clique, you will have opportunities to meet new friends and try out new things.



What's the difference between teasing and taunting?

We are only having a laugh! So what is the difference between 'joking' and 'jeering'?

There is a big difference between having a laugh with someone and taunting someone.

Teasing


- Is not meant in a hurtful way but instead is clever, witty or light-hearted.
- Is joking among friends in equal measures. All people within the group take part and switch between making the joke or being joked about.
- Stops if someone is upset or offended.
- If teasing gets a bit over the top, the person teasing apologises for any hurt feelings.

Taunting

- Is one sided, with one person always being the butt of jokes or insults.
- Is putting someone down in a hurtful, disrespectful way and trying to disguise it as a joke.
- Means laughing *at* someone instead of *with* someone.
- Causes fear and anxiety for the person being taunted.
- Continues even when the person asks for it to stop or seems upset.

A bit of teasing, slagging or joking between people is fine but only if it is not meant to be hurtful and all people involved are laughing. If teasing turns into taunting then it needs to stop.

Is peer pressure like bullying?

 For all teenagers, feeling accepted and part of a group is important. Your peers (people the same age / school year / group) can influence you in many ways and you may have similar tastes in music, fashion or pastimes.

Your peers can be positive role models in your life, a friend who has goals and dreams may inspire you to have your own goals. Sometimes, however, within a group people can feel

pressure to 'fit in'. You may be pressured to break the rules or try something out, such as smoking or drinking alcohol.

Your friends should accept you for who you are and respect the positive choices you make.

With peer pressure, people will say things like 'Come on, everyone's doing it' or 'What are you afraid of? No one will find out.' While you may feel the 'pressure', your peers should be able to accept it when you say no.

If you feel forced into something or threatened if you don't join in then this is bullying. If you are excluded from a group because you won't join in this is also a type of bullying.

- Finding Help

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