

# Lesson 6

Resisting Internal and External  
Pressures to Use Substances

**PROJECT**  
**ALERT**





# Lesson Overview

## Lesson Goals

1. Continue to practice resisting | social pressures to use substances
2. Learn the concept of internal pressures to use substances
3. Practice resisting internal pressures to use substances

## Scope and Sequence with Pacing Guidance

1. Introduce Lesson (3 min.)
2. Review and Practice Saying “No” to External Pressures (13 min.)
3. Introduce Ways to Say “No” to Internal Pressures (10 min.)
4. Practice Saying “No” to Internal Pressures and Social Media Pressures (11 min.)
5. Generalize Pressures and Resistance Techniques (5 min.)
6. Wrap-up (3 min.)

## Brief Lesson Description

In this lesson, the class will review external pressures and provide resistance practice by acting as influencers and resisters. Students and teacher can use their own dialogue in this exercise or use examples of pressure statements in the lesson plan. The student being pressured responds with a way to say “no.”

When students are clear about what external pressure is, it is easier for them to grasp the concept of internal pressure. In this lesson, you will model two settings where students might encounter internal pressure. Students then practice saying “no”, using individual worksheets that ask for their personal responses to pressure scenarios.

Finally, students are asked to think of other types of pressures they experience so they will recognize that pressure may be felt and successfully resisted in many situations.

## Background Knowledge: Pre-Reading

Internal pressure is addressed in the curriculum because students often say, “*No one pressures me,*” yet they may still feel pressure to get involved with substances.

The concept of internal pressures is important precisely because young people may not recognize or understand them. Although internal pressures are felt as coming from inside ourselves, they are not something we make up. They are a result of external experience and are felt by everyone at one time or another.

Internal pressures have three components:

- They are generated by an environment created by other teens, teen culture and social media, the advertising media, and a society that uses substances.
- They are nonverbal (teens feel these pressures without anyone saying anything).
- They are powerful (the pressures we put on ourselves are subtle, but they are very real and very strong).

## Materials and Supplies to Prepare

- **Visual** - Ground Rules: Students (from lesson 1)
- **Visual** - *Ways to Say “No” poster*
- **Visual** - *Pressures From Inside Yourself poster*
- **Handout** – *Internal Pressure Scenarios*; there are five scenario versions, spread equal numbers of each scenario across the room.

## Legend

Throughout the lessons, we use the icons below to indicate what to say during the lesson, what to keep in mind as you facilitate the lesson, and what to display in the classroom throughout the lesson.

What to display	What to say	What to keep in mind
		

# Lesson Plan

## 1. Introduce Lesson



Display visual created in Lesson 1: *Student Ground Rules*.



**Today we will focus more on pressures from friends and peers. We'll also continue to focus on the pressures from inside of ourselves, some of which is influenced by social media and other influencers. We'll also spend time practicing our resistance skills – or practicing saying “no” when faced with pressures.**

## 2. Review and Practice Saying “No” to External Pressures



Display *Ways to Say “No” poster*



**Let's first review the Ways to Say “No” poster from earlier lessons. The categories of ways are: (1) Simply say, “No”; (2) Stand up to pressure; (3) Give a reason; (4) Offer an alternative; (5) Leave the scene; (6) Avoid the scene.**

**We always have a choice to say “no.” By practicing saying “no” and finding ways to say “no” that feel comfortable for you, it will be easier.**

**Practicing saying ‘no’ when you aren’t being offered a substance - will help you resist in real life.**

**A lot of pressure to use substances comes from your peers, like if you are at a party and someone offers you alcohol or marijuana. Or, if you are hanging out with people and someone offers a vape.**

**Can you think of other general or typical examples of times or situations when someone might offer a substance?**

**Now I’m going to give you a chance to feel these pressures and to practice saying ‘no’ in this kind of situation. I’m going to try to get you to agree to use a substance.**

**Using the techniques on the poster, you are going to refuse my offer. I’m going to be realistic in my offer; try to imagine you are really being offered a vape or a joint or alcohol from a peer. Respond in a way that feels right to you. Don’t give in if I put the pressure on you.**

## Would anyone like to volunteer saying “no” to me?

### I’ll ask for a few volunteers or call on individual students.

Aim for three to five students, depending on time. Increase the pressure in the later examples.



- Setup the scene by saying something like “I’m your best friend” or “I’m an older teammate on your sports team” or “I’m a peer in the band or choir with you.”
- After each student’s response:
  - Reiterate the response given and type of response (e.g., give a reason; You said no because you are in a band).
  - Reinforce that you would not apply any more pressure after the response.
  - Remind students it won’t take long before others see them as nonusers and stop offering substances.

#### Examples first offers:

- Do you want some?
- Here, take a hit.
- Want a hit?
- Want one?
- Try one of these, they’re great.

#### Example follow-ups after first refusal:

- I thought you (drank, smoked)
- Just one hit will not hurt you.
- Why are you here if you don’t want to drink?
- What are you afraid of?
- Come on, have one.
- Haven’t you ever vaped pot?

#### Example more pressure:

- You’re not going to get cancer.
- You’re not going to get lung disease.
- You’re not going to be an alcoholic.
- Do you know how to do it?
- You’re going to ruin it for the rest of us if you don’t....
- You’re going to be bored if you don’t....



**We just practiced resisting pressures that you feel when someone offers you substances. Even when I applied more pressure, you were able to say “no.”**

**You remained neutral when declining my offer and didn’t make a big deal of it. Though we disagreed on your choice, I accepted it and moved on. It’s possible that someone will not accept your first refusal, but they will give up if you continue to say “no.” Over time,**

**your friends and peers will learn you don't use, and they will stop offering you substances.**

### 3. Ways to Say “No” to Internal Pressure



Display poster *Pressures from Inside Yourself*.



**We just practiced resisting pressures that you feel when someone offers you substances. Sometimes no one says anything to you, but you still feel pressure. At a party, people might be vaping and drinking. No one directly pressures you like we just modeled, but you feel excluded or different from everyone else because you are not using. You might think, “Maybe I should have a beer because everyone else has one”.**

**You might feel pressure from social media and other influencers, too. You might see celebrities and influencers using substances or you might see advertisements that imply everyone is using and there are no consequences. Thinking of your friends and peers, you might see your friends or peers using substances in their content. You might wonder how to respond to things that your friends post about substance use.**

**In these situations, you feel real pressure; anyone would. It may seem as if there's a voice inside your head telling you to reconsider use – maybe you could or should use whatever substance.**

**I'm going to act out the internal pressures you might feel in different situations. I will need two volunteers. As a volunteer, you will stand there as a “thinker” while I act out the pressures of your internal monologue.**

**Who would like to be my first volunteer?**



- Example scenarios:
  - “What would you do at a party where everyone was drinking but no one was pressuring you to drink?”
  - “What if a friend posted a video of herself using her new vape? Would you “Like” the video?”
- Stand behind the student and portray two sets of voices, one that urges use and one that urges nonuse (resistance). End the demonstration with a “resisting” voice. Alternate your position behind the student each time you switch from “pressuring” voice to “resisting” voice.
- Try to select students of different genders.



**Suppose you feel this pressure. What could you say or do so that you wouldn't use substances?**



Elicit at least one student response for each pressure:

- Simply say "no"
- Give a reason
- Give an alternative
- Stand up to pressure
- Leave the scene
- Avoid the scene



Refer to the *Ways to Say "No"* poster.

**Many of you used the same ways to say "no" to internal pressure. Some of the same ways were ...**

#### 4. Discuss Prevalence of Substance Use



**Let's practice resisting the pressures from inside yourself. I'm going to pass out internal pressure situations for you to resist. You'll read each of the scenarios you will write at least three different ways to resist the pressure.**

Pass out the scenarios.

**There are five different scenario versions so you will come up with ways to say no to your scenarios. I'll ask for volunteers to read their ways to resist. You'll have about 5 minutes to write your responses.**

Give students time to prepare their responses.

**I'm going to read the first scenario aloud:**

A.1. Alcohol - party

**It's Friday night. You and your friends are planning to go to the movies. When you get to your best friend's house, the group has already decided to skip the movies and have a party instead.**

**Someone has brought beer, and several people are drinking. No one pressures you to drink or even offers you anything, but you feel like maybe you should drink. What could you do, say, or think so that you would not drink alcohol?**

B-1. Marijuana - alone and bored

**It's Saturday afternoon, and you're alone with nothing to do. Suddenly, you remember that your older sibling, who is away at**



**college, left a stash of marijuana edibles in their room. You think, “Getting high will certainly make the afternoon less boring.”**

**What could you do, say, or think so that you won’t use marijuana edibles?**

**C-1. Vaping - older teens**

**You are at home alone with your older sister. There’s a knock at the door. You open it and find two of your sister’s friends standing there.**

**They come in and start talking to your sister. You want to be included but feel left out. One of them pulls out a new e-cigarette. No one offers you any. You think, “Maybe if I vaped, they would include me in their conversation.”**

**What could you do, say, or think so that you would not vape?**

**D-1. Alcohol - fight with parents**

**It’s Friday night, and there’s a great party about to happen. You just had a fight with your parents. They have given you a really early curfew, and they won’t let you stay out even an extra half hour. You are really angry! When you get to the party, you think, “Maybe I’ll just get wasted and show them.” No one pressures you to drink, but you are angry and hurt and you think, “Getting wasted might make things better.”**

**What could you do, say, or think so that you would not drink alcohol?**

**E-1. Vaping - friends posting pictures on social media**

**You are online and see that friends are posting pictures and some are vaping. You think to yourself, “Should I respond? Should I like, ignore, or comment on their posts?”**

**What could you do, say, or think in order not to feel like you have to show approval of your friends vaping?**



- Read the scenario dramatically, use students’ names, and set the scene to increase interest.
- Reinforce students’ resistance approaches.
- If time permits, have students share responses for other scenarios. Ask students to read the scenario aloud then provide ways they will resist.



**You've come up with some really good ways to say 'no' to internal pressures. You really can resist pressures that you feel inside of yourself. There are many ways that you can resist pressures from other people and yourself.**

## 5. Generalize Pressures and Resistance Techniques



**What other pressures do teenagers feel besides pressures to use substances?**

Examples include: cheating, stealing, lying, skipping school, cyberbullying.

**What could you do if you feel these pressures?**

**How can you say "no" or resist the pressure?**

**What are some other ways to say 'no' in that situation?**



Discussion goals:

- Help students recognize that pressures may be felt in many situations
- Help students understand that such pressures may be resisted successfully



**The truth is you experience pressures to make decisions in challenging situations every day. We've been discussing ways to resist pressures from others and yourself as part of Project ALERT. But, the strategies we are practicing to say "no" to substances work when you are pressured to cheat, lie, steal, skip school, bully or tease, and ...**

Add other student examples of pressure.

## 6. Wrap Up



**Everyone experiences pressure, particularly at this age. If you want to resist pressures and to make your own choices, it is important to be able to recognize when we do feel pressure.**

**You're great at recognizing pressures from others and yourself. You're also thoughtful about developing resistance approaches that work for you. The ways that feel most comfortable for one person may differ from another, and they may also depend on the situation.**

**In the next Project ALERT lesson, we'll continue practicing resistance skills and watch another video when things at the party start to get a little out of hand.**