

JUST SAY NO

People of all ages are faced with difficult choices. Being prepared to defend your position or stand up for your rights involves planning ahead of time. Some ideas to remember are:

1. Establish priorities before you are placed in a compromising situation. This makes decisions easier and gives you a reason to say no when the situation requires it.
2. Give a reason for saying no. You do not need to make these extensive, but a good answer helps others to see that you have considered their request before turning them down.
3. Don't lie about why you are saying no. Logical reasons that are explained are sufficient. Besides, you will usually get caught in a lie.
4. Don't get emotionally involved. Don't argue or lose your temper, just say no.
5. Listen before you give an answer. This will not make others feel defensive and they will more likely respect your answer.
6. Give others the opportunity to say no. Usually there are others in the group that will agree with your ideas. Let them have a chance to express their views.
7. Provide acceptable alternatives when possible. Most needs can be met in many ways. Think of alternatives before you are in a tough situation.
8. Don't procrastinate. Make your decision quickly, then stand by it. Tough choices won't go away, but will cause you anxiety and frustration.
9. Evaluate yourself often. Review your priorities and goals. Keep your attitudes current and know what it is you want from life.

There is a wide variety of ways to say no; some are humorous, some are serious. The important thing to remember is to stand behind your decision once you have stated your position. Some techniques of saying no are listed below:

BROKEN RECORD TECHNIQUE

Keep repeating the same short response over and over with no further response. For example, one might say, "No, thanks," each time the person tries a new approach. Other options might be "I prefer not to," "Not me," or "That's not for me." For example, if a friend is trying to persuade you to smoke, the conversation may be something like this.

Friend: Here, have a smoke!
You: I don't want one, thanks.
Friend: Come on! No one will see us!
You: I don't want one, thanks.
Friend: Try one! I know you'll like it!
You: I don't want one, thanks.
Friend: What's the matter? Are you scared?
You: I don't want one, thanks.

GIVE REASONS OR EXCUSES

This is a technique many people already know how to use. Some examples of excuses are:
"I promised my mom I wouldn't do that."
"If I smoke, it will ruin my lungs for sports."
"It will give me bad breath and make my clothes smell."

FIND A FRIEND WHO FEELS THE SAME WAY YOU DO, OR RECRUIT AN ALLY.

An ally is one who helps or supports another person; the stronger the friendship with a person, the stronger ally or support the person will be. To recruit an ally simply turn to one of your friends and ask: "Do you really go along with what they're asking me to do?" or "Don't you understand why I don't want to smoke?" These attempts to recruit an ally will enhance a person's ability to resist the group's pressure. Many times your ally will be feeling the same as you, but does not dare speak his/her mind.

AVOID THE SITUATION

Think of a way to leave the situation and avoid being confronted with the pressure. Stay away from situations or places where you will be confronted with uncomfortable situations. If you find yourself in a tough situation, make an excuse to leave. For example, "Sorry, I forgot, I've got to go pick up my little brother", or "Wow! I didn't know what time it was. I've got to get home."

CHANGE THE SUBJECT.

Refuse the offer and change the topic of the conversation. For example, if a friend offers you a cigarette on the way to school, you might say, "No, thanks. What did you watch on television last night?" Or you might be at a party and a friend offers you an alcoholic beverage. You might respond by saying, "I don't want any, thanks. Do you want to play a game of pool?"

TAKE A STAND

Tell your friends that you decided a long time ago that you would not drink or smoke and explain why. After repeating yourself on several situations, your friends will get the idea and leave you alone. If they don't, perhaps it's time you find new friends.

TAKE THE PLEDGE

Together with friends who feel as you do, form a club, such as the HBC Club (Healthy Body Club). When someone begins to put pressure on you to smoke or drink, just smile and reply, "Sorry, I'm a member of the HBC Club and that's against our rules!"

IT'S THE LAW

If all other excuses fail, you always have the legitimate excuse that smoking and/or drinking is illegal.