

Target Your Influences

Activity

Resource: Ideas for Action

Grade(s): 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

What Is it All About?

This activity has participants consider the people and factors that influence group decision making, such as personal values, peer pressure, and the desire to belong.

Why Do It?

Engaging participants to focus on their influences helps them identify positive influences and role models as well as the personal support system(s) they depend on to help them make informed decisions.

How Do We Do It?

Find or create a large image of a target.

Create a list of common influences, such as family, friends, neighbours, co-workers, media, the law, values, culture, or religion. Determine how participants will identify their influences on the target; you could use different coloured markers or dots made out of paint chips or construction paper to represent different influences. For example, red for peers, green for family, blue for personal values, orange for culture/religion, and yellow for others.

Add a title above the target such as "Target Your Influences."

Post the target in the activity space. If you are using this as a whole-school activity, consider hanging it in a high-traffic area of the school.

Choose a designated period of time for participants to identify their greatest influences on their decisions and place dots on the target. The greater the influence, the closer the dot is to the middle of the target, and the lesser the influence, the further the dot is toward the outer edge of the target. For example, if a peer is the most important influence for an individual, the individual would place a red dot in the center of the target. For peers who are the least influential, an individual would place the dot on the outer ring. If someone or something is somewhat of an influence but not the greatest, the individual places a dot in the middle rings of the target.

Once participants have had sufficient time to identify their influences, it's time to have them think about different situations they might face and the weight of each of their influences on their decisions.

Post situations and questions around the target that might represent common situations. Examples:

- You are trying to make a big decision about school next year. Who would most influence your decision?
- You are invited to a party where there will likely be a variety of substances and you may be pressured to try them. What would be the biggest influence on your decisions around going to and being at the party?
- Your friend wants you to vape in the bathroom at lunch. What would be your biggest influence in deciding whether to go?
- You are having trouble in a relationship. Who would be the influence you would turn to for advice?

Have participants read the different situations and consider who or what would influence their decisions in each situation. Would it still be the one they targeted in the bullseye, or would it change depending on the situation? No response is needed; these questions are intended to provoke thought and reflection. If someone did not initially populate the target, they can still participate by considering who and what others identified as their most powerful influences and if it would be the same for them.

Conclude the activity by posting positive affirmations around the target in order to communicate your message(s) about the power of influences on decisions and making healthy choices. Sample messages: "Just be you," "You are your most important thing," and "You are uniquely you; your decisions are uniquely yours." You can find many powerfully positive affirmations online, or consider making up some of your own.

Ideas for Use in a Variety of Settings

Use your school media platforms to promote the event and invite participants to attend.

Use available technology with an interactive whiteboard to have participants identify common influences on their decision-making. Add an image of a target to the whiteboard and have participants reflect on what influences have the greatest impact on their decisions. Consider moving identified influences closer or further away from the target centre based on participant input. Next, post the situations and questions around the target and have participants reflect on the weight of each of their influences on the decision to be made.

Conclude the activity by posting positive affirmations around the target in order to communicate your message(s) about the power of influences on decisions and making healthy choices.

What Else Do We Need?

- An activity space
- A list of common influences
- Markers or dots
- Situations involving substances and other stressful events
- Positive affirmations

How Do We Get Creative?

Run the activity over a period of days by adding different situations to the target each day and a new positive affirmation.

Invite an expert in to talk about powerful influences on decisions about consuming substances, ways to respond to negative influences, and the importance of having positive influences to help you make healthier choices.

Run this activity as part of a larger school event or in conjunction with a recognized day (e.g., Weedless Wednesday, Mental Health Week).