

Workshop 3 – Assertive communication and personal limits

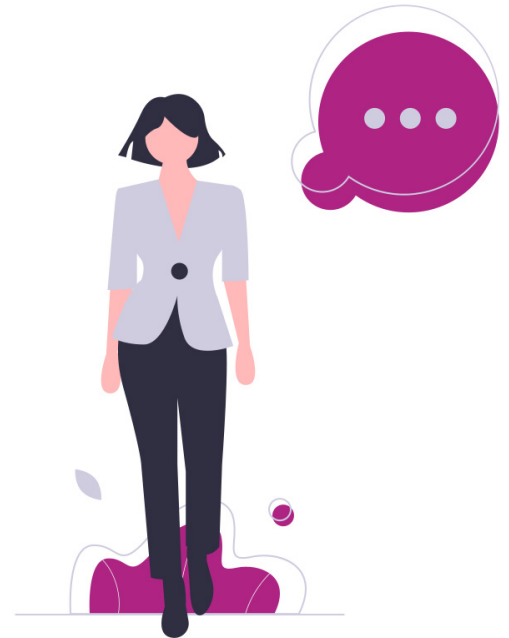
How can I encourage my child to be assertive?
Help my child define their limits.
Support my child in setting limits with their friends.

What is a personal limit?

Personal boundaries are a guide, a set of rules that a person creates so as to identify what are reasonable, safe and permissible ways they accept from others when they interact with them. We have a multitude of different types of limits.

- Physical limits (who touches me, how and where)
- Emotional limits (what I share, what I am comfortable to hear)
- Numerical limits (who has access to my information online, with whom I interact online or share the password, etc.)

It is important to define these limits for yourself and to support our child in the development of their limits. What is acceptable or not. Ask questions.



How to communicate our limits: exploring the types of communication

We communicate in many ways. We can use verbal, non-verbal, tone of voice, look, actions, body position, and it can be online or in person. During our workshops, we explore three types of communication: aggressive, assertive and passive.

These three modes of communication can be simplified to the following behaviors:

Aggressive:

- I take up space with my body - shoulders back, aggressive posture
- Hard look
- I say what I need without worrying about the content or respecting the other
- I shout or raise my voice

Passive:

- I take up little space, I am folded in on myself, shoulders retracted
- Fleeing looks
- I don't say anything or I avoid
- I mumble, I speak in a quiet voice

Assertive:

- Feet anchored in the ground at a distance the length of my hips, straight posture, relaxed but straight shoulders
- Sustained and determined look
- I say what I need clearly, without insults or aggression
- I speak in a clear and calm voice.

Negotiate limits and influence of pairs

For your child, setting boundaries and enforcing them can be a challenge at a time in life when approval and the eyes of others seem very important to them. The influence of friends can have positive impacts, but may also put pressure on them. Children are not always aware of this influence and may feel that their parents are just «against» their friends. As a young person, this can be felt as a feeling of being constantly between not disappointing friends and not disappointing parents.

How to support my child - start the conversation

Discuss with my child the influence of friends

- "Have you ever felt compelled to do something because your friends were doing it?" (Eg: missing a class, enjoying a style of music, etc.).
- "Is it possible to stay yourself with your friends?", "How do you react when a friend doesn't want to do the same things as you? How far do you think a person can go to impress others?"
- "How do your friends react if you refuse to do an activity?" (Eg .: Seriously?! You don't do that?).

Source: [Mosaïk, Le bulletin n14 : « L'influence des amis sur mon jeune » \(Gouvernement du Québec, 2015\)](#)

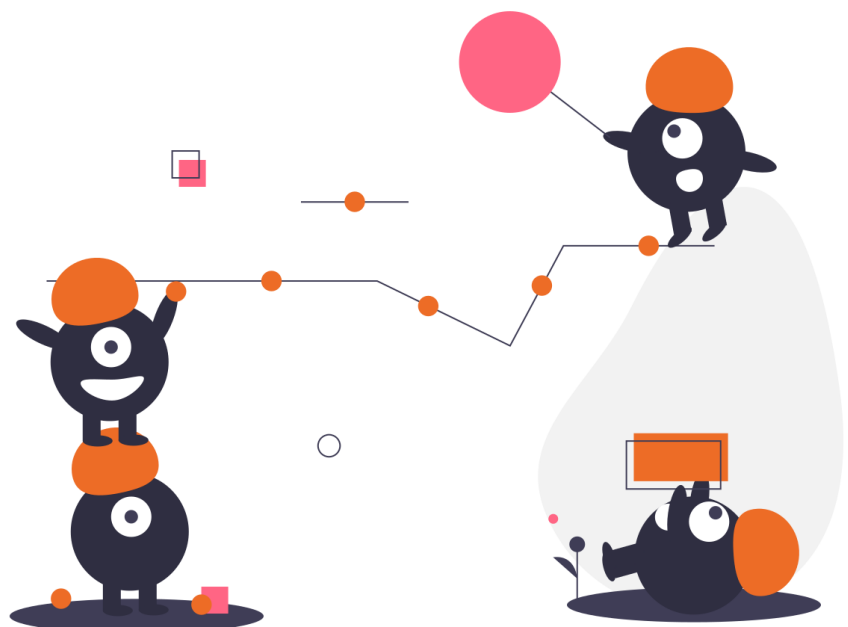
See how my child would act in a situation where friends are exerting pressure

- "What advice would you give to someone who is not comfortable doing something but who is afraid of being rejected if they do not do it?" (Eg: avoid the situation if possible, find allies, use humor, etc.).
- "How do you feel when you're the only one not doing something?" (Eg: the only one not having a blonde or boyfriend, the only one not smoking cigarettes, the only one not having the fashionable coat, etc.).
- "Someone tells you that they are not game to do something. How do you react?"

Help my child recognize situations where their friends influence them

The situations where my child feels pressure may seem obvious to me, but not for them! I can help them

recognize those situations. For example: Did you notice how you acted in front of your friends the other night? I'm surprised that you did that, etc. My child can ignore what I tell them. I have to be patient. Our discussions will come in time.



Resources

Don't hesitate to contact your school staff: the school counsellor, the teacher, or the school principal. Your family doctor can also help you, as can the following resources:

- **Kids Help Phone** : to confide in somebody, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Anonymous and bilingual. Toll-free number: 1-800-668-6868. kidshelpphone.ca



Ressources en français

- * Fiche de ressources [Mosaik, Le bulletin n14 : « L'influence des amis sur mon jeune »](#)
- * Site internet - [LigneParents.com - Que faire si je trouve que mon jeune a changé à cause de ses ami·e·s?](#)
- * Site internet [Jeunesse j'écoute – Parler ouvertement avec les jeunes](#)

Livres en français

- * On ne se comprend plus! : traverse sans dommage la période des portes qui claquent entre 12 et 17ans, par Isabelle Filliozat, Marabout, DL: Vanves, 2019 [Disponible à la bibliothèque BC Children's and Women's Hospital](#)

Ressources en anglais

- * Information sheet [Healthy Family - Teenage Friendships](#)
- * Website [Kids Help Phone - How to have an open conversation with a young person](#)

Livres en anglais

- * Raising kids to thrive: Balancing love with expectations and protection with trust, by Ginsburg et al., IL: American Academy of Pediatrics, 2015. [Available at BC Children's and Women's Hospital library](#)
- * Smart but scattered teens: The «executive skills» program for helping teens reach their potential by Guare et al. New York, NY: The Guilford Press, 2013. [Available at BC Children's and Women's Hospital library](#)

N.B : Veuillez noter que dans un esprit d'écriture inclusive, l'utilisation du féminin inclut le masculin et l'utilisation du masculin inclut le féminin.