

“If you’re the leader, you can’t just sit back and hope others will do it...you’ve got to do it first.”

— Wanda, age 11

Why This Program?

Girls deserve healthful environments, but they face many pressures that thwart their ability to make smart choices concerning the use of legal and illicit substances. Girls often are induced to use alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs to become or stay slim, manage stress, appear mature, be popular with peers of both sexes, or escape overwhelming problems. Because many of these pressures are more prevalent for girls than boys, standard prevention programs may not be effective with girls.

Girls use substances differently and for different reasons than boys. Girls are more likely to accept a substance from someone else and to engage in sexual behavior under the influence of a substance than boys are. The desire to be accepted by peers can further impact girls’ use of substances. Moreover, girls are more likely than boys to perceive themselves as being obese as well as have greater social pressures than boys to be thin. Thus, girls may use diet pills and cigarettes for weight control, self-esteem, and popularity.

About the Program: Friendly PEERsuasion®

Girls Inc. Friendly PEERsuasion® develops girls’ skills to resist pressure to use harmful substances, such as drugs, alcohol, tobacco, and household chemicals. After learning healthy ways to manage stress and to deflect peer, media, and other pressures that contribute to substance use, girls become peer educators (PEERsuaders) for younger girls.

Friendly PEERsuasion, for girls ages 11 to 14, targets the years during which girls begin to more fully experience and respond to influence and pressure from their peers. Friendly PEERsuasion builds participants’ knowledge and skills for resisting negative peer pressure by empowering them to use a process of identifying specifically what they are being pressured to do and the consequences. Participants then determine healthy alternatives and invite peers to join them in acting on their smarter choice. This process is fortified by enhancing girls’ communication skills and ability to recognize stress and by providing them with practice in responding to stress in healthy ways. Additionally, participants learn about various legal and illicit substances, adopt guidelines for responsible use of readily available prescription and over-the-counter medications and supplements, and analyze media messages that glamorize substance use.

Participants also build leadership skills that help them plan and implement substance use prevention activities with groups of younger children ages 6 to 10 (referred to as PEERsuade-Mes). By serving as peer educators and mentors, the older participants are able to reinforce their commitment to avoiding substance use. Friendly PEERsuasion is also available in Spanish (Persuasión positiva). Friendly PEERsuasion has received awards and has been recognized as an effective, evidence-based program by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services) and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (U.S. Department of Justice). For more information on the program’s awards and recognition, contact Girls Inc.



About Girls Inc.

Girls Inc. delivers life-changing programs that inspire girls to be strong, smart, and bold. Research-based curricula, delivered by trained professionals, equip girls to achieve academically; lead healthy and physically active lives; manage money; navigate media messages; and discover an interest in science, technology, engineering, and math. The network of local Girls Inc. non-profit organizations serves 150,000 girls annually at over 1,400 sites in 350 cities across the United States and Canada. Learn more about our programs and advocacy at: www.girlsinc.org.

