NCADD
NATIONAL COUNCIL ON ALCOHOLISM AND DRUG DEPENDENCE, INC.

Why Does Peer Pressure Influence Teens To Try Drugs?

New research shows that, when making a decision, teens think about both the risks and rewards of their actions and behaviors—but, unlike adults, teens are more likely to ignore the risk in favor of the reward.

In a NIDA-funded study, teens driving with their friends in the car were more likely to take risks—like speeding through yellow lights—if they knew that two or more of their friends were watching. Teens were also significantly more likely to act this way than adults in the same experiment.

Researchers monitored the brain activity of all the teen drivers in the study. Results showed that just knowing friends were watching activated brain regions linked with reward, especially when the teen drivers made risky decisions.

So, be aware: The desire to impress your friends may override your fear of taking risks.

This could also apply to deciding whether to try drugs or alcohol—your decision might be influenced by who is around and if you think they'd be impressed.

Helping a friend or family member struggling with alcohol or drugs can be heartbreakingly painful but, with help, it can be remarkably rewarding. At times, it can seem so overwhelming that it would be easier to ignore it, pretend that nothing is wrong and hope it just goes away. In the long run, however, denying it or minimizing it, will be more damaging to you, other family members, and the person you are concerned about. **Don't Wait, Now Is The Time**. Click here to learn how to help.