

# ***Understanding Peer Influence and Using the S.T.A.R. Strategy***

Lesson Objective:

Students will learn to recognize positive and negative peer influence and how to use the S.T.A.R. strategy (Stop, Think, Act, Reflect) to make safe, responsible decisions.

Materials Needed:



- Copy of Book 5, Chapter 3, *Buzz and Sammy Learn About Peer Influence*

- Pencils and markers
- S.T.A.R. Strategy Poster
- Activity 1: Sorting Positive from Negative

Peer Influence Scenarios

- Activity 2: S.T.A.R. Reflection on Peer

Influence worksheet

- Home Connection Letter



Introduction to the Topic (10 minutes)

Greeting Outline:

- Welcome the children and have them sit in a circle (if applicable)
- Begin with a brief discussion on peer influence.



**Greeting and Circle Time Teacher Script**

## **1. Warm Welcome and Opening Discussion:**

- "Today, we're going to talk about how our friends can sometimes influence us. This is called 'peer influence.' Sometimes our friends influence us in a positive way, and other times it might push us to make choices that aren't safe. But don't worry, we'll also learn how to use the S.T.A.R. strategy to make sure we're making smart, safe decisions even when we feel pressured by others."

## 2. Discussion Starter

- "What does it mean to be influenced by others?"
- "Can you think of a time when a friend encouraged you to do something fun and safe?"
- "Have you ever felt unsure when a friend asked you to do something risky?"

Read the Chapter (15 minutes)

Story Time Outline:



- Read Chapter 3 aloud. Pause at key moments to engage students and make sure they are following the story.
- Ask questions during key parts of the story.

**Story Time Teacher Script:**

**Prepare the Students for the Story:**

- "Let's read about Buzz and Sammy in Chapter 3 of the chapter book, Buzz and Sammy Spot the Signs. While I read the story, think about how Buzz and Sammy and their friends handle peer pressure and use the S.T.A.R. Strategy."
- (Read the chapter aloud, pausing at key moments to ask questions and engage the children.)

**Read the Chapter with Emphasis on Key Moments:**

- **While reading**, pause during key moments.
- **Ask Questions:**
  - Why do you think Harriet suggested playing a game called "Fastest Dare"?
  - How did Sammy feel when Buzz dared him to run across the street?
  - Why was Sammy unsure about doing Buzz's dare?
  - What did Ollie say about the dare being risky?
  - What is peer influence, and how did it show up in this story?

- What advice did Grandma give about how to recognize negative peer influence?
- How did Grandma explain the brain's role in making predictions during peer influence?
- How did the S.T.A.R. strategy help Sammy make a safe choice?
- What do you think would have happened if Sammy had not used the S.T.A.R. strategy?
- How did the group decide to play safer dares instead of risky ones?

### Chapter 3: Buzz and Sammy Learn About Peer Influence

It was Friday afternoon, and Buzz, Sammy, and their friends were excited. The weekend was just around the corner, and everyone was buzzing with energy. As they gathered in the playground after school, Harriet had an idea.

"Let's play a new game I saw online!" she said, her eyes bright with excitement. "It's called the 'Fastest Dare.' We all take turns daring each other to do something, and whoever does the dare fastest wins!"

Sammy was intrigued, but he also felt a little unsure. "What kind of dares?" he asked.

"Fun stuff," Harriet said with a grin. "Like running around the jungle gym as fast as you can or shouting something silly!"

The group started laughing and talking about different dares. Sammy felt his friends' excitement growing, and he couldn't help but feel swept up in it. But then, Buzz buzzed over with a different kind of dare.

"I dare you, Sammy, to run all the way across the street without stopping!" Buzz said, pointing to the busy street next to the playground.

Sammy froze. That didn't sound fun—it sounded dangerous. He looked around at his friends, and he could see that some of them were thinking the same thing.

"I don't know, Buzz," Ollie said, frowning. "That's a little too risky."

But Buzz just laughed. "It's just a game! Come on, Sammy, you're really fast. You can totally do it!"

Sammy felt his heart racing. He didn't want to let his friends down, but he also knew that running across the street without looking was dangerous. He wasn't sure what to do.

Grandma, who had come to pick Ollie up from school, saw the group huddled together and decided to check in. "What's going on, everyone?" she asked with a warm smile.

Sammy hesitated but explained the game and Buzz's dare. Grandma listened carefully, then nodded thoughtfully.

"It sounds like your friends are really excited about this game, Sammy, but I can tell you're feeling unsure. That's a great example of peer influence," Grandma said. "Sometimes, when we're with our friends, their emotions and excitement can influence us, and that's not always a bad thing. But it's important to know how to tell the difference between positive and negative peer influence."

Sammy thought about this. "But how do I know if it's good or bad?"

Grandma smiled. "Great question! Let's start by thinking about how your brain works. Your brain makes predictions based on what's happening around you, right? When you're with your friends, your brain notices their excitement and predicts that you should feel excited too. This can be good when it's about having fun and being safe, but if it's leading you to make a dangerous choice, like running across the street, that's when it becomes negative peer influence."

Harriet, who had been listening, nodded. "So, if we're doing something fun but safe, it's okay to feel excited. But if it's something that could hurt us, we should stop and think."

"Exactly," Grandma said. "When your friends influence you in a way that helps you grow, learn, or have fun safely, that's positive peer influence. But when it pushes you to do something that could harm you or others, it's important to recognize that as negative peer influence."

Sammy was starting to understand. "So even though Buzz's dare might sound fun, it's not a good idea because it's dangerous."

"That's right," Grandma said. "And the S.T.A.R. strategy can help you figure it out when you're not sure."

Ollie jumped in. "Let's use the S.T.A.R. strategy right now! First, we **\*\*Stop\*\***—let's take a deep breath and pause before we make any decisions."

Sammy took a deep breath, and the group followed along.

"Now, let's **\*\*Think\*\***," Ollie continued. "What are the possible consequences of running across the street without looking?"

"It could be really dangerous," Sammy said, thinking it through. "I could get hurt."

"Right," Grandma said. "That's your brain helping you predict the outcome. So, what's the next step?"

**\*\*Act\*\***," Harriet said. "We need to make a safe choice."

"And the safe choice is not to do the dare," Sammy said firmly. "It's not worth the risk."

"Exactly," Grandma said proudly. "And finally, you'll **\*\*Reflect\*\*** afterward on how it felt to make a smart, safe decision. Peer influence can be strong, but when you stop and think about what's really going on, you can make better choices."

Buzz buzzed nervously. "I didn't mean for it to be dangerous. I just thought it would be fun."

Sammy smiled at Buzz. "It's okay, Buzz. We can still have fun, but let's choose dares that won't get us hurt."

The group nodded in agreement, and they started coming up with safer, funnier dares. They spent the rest of the afternoon laughing and enjoying each other's company, but this time, they made sure to keep things safe.

As they walked home, Sammy felt good about the decision they had made. He had learned that peer influence could be strong, but it was important to think for himself and make sure that the choices he made were safe and smart.

Grandma walked alongside them with a smile. "Remember, Sammy, your friends can be a positive influence when you support each other in safe and healthy ways. But when you're unsure, it's always okay to stop, think, and decide what's best for you. That's true self-awareness."

Sammy felt proud. "Thanks, Grandma. I'm going to make sure I use the S.T.A.R. strategy whenever I'm feeling pressured. It helps me see things more clearly."

And from that day on, Sammy and Buzz, and their friends learned to be more aware of how their peer group could influence their emotions and decisions. They made a pact to support each other in positive ways, and whenever they felt unsure, they knew they could use the S.T.A.R. strategy to help them make safe, responsible choices.

## Post-Chapter Teacher Script

- **Teacher:** “Buzz and Sammy learned that their friends could be both a positive or a negative influence, and if they aren’t sure, they should use the S.T.A.R. Strategy to decide what’s best for them.”

## Post-Chapter Questions

Ask these questions to help students reflect on the chapter and connect it to their own experiences:

- How did Buzz’s excitement influence the group at first?
- Why was it important for Sammy to stop and think before acting?
- What would you do if you felt pressured by a friend to do something risky?
- Can you think of a time when a friend encouraged you to make a good choice?
- Why is peer influence sometimes hard to recognize?
- How can asking questions help when you feel unsure?
- How did using the S.T.A.R. strategy help Sammy and his friends stay safe?
- What are some ways you can be a positive influence on your friends?
- How does reflecting on a decision help you make better choices next time?
- What will you do the next time a friend asks you to do something you’re unsure about?

## Do an Activity (20 minutes)

- Students will practice recognizing peer influence and deciding whether that influence is positive or negative.

## Please choose from the following 2 activities:

### Activity 1: Sorting Positive and Negative Peer Influence (15 minutes)

#### Introduce Activity

"Now we’re going to play a sorting game to help us understand the difference between positive and negative peer influence."

## Activity Instructions

- Provide each student with peer influence scenarios (e.g., "A friend encourages you to help clean up after an activity" vs. "A friend dares you to skip school").
- Students will sort the scenarios into two categories: Positive Peer Influence and Negative Peer Influence.
  - Discuss as a group why each scenario is positive or negative.

Here are 10 peer influence scenarios, both positive and negative, to help students practice recognizing the difference between positive and negative peer influence:

### Positive Peer Influence Scenarios:

1. A friend encourages you to study together for an upcoming math test.
2. Your classmates invite you to join a group cleanup after a messy art project.
3. Your friend suggests you join them for a walk during recess to get some fresh air.
4. A friend asks you to volunteer with them at the school's recycling program.
5. Your friends decide to play a safe, cooperative game at recess instead of something dangerous.

### Negative Peer Influence Scenarios:

1. Your friends dare you to skip class to hang out at the park instead.
  2. A classmate dares you to climb a tree that looks a little too tall and risky.
  3. Your friend suggests you cheat on the test by copying their answers.
  4. A group of friends pressures you to ignore a new student because they think they're different.
  5. Your friends want you to throw trash on the ground, even though there's a trash bin nearby.
- These scenarios give students a chance to identify whether the peer influence is encouraging safe, responsible behavior or encouraging risky or harmful behavior.

### Discussion:

- "How did you decide which scenarios were positive and which were negative?"
- "What would you do if a friend asked you to do something you thought was unsafe?"

## Activity 2: S.T.A.R. Reflection Sheet (15 minutes)

### Introduce Activity

"Now that we know how to recognize peer influence, let's practice using the S.T.A.R. strategy to make good decisions."

## Activity Instructions

- Provide each student with a S.T.A.R. Reflection Sheet that includes sections for each step: Stop, Think, Act, Reflect.
- Present the situation - "Your friend dares you to climb a tree that looks a little too tall for you."
- Have students write or draw how they would use the S.T.A.R. strategy to handle the situation.

Discussion:

- "Why is it important to stop and think before making a decision?"
- "How can the S.T.A.R. strategy help you make safer choices?"

## Review and Reflection Teacher Script

### 1. Gather in a Circle for Reflection:

- o "Let's all come back together in a circle."

### 2. Closing



"Today, we learned about peer influence and how it can sometimes lead us to make decisions that aren't safe. But by using the S.T.A.R. strategy, we can stop, think, act wisely, and reflect on our choices. Let's remember to ask questions

when we feel unsure and always choose to stay safe."

Ask students:

- "What's one thing you learned today about peer influence?"
- "How will you use the S.T.A.R. strategy in the future?"

## Home Connection Letter

### 1. Sending Information Home:

- o "Before you go, I have a letter for you to take home. It explains that we learned about peer influence and how to determine whether it is positive or negative and to use the S.T.A.R. Strategy when in doubt."
- o Hand out the letters as the children prepare to leave.

## Parent Letter

Sending Information Home:

- Provide each child with a letter to take home to their parents explaining the lesson.



Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s),

Today in class, we learned about peer influence and how friends can sometimes encourage each other to make good or risky choices.

Your child learned how to recognize positive and negative peer influence and how to use the S.T.A.R. strategy (Stop, Think, Act, Reflect) to make safe, responsible decisions.



We discussed how important it is to stop and think when they feel pressured and to ask questions before making choices.

We encourage you to talk to your child about what they learned today. Ask them to share how they would handle situations where they might feel pressured by peers.

Working together, we can help them develop strong decision-making skills and confidence in choosing what's best for them.

Best Regards,

# ***S.T.A.R. Strategy***



**Stop  
Think  
Act  
Reflect**



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# ***S.T.A.R. Reflection on Peer Influence***

Your friend dares you to climb a tree that looks a little too tall for you.

What do you do?

***STOP***

***THINK***

***ACT***

***REFLECT***

# ***Peer Influence***

Draw a line from the statement to whether it is positive or negative

Your friends dare you to skip class to hang out at the park instead.

Your classmates invite you to join a group cleanup after a messy art project.

Your friends decide to play a safe, cooperative game at recess instead of something dangerous.

Your friends want you to throw trash on the ground, even though there's a trash bin nearby.

A friend encourages you to study together for an upcoming math test

A classmate dares you to climb a tree that looks a little too tall and risky.

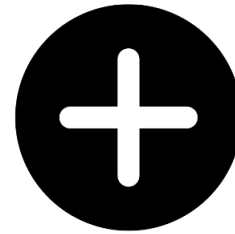
Your friend suggests you cheat on the test by copying their answers.

A group of friends pressures you to ignore a new student because they think they're different.

A friend asks you to volunteer with them at the school's recycling program.

Your friend suggests you join them for a walk during recess to get some fresh air.

***Positive***



***Negative***

