

PURPOSE

To help students understand how our brains can be influenced by our hormones and peers, and how we can become better at self-determination in this area.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of the lesson students will be able to:

1. Understand the impact of certain hormones on the brain and their relationship to trying riskier activities.
2. Understand the positive and negative influence of peers at this stage in our development.
3. Understand the importance of self-determination and that this is something we can practice throughout our lives.
4. Learn some ways to talk to our friends and parents/teachers if we need help to get out of a situation.

MATERIALS & RESOURCES

- **Lesson 7.7 teenMEN** powerpoint
- **Think and Write: Positive Peer Influences**
- **Worksheet: Script the Situation**

VOCABULARY

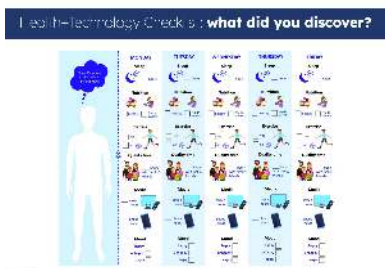
- **Hormones:** Chemical signals that travel in the bloodstream, directing the activity of every system in the body.
- **Hormonal feedback:** When a hormone that has been produced in the body feeds back to the brain to either increase or decrease its own production.
- **Testosterone:** A hormone that stimulates the development of male characteristics.
- **Peer:** People who are around you and at the same level as you (e.g., people in your grade, on your sports team, etc.).

- **Peer Influence:** When one's peers influence one to do something. Peer influence can be positive or negative.
- **Self-determination:** Self-determination is being in control of your emotions, habits, and behaviors.
- **Scripts:** Things that we have practiced saying so that they come to mind easily when needed.

PREPARATION

- ☐ Print the **Think and Write: Positive Peer Influences** for each student.
- ☐ Print four copies of **Script the Situation Worksheet** for each group.

Step 1 (5 minutes): Health and Technology Checklist



Talk to the students about what they discovered: do they spend more time on screens than they thought? Do they spend more time on their phone than they do with friends or family? Did they notice any patterns with screen time and mood? Exercise and mood? Have an open discussion with the class.

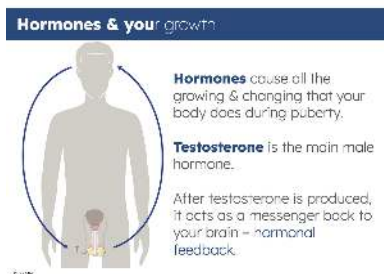
Step 2 (5 minutes): Technology: Better or the Best?

Technology Review	teenMEN Better or the BEST?	teenMEN Better or the BEST?
Julian has a big track meet on Thursday. It's Tuesday night. His buddies are gaming tonight. They usually stay up until 11:00pm when they play. Should he do it? a) Yes! It's gonna be fun! b) No. Track is really important to him and if he wants to do well, he needs to get enough sleep every night and not just the night before his meet. c) Maybe he can play with them until 9pm and then still have a decent bed time.	Jay says he's going to bed around 9:30 pm. But he's been staying up in his room watching Tik Tok until almost 2am. He feels sleepy and grumpy a lot. What can he do? a) He can still use his phone, but he needs to watch his bedtime. b) His bedtime is too late and he might be watching stuff on Tiktok that is affecting his mood. c) Nothing. If his parents don't care when he goes to sleep, it's fine.	

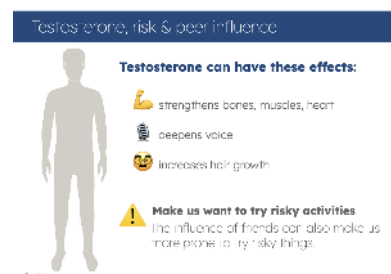
Read each of the four scenarios aloud to the class, and have students critically evaluate which option is the better thing to choose and and which option would be the BEST.

Step 3 (10 minutes): Review Testosterone + Think and Write: Positive Peer Influences

Ask: What controls the activity of every system in the body? Yes, hormones! We really know that by now!



Hormones are directed by your brain! There are a lot of different hormones at work in your body. We have already learned about testosterone. After your body produces testosterone in your testes, testosterone acts as a messenger *back* to your brain. This is called hormonal feedback.



We already know that testosterone does a lot of very important things in our bodies. It helps us grow muscles, it helps us grow facial hair, it makes our voices deeper. Testosterone can also make us want to try riskier activities. This is not always a bad thing. When we need to help someone, for instance, testosterone, along with other hormones, makes us act quickly and take the risk to pull our friend out of a rushing river.

However, sometimes testosterone makes us want to try risky things that are not good for us or others. Another thing that can make us want to try riskier behaviors is the

influence of our friends. There is research to show that, sometimes in the presence of our peers, we choose worse things just because they are around us. If we had been alone, we might have chosen differently.

Of course, if we choose our friends wisely, they can also be a good influence on us.

Testosterone, risk & peer influence

Excellent friends may cause these risks:

- Help us become better. They encourage and competitively challenge us to do good things.
- They give us the courage to stand up for our convictions.
- Inspire leadership. They always show respect to others, which is why people respect them.

Friends can help us improve or competitively challenge us. Friends can inspire us to be better, give us the courage to stand up for our convictions, help out with a good cause and introduce us to other people. It's a gift to have good friends!

Think and Write: Positive Peer Influences

Pass out the Think and Write worksheet. Give students a couple of minutes to journal.

Think and Write

teenMEN

Think and Write

1. Write your name in the box.

2. Write a list of three positive peer influences that you have experienced.

3. Write a list of three negative peer influences that you have experienced.

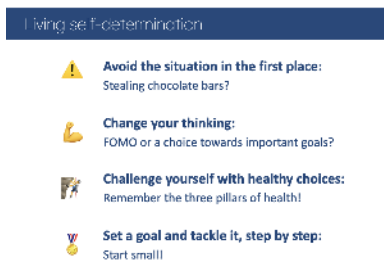
4. Write a list of three positive peer influences that you want to experience in the future.

Step 4 (5 minutes): Self-Determination

We can't blame testosterone or peer pressure for everything! We have to take responsibility for what we are doing. This can give us a lot of hope, because it means we are not robots! We are in control of what we are doing.



Self-determination is being in control of your emotions, habits, and behaviors. It is the ability to make yourself do the things you know you should do, even if you do not *want* to do them. It is the ability to respond rather than react. The good thing is that it can be learned! Even if we do not have a lot of self-determination now, we can work on it every day to get more of it.



Some ways that we can help ourselves and our friends to make good choices are to:

- Avoid the situation in the first place: for example, if we know that we are always tempted to steal chocolate bars from a certain store when we're with a certain group of friends, maybe we shouldn't go to that store or hang with those friends.
- Change your thinking: instead of thinking about how you're missing out on things, remind yourself that you're making a choice towards other important goals.
- Challenge yourself with healthy choices: take care of yourself and your hormones by getting enough sleep and eating delicious, healthy food.
- Make a goal and tackle it, step by step: you have to start somewhere! Even if it seems small, GO FOR IT and take the first step! It will feel great and you'll be closer to your goal!

Step 4 (10 minutes): Worksheet: Script the Situation

You might find it's easier to say no to things that aren't good for you, if you have a couple of responses that you've already thought through and prepared. You may also find it easier to say "no" in another kind of way, that makes it hard for your friends to disagree with you. For example, if someone is trying to get you to try smoking, instead of saying, "No. It's bad for your health." You could say, "it's not really my thing; I don't like how the smell sticks to your clothes."



Arrange students into four groups. Give each group the **Script the Situation Worksheet** and assign each group one of the scenarios. Have each group read and discuss the scenario, then, together, come up with a script (a few sentences that they can write down) in dealing with the situation. Inform groups that they can either read their script aloud or perform their script by acting out the scene in front of the class.

CONCLUSION

Testosterone is important for our healthy development. We have the ability to make our own healthy choices. We can practice self-determination so that we do not let negative influences from others make our choices for us. A true friend is someone who wants what is excellent for you and for your health and wellbeing. We can be this friend and leader for others. Thinking about a script for difficult situations can help you prepare for the real situation.

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