

Group Power — Help or Harm?

Suitable for:	Upper primary and secondary
Time:	20–30 minutes
Format:	Group discussion / positioning / scenario work
Evergreen:	Yes

The idea

Groups can make people feel safer, stronger and more connected.

But group power can also become pressure, exclusion or intimidation.

This activity asks:

When does group power help, and when does it become harmful?

1. Start with belonging

Ask pupils to think about what is good about being part of a group.

Possible answers might include:

- friendship
- support
- confidence
- shared interests
- feeling less alone
- having people to turn to

Then ask:

Can the same group also make someone feel pressured or excluded?

2. Use fictional scenarios

Give groups short examples such as:

A friendship group decides that one person should no longer be invited to sit with them.

Several pupils keep repeating a joke because everyone else is laughing.

Someone wants to leave a group chat but worries their friends will turn against them.

A group agrees to support a pupil who has been repeatedly targeted.

Ask:

How is the group using its power here?

3. Help or harm?

Create three areas in the room:

Helping Harming Depends

Read out different group actions and ask pupils to position themselves.

For example:

- standing beside someone who feels unsafe
- excluding one person “for a laugh”
- agreeing not to share a humiliating image
- keeping quiet because the group expects it
- encouraging someone to tell a trusted adult
- pressuring someone to join in
- challenging a friend privately
- spreading a rumour because everybody else is

Invite pupils to explain their choices.

There does not need to be complete agreement.

4. When does belonging become pressure?

Ask:

Why might someone do something in a group that they would not do alone?

Explore:

- fear of being left out
- wanting approval
- not wanting to appear weak
- copying others
- believing responsibility is shared
- thinking “everyone does it”

Then ask:

What might make it easier to resist that pressure?

5. Change the group norm

Give each group one harmful scenario and ask them to change the unwritten rule.

For example:

From:

“Everyone laughs.”

to:

“Nobody forwards it.”

Or:

“If someone is left out, someone checks in.”

Ask:

What would need to happen for that new rule to become normal?

6. Think about leadership

Ask:

Who influences a group?

Not only formal leaders.

It may be:

- the funniest person
- the most confident
- someone others copy
- someone willing to disagree
- the person who changes the subject
- the first person to say “enough”

Discuss how leadership can be used positively or negatively.

Final reflection

Complete:

“A group becomes safer when...”

and:

“One way I can resist harmful group pressure is...”

Key message

Groups have power. That power can protect, include and support, or it can pressure, isolate and harm.