

## Peer Pressure

Have you ever heard the word “peer pressure”, or 同調圧力 in Japanese? It originally means a feeling of tension caused by trying to cooperate with others. However these days in Japan, it likely means the pressure by the majority on the opinions of the minority. Do you feel it around you? I feel it especially when I walk outside wearing a mask. Even if no one told me, I would still wear a mask. Somehow, I feel the weight of negative pressure.

I guess in many countries peer pressure exists, but in each country it exists differently. In English speaking societies, it is sometimes said to be the pressure to do things. On the other hand, in Japan it is the pressure not to do things rather than do things. For instance, in some discussion English speakers try to express their opinion clearly, while Japanese people just listen instead of speaking up.

Unfortunately sometimes peer pressure leads people to make the wrong decision. Here is a famous joke. On a sinking ship, there are not enough boats to save all the passengers from various countries. Therefore the crew asks American passengers to jump into the sea, saying “If you jump, you can be a hero.” To German, “You should jump into the sea. It is the rule.” To Japanese, “Everyone will jump.” We cannot laugh at this joke.

Also, bullying or いじめ in Japanese may be caused by peer pressure. Some people exclude someone just because he is different from them.

Does peer pressure have only bad influences on Japanese people? I do not think so. A proper amount of peer pressure could be very beneficial to us. Let me give you some examples. At school, all students are supposed to clean their classrooms and other places in turn. If someone in charge of the job is absent due to illness or something, another student will do it instead. As a result, the sense of mutual consideration will be built between them. Thanks to peer pressure, some students can concentrate on studying in libraries or public spaces better than at home. Maybe they are worried what other people in there will think of their manners.

In companies if you feel peer pressure from your boss, you will work hard to come up to his expectation. It is true that peer pressure often encourages Japanese people to work harder and care more about other people.

Working together, even if it is due to peer pressure, is very important. Also it can bring us much better results than we expect. Probably many of you have had such an experience before like me. In junior high school, I played many softball games as a team member. If a member commits an error in the game, the other members try hard to make it up, shouting encouragement. Our team worked like that many times. In sports, working together leads to good teamwork. It is the key factor especially in team sports.

Peer pressure is sometimes our enemy, but sometimes our good friend. Therefore, each of us should be brave and wise enough to make full use of peer pressure. Last month I visited Hiroshima Peace memorial Museum on a school trip. All the photos, pictures and objects we saw were so shocking that visitors were left speechless for a while. I think that people all over the world should visit this museum because they are afraid that their future may be destroyed by nuclear weapons of some cruel countries. Can we take action to stop having more victims? Yes, we can. People in this world must cooperate with each other to stop it. Japanese people are the only nation to have been hit by nuclear bombs. Therefore we must spread this message throughout the world as global peer pressure. In this way, peer pressure can be our greatest ally to overcome this challenge.