



Instructor Guide Unit 4: Lesson 2 Pressure to Obey

Lesson Objectives:

- The child will understand how people feel a lot of pressure to obey authority figures, and this can impact their behavior.
- The child will consider strategies for combating this tendency when necessary.

Fundamental Skills or Competencies: Responsible decision-making, Ethical responsibility, Social dynamics, Critical thinking

Time Needed: It is flexible, depending on which activities you choose.

Materials Needed:

- 4-2-8 *Assessment for Pressure to Obey* handout (1 per student)
- 4-2-5 *Scenario Cards* (1 set printed and cut out per child)
- 4-2-6 *Discussion Questions* handout (*Optional – 1 copy to project on a screen or 1 copy for each small discussion group*)
- Video Clip *Evil Like Me* from *Descendants* (3:11)
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PMFWFaSauVU>
- Video Clip *General Hux's Speech* from *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* (2:37)
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MPhHl2DpD4E>
- Screen on which to project video clips
- For visual art activity:
 - Copies of 4-2-7 *DIY Trading Cards* printed on cardstock (at least one sheet per child)
 - Scissors
 - Play-Doh, sculpey, or some other form of modeling clay
 - Pencils, crayons, markers, paper
- A copy of the following picture books to read aloud:
 - [I Am Rosa Parks](#) by Brad Meltzer
 - [I Dissent: Ruth Bader Ginsburg Makes Her Mark](#) by Debbie Levy
 - [The Judgmental Flower](#) by Julia Cook
- A copy of 4-2-4 *Sharing Circle Script for Pressure to Obey*

Part One: Watch Video on Pressure to Obey

Start by watching the ***Pressure to Obey Video for Kids***. If kids have trouble focusing, invite them to do 25 jumping jacks or another burst of intense physical activity for one minute before you start the video. After watching the video, you can move into Part Two below.

Part Two: Discussions on Pressure to Obey

Lesson Essential Questions: A person with authority is someone who is in charge of others and has more power. How does the role of authority impact how others behave? What can we do to ensure we are critical thinkers that question authority when necessary?

Introductory Hook/Question to Engage Students

Think about a time in a story or a show when someone in charge was pressuring other people to do something that wasn't right. For example, in *Aladdin*, near the end of the movie, Jafar pressures the palace guards to arrest the real Sultan. Jafar pressures people into acknowledging that *he* is the Sultan, because he is power-hungry.

Additional example of Pressure to Obey: Share a Pop Culture Story

- Explain that you are now going to recount a storyline from *Star Wars Episode 7: The Force Awakens*. Use the following script:

“In Star Wars Episode 7: The Force Awakens, the opening scene shows a squadron of First Order stormtroopers that have been sent to the planet of Jakku to recover a map to Luke Skywalker's secret location. When it is clear that the villagers do not have the map, the commander orders the stormtroopers to slaughter all the innocent villagers. One stormtrooper – Finn – is clearly distressed by this command, yet he feels enormous pressure to obey. Realizing that he can no longer obey the First Order, Finn flees and joins the Resistance.”

- Ask students how the pressure to obey affects the Stormtroopers as a group and Finn as an individual.

Discussion of Key Teaching Concepts About Pressure to Obey:

Key Concept One: The pressure to obey is a widely studied, very real power.

- Authority figures have great power in society. This power can be used positively or negatively.
- A positive example is when a superhero stands up for someone who is being bullied and shows other people that it's not okay to make fun of someone. A negative example is when an evil leader uses an army to attack innocent people.

Key Concept Two: When following orders, people tend to minimize their own responsibility, especially if they are causing harm to others.

- We engage in thinking that makes us feel like we aren't responsible for our actions. Here are a few examples of how that thinking occurs:
 1. We let ourselves become lost in a group, such as saying to ourselves, “*everyone else is acting the same way, so it must be ok*” or “*there are lots of other people here. I don't need to be the one to speak up, because someone else will.*”
 2. We look to an authority figure, such as by saying to ourselves, “*I am just a kid. There are adults/teachers/politicians/police officers/etc. here. They should know what to do.*”
 3. We blame the victim, such as by saying to ourselves, “*It is really their own fault anyway. They brought this on themselves.*”

Key Concept Three: You can take positive steps to help you identify when and how to question authority, especially if you are being asked to do something that feels wrong.

- This questioning can be very hard to do. So, here are a couple ways to prepare yourself for when and how to question authority:
 1. Practice Standing Out. If you are comfortable looking different and being noticed, you are more likely to feel confident challenging authority. Practice this by wearing something funny that makes others look at you or by doing something unusual, like walking backwards for a bit.
 2. Question the Rules. If you notice a rule that creates a contradiction in your head – where it does not seem quite right – you can ask questions. Ask for details about the rules, and get more information about **if** and **when** it might be acceptable to not follow them. For example, it might be acceptable to arrive to class late if it is because you stopped to help someone who needed it.

Discussion Questions: Tell children: “our goal is to teach you to be critical thinkers so you can identify when it is right to obey authority and when it might be okay to resist authority.”

- Use the handout *4-2-6 Discussion Questions for Pressure to Obey* to guide the conversation, either by projecting the questions on a screen or printing out handouts. You may break children into small groups to discuss the following questions, or you may facilitate a whole group discussion.
- If you break the children into small groups, allow them a few minutes to talk amongst themselves and then invite them to share their thinking with the whole group. The questions are also printed below:

Question 1: Why do people listen to authority figures, even when it conflicts with their own beliefs?

Question 2: Do you think the power of authority and the pressure to obey is a good or a bad thing? If you think it is bad, is there a way that it can be used positively?

Question 3: What can you do to ensure that you are a critical thinker when it comes to obeying authority?

Question 4: How can you identify when you should question authority and resist authority?

Part Three: Activity Options

- *For a one-page brief summary of quick activity options, please see 4-2-3 *Quick Guide to Breakout Activity Options for Pressure to Obey*.

Activity Option 1: Video Clip #1 *Evil Like Me* from *Descendants*

- Before watching, tell the children: “Mal is the daughter of Maleficent, and in this song, Maleficent is pressuring her daughter to be evil like she is. Notice how Mal’s facial expressions and body language change throughout the song. What is happening?”
- As a group, watch the music video *Evil Like Me* from *Descendants*, and please remember to choose “skip ads” on the video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PMFWFaSauVU>
- After watching, divide children into groups of 3-5. Have each group discuss the following questions:
 1. Who has more power, Mal or Maleficent?
 2. What did you notice about Mal’s expressions and body language?
 3. How do you think Mal felt about being evil at the beginning of the song?
 4. How do you think Mal felt about being evil at the end of the song?
 5. What do you think would have happened if Mal resisted the pressure to obey in this moment?
- Children may elect to create a skit showing what might have happened if Mal had resisted the pressure to obey Maleficent right away. (In the end of the movie, Mal does resist the pressure to obey Maleficent and chooses not to use the wand for harm).
- Invite groups who elected to make skits to perform them for the whole group.

Activity Option 2: Video Clip #2 from *Star Wars VII: The Force Awakens*.

This clip is of a speech given by General Hux to the First Order, instructing his evil army to use a massive weapon to destroy other planets that support the Republic. *Note: This clip could be too scary for younger children in your care. This activity is recommended for 4th grade and older.*

- Watch the video clip, and please remember to choose “skip ads” on the video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MPhHl2DpD4E>
- After watching, ask children to discuss as a group how the pressure to obey played a role in this scene.
 1. What might have happened if a member of the First Order refused to obey General Hux?
 2. How did the members of the First Order stand when they were in public? Why?
 3. What role does fear play in the pressure to obey authority figures?
 4. Why do you think a resistance group is important in *Star Wars*?

Activity Option 3: Scenarios for *What Would You Do?*

Before doing this activity, the instructor will print the sheet called *4-2-5 Scenario Cards Cutout* and cut out the eight scenario cards along the dotted lines. The teacher will pair up the children and hand one scenario card to each pair.

- Tell the children, “One person in each pair will read the scenario card aloud. Discuss what you would each do in this situation. After a few minutes, I will have you trade cards with another pair.” Every three minutes, invite children to trade scenarios until everyone has had a chance to discuss all eight scenarios.
- For primary students, the instructor can read aloud each scenario and invite children to discuss the scenarios in small groups. Allow several minutes for them to discuss each scenario before reading aloud the next one.
- If time permits, bring everyone back into one group and invite children to share their answers with the group as a whole.

Activity Option 4: Hold a full group Sharing Circle to discuss the Pressure to Obey.

- Please use the complete guided script for facilitators labeled *4-2-4 Sharing Circle Script on Pressure to Obey*. Allow 20-35 minutes for this activity, depending on how many rounds you complete and how large the circle is.

Activity Option 5: Read aloud and discuss a picture book about the Pressure to Obey.

We recommend the following books that embody the themes of this lesson plan. After reading each book aloud, ask the children how it relates to the idea of the power of authority and the pressure to obey. Children may draw pictures of the story as they listen.

- *I Am Rosa Parks* by Brad Meltzer
- *I Dissent: Ruth Bader Ginsburg Makes Her Mark* by Debbie Levy
- *The Judgmental Flower* by Julia Cook

Activity Option 6: Physical activity:

The children will explore the power of authority and the pressure to obey through physical games. They will practice ways to stand out safely.

1. **Follow the Leader:** Give each child a chance to be the leader of the line. The leader can ask everyone in the line to do whatever movements they like (i.e. sing, count, march, walk backwards, make a funny noise, hop, tiptoe, skip, crabwalk). If there is a movement someone feels unable or unwilling to do, make sure they know that it is always safe and acceptable to step out of the line and rejoin when they are ready.
2. **Show Your Strength:** Divide group into teams of 4-5 kids. One person is the Coach and the other kids are being trained for an Olympic team. The Coach picks a skill or a strength that the group must practice and instructs them what to do. (It could be a martial arts movement, speed training, yoga, push-ups, jumping jacks, etc.) Trade every five minutes until each child in the group has had a chance to be the Coach.
3. **Standing out in the Crowd:** Have the kids form a circle. Play a favorite style of music out loud. The instructor starts off by doing dance moves in the center of the circle for about 30 seconds before dancing back to the edge of the circle and tagging the next person to take a turn. Move clockwise around the circle, giving everyone a chance to be the focus in the center. Allow kids to determine how long they want to be the center of attention, with an upper limit of one minute. Some kids may only be comfortable with darting into the center of the circle for a second. Repeat the activity and encourage kids to stay longer in the center.

Activity Option 7: Drama/Theater activity:

The children will create skits about this week's theme, which is *Pressure to Obey*. Below are prompts.

- **Cramping Cupcakes:** "You are on a team that is competing for the state championship in whatever sport your group chooses. The night before the big event, all the teams are invited to a picnic together. Your coach has made cupcakes and added in a medicine that will give people a terrible stomachache so they will perform poorly the next day. The coach warns your team not to eat any of the cupcakes. What do you do you and your teammates do?"
- **Good or Bad? Hard to Tell:** Create a skit about a team of superheroes that wants to stop a war that is happening on Planet Earth. But in order to stop the bad guys, the superheroes also need to use destructive weapons. Some people on planet earth are saying that the superheroes are as dangerous as the villains and that they destroy too much property. What happens? These are real issues that leaders face.

Activity Option 8: Visual Art activity: Kids will do art projects that encourage critical thinking and standing out from the crowd.

- Print copies of template *4-2-7 DIY Trading Cards* onto cardstock paper. Instruct kids to draw unique personal trading cards for themselves. (include their name, a simple drawing of themselves, and a unique fact that makes them different from other people). Cut out the cards and have kids trade cards with peers they don't know well.
- **Make my own creature:** Using play-doh, sculpey, or modeling clay, kids will sculpt their own creature that will help them resist peer pressure by giving them strength. It could have traits from other known creatures (i.e. dragon wings, rhino horn, dog tail, cat ears). Kids can circle up and introduce their unique creature to the group.

Part Four: Assessment

If you want to do a formal assessment at the end, hand out one printed copy to each child of *4-2-8 Assessment for Pressure to Obey*. Ask the children to do the written exercise. For primary students, you can talk through this assessment as a discussion.

ANSWERS: The correct answers are indicated in bold.

- 1) Which of the following are reasons why we sometimes obey authority when we should not, and as a result, fail to act to help others?
 - a) *We let ourselves become lost in a group.*
 - b) *We look to an authority figure to act assuming they are more capable than we are.*
 - c) *We blame the victim involved.*
 - d) **All of the above**
- 2) It's possible for the pressure to obey to have positive effects.
 - a) **True**
 - b) False
3. Name (or describe) two ways you can prepare yourself to question authority. (Accept all reasonable answers.)
 - a) **Practice standing out**
 - b) **Question the rules**

*(Accept all reasonable answers. For example, if you notice a rule that creates a contradiction in your head, where it does not seem quite right, question it. Also, question the context. Ask for details about the rules, and get more information about **if** and **when** it might be acceptable to not follow them.)*

Accommodations/Modifications:

For diverse learners in your classroom, the written activities could be read aloud to a student or students if they have learning or reading difficulties. Students with social anxiety would not need to share their responses with the group.