

thESource *Jr. High Event*

Life...The Great Pressure Cooker

by Mike Heinz

Objectives

This event will allow junior high youth to:

1. Identify ways in which they deal with pressure in their life.
2. Recognize the positive and negative ways in which we deal with pressure.
3. Focus on God's grace in Jesus Christ so that they can respond with prayer and praise as a way of dealing with pressure.

Materials Needed

- One pressure cooker for every ten participants
- Ingredients (brought by teens) for chili, stew, or some other one-dish meal
- Words to "A-la-la-la-la-la-le-lu-jah" (from *Songs, Songs and Creations*, San Anselmo, CA)
- Newsprint and markers
- Pencils
- Cards with pressure-causing situations on them

Before the Event

Assign each participant to bring an ingredient for a one-dish meal such as chili or stew. Arrange with someone to prepare the meal using the pressure cooker(s).

Group Building

As people arrive, have them take their ingredients to the kitchen and wash or peel them (whatever is necessary to prepare the one-dish meal).

Learning Experience

1. The Pressure Cooker

Gather the group around the pressure cooker. As you toss the ingredients in, discuss how the pressure cooker accelerates the cooking process and how the gauge keeps the pressure constant and manageable. Then tell the group that the entire activity revolves around the theme of pressure and how we respond to it and that later in the activity we will apply the principles of Pressure Cooking to real life. Start the cooker and let it cook while the activity goes on.

2. Ways to Respond to Pressure

Print the definitions (found below) of FLIGHT, FIGHT, and YIELD on newsprint and post where everyone can see.

Responding to Pressures in Our Lives

There are three main ways we respond to pressures in our lives:

FLIGHT—"Run away" from the source of the pressure; find a way to avoid it for as long as possible.

FIGHT—Stand up to the source of the pressure, refusing to give in.

YIELD—Give into the immediate pressure; do what is easiest FOR RIGHT NOW.

Read aloud the following pressure situation and have the youth label the responses according to whether they are FLIGHT, FIGHT, or YIELD responses:

"C'mon, drink the beer! You can eat a couple of mints afterward and your folks will never know. Don't be such a nerd."

- Say, "No, thanks. I just don't like the taste." (Flight)
- Say, "No, thanks. I made a promise to my parents and to God that I wouldn't drink until I'm legal age." (Fight)
- Give in and drink "just one." After all, you're not going to get drunk. (Yield)

Which response do you think would have the most positive consequence for you?

Now discuss together what might be FLIGHT, FIGHT, or YIELD responses in the following situation:

Teacher: "Your assignment—a four page book report—is due in one week."

FLIGHT—

FIGHT—

YIELD—

Which response do you think would have the most positive results for you?

3. Cookin' in Small Groups

Divide the youth into groups of five to six. Place cards in the center of the room with pressure-inducing situations recorded on them (samples below). Each group grabs a card and records on newsprint at least one FIGHT, one FLIGHT, and one YIELD response for that card, also indicating possible consequences of each response and whether it is a positive or negative response. Display a newsprint sample looking something like this:

Pressure	Responses	Possible Consequences
	FLIGHT:	
	FIGHT:	
	YIELD:	

The cards might include the following situations:

- "Let me copy your math homework. And thanks—I knew I could count on you."
- "This is the last time I'm going to tell you! Sit down and do your homework RIGHT NOW!"
- Mom and Dad have a fight. As Dad storms out of the house, he says he wants a divorce.
- Your best friends tells someone else a secret you had shared in confidence. Now everybody at school knows.
- Your math teacher seems to like you better than other class members, who then exclude you and call you teacher's pet.
- Your English teacher seems to single you out for negative comments. Even your friends notice you are "picked on."
- The best-looking, most popular boy or girl in school (whom you really like) has just broken up with your best friend and has asked you to out on a date. Problem: Your best friend says he/she'll never speak to you again if you do.
- "You are going to church and Sunday school this morning and that's that! Now get out of bed!"

After the small groups have discussed several cards, have several groups share their responses to one or more of the cards with the whole group as time allows.

Worship

Gather the group around the pressure cooker containing the finished soup. Say something like: "Our lives are a lot like this pressure cooker. Pressure is generally a good thing. Just like the pressure in this pressure cooker makes the food inside cook faster, pressure in our lives often motivates us to achieve more, sooner. Without pressure, many of us would just slide along in life with no goals...and we'd probably be bored and unhappy. But when we're under pressure, we can really cook (pardon the pun!)."

"However, we all need ways to release the pressure when it gets too high. There is a special valve on the pressure cooker which releases steam when it reaches a certain point. Without that valve, the cooker itself would begin to bulge at the weakest point and could very well explode.

"Name some ways people 'explode' under pressure."

Allow youth to share some ideas, then continue with:

"A much better way is to let off steam before we explode. What are some ways we can let off steam? Let's list them in positive and negative columns on a sheet of newsprint.

"Because we are God's children because of Jesus Christ, we can come confidently to God and seek His promised help when we are under pressure."

Have someone read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, Matthew 7:7, and 1 Peter 5:7.

Say, "Let's spend a few moments in silent prayer for the pressures we are personally facing or for someone we know who is under pressure lately."

"Another way to release pressure is to praise God. Let's praise Him by standing and singing 'Al-la-la-la-la-la-le-lu-jah!'"

Refreshments

Eat the food in the pressure cooker. Thank God for how good it tastes!

Recreation

Play one or more of the group's favorite games as time allows. Release some of that pent up energy—this is synonymous with "junior high." Let off some steam!

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