

## Unit 7: Social Conformity

**Narrator:** Take a look at this crowded waiting room. These people may appear to be waiting for the eye doctor, but they're actually waiting for the first test subject in our hidden camera experiment. And here she is, right on time for her 12 o'clock appointment.

**Receptionist:** Hi. How are you doing?

**Narrator:** This woman thinks she's here for a free eye exam.

**Receptionist:** Have you been here before?

**Participant:** No, it's my first time.

**Narrator:** What she doesn't know is that everyone else in this room is working for us.

**Receptionist:** They'll be with you in just a couple of minutes.

**Narrator:** Today, we're running an experiment on social conformity—and the test starts now.

Did you hear that? These people sure did. It doesn't take long for our test subject to notice a pattern. Beep means stand up—but why? And if you were in her shoes, what would you do the next time the tone sounds? While you might think you make your decisions all on your own, when it comes to peer pressure, all too often your brain is just following the crowd.

After just three beeps and without knowing why she's doing it, this woman is now conforming perfectly to the group. But what happens if we take the group away?

**Assistant:** Elaine, please.

**Narrator:** OK, now she's alone. The crowd is gone, and nobody is watching her except our hidden cameras. What do you think she'll do?

She's now conforming to the rules of the group without the group even being there. Now, watch what happens when we introduce another outsider who doesn't know the rules.

**Receptionist:** Have a seat and they'll be out in just a couple minutes.

**Participant #2:** Great.

**Receptionist:** Thanks so much.

**Participant #2:** Why are you standing up?

**Participant:** Everybody was doing it, so I thought I was supposed to.

**Narrator:** We keep the cameras rolling as more unsuspecting patients arrive. And slowly but surely, what began as a random rule for this woman has now become the social norm for everyone in this waiting room.

This tendency for individuals to copy the actions of a larger group is what we call herd behavior. It's how we become socialized. And it's why even this rebel who wasn't standing for any of this nonsense eventually joined the ranks.