

- Today's youth are bombarded with advertising and promotion. Divide the class into groups and assign each a number of magazines to study, some targeted at adults and some targeted at youth. Have them find out how many tobacco advertisements can be found in each magazine, and calculate the percentage of pages devoted to cigarette advertising. In addition, have students discuss the look and feel of the ads, noting how healthy and colorful the people and locales appear. What message do these ads send about cigarettes and smoking in general? Discuss what kinds of magazines have the most cigarette ads and why.
- Using some of the anti-smoking sites listed in the *Internet Resources* section as guides, have students develop their own anti-smoking campaign. Come up with an original name for the campaign, develop and utilize posters, flyers and handbills, and arrange for a day when a guest speaker can come and talk to students about issues they raise.
- Conduct your own "Great Smoking Debate" in class, splitting students into two groups to debate the pros and cons of smoking. Instruct students to research the topic in preparation, making clear that students should play devil's advocate in spite of their personal take on the matter.

Internet Resources

Periodically, Internet Resources are updated on our web site at www.LibraryVideo.com.

ash.org/teens.html

ASH — Action on Smoking and Health — offers answers to pre-teens and teens on smoking and non-smoking rights.

www.cdc.gov/tobacco/tips4youth.htm

"Tips 4 Youth," a special anti-smoking site sponsored by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, presents important facts, a message from the Surgeon General, a tobacco quiz and a variety of other resources to help understand the ugly truth about tobacco.

www.costkids.org/

Founded by 43 middle-school students, the group Children Opposed to Smoking Tobacco encourages teenagers to take control of the teen smoking debate.

(Continued)

www.tobaccofreekids.org/

Web site sponsored by the Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids, the country's largest non-government initiative ever launched to protect children from tobacco addiction and exposure to second-hand smoke.

Suggested Print Resources

- Graves, Bonnie. *Tobacco Use*. Capstone Pres, Mankato, MN; 2000.
- Houghton, Emma and Nicola Baird. *A Right to Smoke?* Sea to Sea Publications, North Mankato, MN; 2005
- Weitzman, Elizabeth. *Let's Talk about Smoking*. Rosen Publishing Group, New York, NY; 2003.

TEACHER'S GUIDE CONSULTANT

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TITLES IN THIS SERIES

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THE DANGERS OF SMOKING
WHY KIDS SMOKE

■ *Grades 7-12* ■

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The Dangers of Smoking

Why Kids Smoke

Grades 4-6

This guide is a supplement designed for teachers to use when presenting either *The Dangers of Smoking* or *Why Kids Smoke* from the series *Smokin': Somebody Stop Me!*

Before Viewing: Give students an introduction to the program by discussing the topic with them. Select pre-viewing discussion questions and vocabulary to provide a focus for students when they view the program.

After Viewing: Review the program and vocabulary, and use the follow-up questions and activities to inspire further discussion. Encourage students to research the topic further with the Internet and print resources provided.

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Overview

Statistically we have very little information to substantiate exactly how many grade-school children smoke. Most of the nationwide and local surveys on tobacco use among children focus on grades 7 through 12, but even in those studies, around 20% of the respondents said that they first used tobacco before the age of 12. While smoking may not be a normal activity for children in grades 4 through 6 — let alone anyone, for that matter — it is important to address the subject before a child actively starts.

By this time in their lives, children have undoubtedly come into contact with a friend or family member who smokes. They are also on the threshold of the years when peer pressure may force them into situations where smoking a cigarette ensures feeling comfortable within a group of friends and serves as a showcase for rebellion against adult influences. On top of these personal factors, children today are externally bombarded with advertising and promotions that portray smoking as cool, sexy and the “in-thing” to do. It is estimated that the tobacco industry spends about six billion dollars a year on advertising and promotion, or \$24 on every man, woman and child in the United States.

Nicotine is a drug that is as addictive as heroin, cocaine and alcohol. While alcohol and other illegal drugs are more likely to be administered on a more periodic basis, the nicotine in cigarettes is self-administered on a regular and patterned basis every day of the year for most smokers. In the short-term, smoking interferes with active participation in sports and life in general, while in the long-term, smoking causes poor health and premature death.

So what can young people do to avoid becoming smokers? The first thing they can do is to recognize that in order to be liked and respected by their peers, their biggest asset is themselves — who they are and not who they might pretend to be. The second thing is to recognize that the tobacco companies’ primary purpose is to make a profit. Because cigarette smoking is responsible for so many premature deaths each year, the tobacco companies have to recruit new smokers. The third thing is to recognize that most young people, of any age, do not smoke. Smoking is not the norm — it is the abnormal behavior.

Vocabulary

nicotine — The natural substance found in tobacco plants that acts as the chief addictive ingredient in cigarettes. Named for Jean Nicot, a French ambassador to Portugal who sent tobacco seeds to Paris in 1550. *(Continued)*

peer pressure — The act of being forced into doing something one would not normally do in order to fit in with a group. Usually associated with children being pushed into situations involving drugs, alcohol or sex by their peers. One out of every three kids use tobacco by the age of 15, encouraged in large part by their friends.

addiction — Being physically and sometimes emotionally dependent on a drug. In the case of cigarettes, smokers form an addiction to nicotine, which, when broken, brings about symptoms of withdrawal that can include anxiety, insomnia and weight gain.

puberty — The period when children begin maturing sexually and in turn begin seeking a greater range of independence from adult influences and authority.

advertising and promotion — The selling of an image to potential smokers that smoking is a cool, hip thing to do. Up until the tobacco settlements that were implemented in 1998, tobacco companies were active and creative in efforts to draw attention to tobacco products, even when the potential consumer was an under-age child.

Pre-viewing Discussion

- Ask students to share their experiences with smoking and discuss their feelings towards family and friends who smoke. Have them explain what they think it is about smoking that draws so many people to the habit.
- Discuss with students the many reasons that kids start to smoke. According to a recent survey, 35% of U.S. high school students consider themselves current smokers, which means they have smoked one or more cigarettes in the past month. Why do young people smoke in spite of knowing the long-term health consequences? Introduce them to the concept of peer pressure, and relate how commercial advertising and the natural need to rebel push many towards tobacco products.
- Using information from the *A Closer Look* section, explain to the class what nicotine is, detailing that in its purest form, nicotine is a very powerful natural insecticide found in tobacco plants for the purpose of driving off insects that would eat the plant.

A Closer Look: Nicotine

If cigarettes did not contain nicotine, it is likely very few people would smoke them. Nicotine is a naturally occurring part of the tobacco plant and is, for the most part, colorless and odorless. It is thought to have evolved in the tobacco plant as a means to drive off insects that would eat the plants, and, in its purest form, is a very powerful insecticide. *(Continued)*

Nicotine is addictive for several reasons. One reason is the speed with which the nicotine gets to nicotinic receptors in the brain thereby making cigarettes an extremely efficient drug delivery device. Carried there by tar droplets in the cigarette smoke, nicotine reaches the brain in about seven seconds. In comparison, it would take about 14 seconds for the nicotine to reach the brain if injected directly into a vein with a needle.

A second reason nicotine is so addicting is the number of times it is used. Under most circumstances, a smoker will take ten three-second puffs off any given cigarette. A pack contains 20 cigarettes. If a person smokes 20 cigarettes a day and takes ten puffs off each cigarette, that is 200 hits of nicotine to the brain every day with each puff delivering nicotine to the brain within seven seconds.

This may be very rewarding to the nicotine receptors, but it is extremely damaging to the body. Nicotine is a vasoconstrictor. This means that it causes the blood vessels to become smaller than normal, so the blood has a more difficult time flowing through the vessels of a smoker than through those of a non-smoker.

Every year in the United States, over 400,000 people die prematurely due to smoking-related illnesses. It is more than all deaths attributed to suicide, homicide, accidents, alcohol, illicit drug use and HIV/AIDS combined.

Follow-up Discussion & Activities

- Discuss and role play various scenarios where peer pressure is evident, demonstrating that it is all right to say no in situations where friends push one to smoke while offering advice on taking a stand despite others in a group who might say otherwise.
- Most youths, regardless of age, overestimate the percentage of youth who smoke and often misperceive the percentage of kids their age who approve of smoking. Have students create anonymous questionnaires and take them home to survey their peers. Have them report back to class on how many kids their age have tried a cigarette, how many are current smokers, the percentage who think that smoking is cool and whether those friends would approve or disapprove of another friend becoming a smoker.

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