



RIGHT DECISIONS

**BE
NICOTINE
FREE**

RIGHT NOW



Remember to read the
overview booklet
before starting
the unit

MESSAGE TO EDUCATORS

It is a fact that most young people do not use tobacco or other nicotine products.¹ But, research also shows that young people are most likely to try smoking for the first time between the ages of 11 and 13, or grades 6–7.²

Results from a nationwide survey of 8th graders showed that smoking initiation more than doubled from 6th to 8th grade, from 6.6% to 13.3%.² Your students are at an age when they might be considering experimenting with tobacco and nicotine products—some may have already. With your guidance and the activities in this booklet, your students can learn the facts and skills to help keep them nicotine free.

This booklet is part of the Right Decisions Right Now: Be Nicotine Free educational program designed to help prevent young people from using nicotine products (cigarettes, vapes, smokeless tobacco, nicotine pouches and any other forms). Developed by Lifetime Learning Systems, Inc.; updated and adapted to a digital format by BKFK; references and footnotes updated by Young Minds Inspired (YMI); and funded by R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company, RDRN: Be Tobacco Free is an evidence-based program that was tested in middle – and junior-high schools in 2006 with students in grades 5 through 9, followed by a replication study conducted in 2007. In 2024, the program was updated and reviewed to ensure the content reflects evolving trends in youth tobacco and nicotine use. Youth smoking rates among middle and high school students have declined over the past decade, but e-cigarette use is on the rise.¹

The program includes digital activities and a unit quiz for grade 7 on the RDRN: Be Nicotine Free website, at <http://www.rightdecisionsrightnow.com/activity/grade-7/activity-1-tobacco-survey/>. Instructions for implementing the activities and quiz are included. In addition, reproducible activities and a unit quiz for grade 7 can be found on pages 16 through 26 of this booklet, along with instructions for implementing them.

Before starting the unit, read the Overview Booklet for background information about the program, its components, and how it works. The Overview Booklet also contains facts about tobacco and nicotine use among young people, a developmental chart (with tips for teachers), resources and references, and information you can share with your students about peer pressure and peer influence.

To use this program most effectively with your 7th grade students, complete all of the activities on the website, and/or in the booklet, in the order in which they are presented.

The activities are divided into three categories:

■ **Keeping Healthy** – This section includes a survey to determine students’

perceptions about tobacco and nicotine, their understanding of its effects, and their experience with it. In addition, it includes activities to educate students about the health consequences of tobacco and nicotine use.

■ **How Friends Fit In (Interpersonal Skills)** – In this section, students explore their relationships with others. The activities focus on peer relationships and how peer pressure, influence, and acceptance may affect their lives. There are also activities on refusal skills to help equip students with strategies for saying “no.”

■ **How I am (Intrapersonal skills)** – This section has students look at how they act, feel, and think. Topics covered include self-esteem, social image, decision-making skills, and personal values (what is important to each student). The activities are designed to provide students with a chance to practice decision making and to empower them to make healthy decisions.

Digital and print activities with the same number and title are based on the same content, but in some cases, wording and format will vary based on manner of presentation.

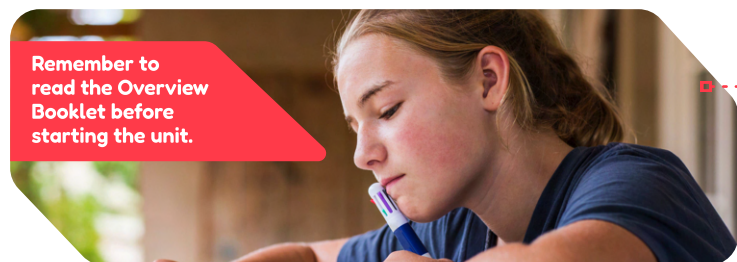
The quiz should be used after students complete the activities and lessons. It is designed to help you assess their understanding of the content. The digital version of the quiz includes True/False, Multiple Choice, and Fill-in-the-Blanks questions. The print version of the quiz includes multiple-choice questions and short-answer responses.

This program also contains nicotine-free pledges for students and parents. PDFs of the pledges can be found on the website at www.rightdecisionsrightnow.com/resources/pledge-forms/. Print versions of the pledges that you can copy and distribute are included in this booklet.

Posters and extension lesson ideas are included in the program to complement this unit. Information about how and when to use these components to supplement these lessons can be found in the Overview Booklet.

Also Available: Supplemental videos and accompanying teacher’s guides are available at www.rightdecisionsrightnow.com. Look for the video icon in this booklet for suggestions on when to incorporate the three video segments into your lessons.

Remember to read the Overview Booklet before starting the unit.



The educational resources listed or linked to in this publication are provided as a convenience. R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company (RJRT) is not responsible for the content of those materials. The statements and views in those materials do not necessarily represent the views of RJRT or its management.

¹ CDC. Smoking & Tobacco Use. Fact Sheet—Youth and Tobacco Use: Estimates of Current Tobacco Use Among Youth. Referenced 2024. www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/youth_data/tobacco_use/

² Miech, R. A., Johnston, L. D., O’Malley, P. M., Bachman, J. G., & Schulenberg, J. E. (2016). Monitoring the Future National Survey Results on Drug Use, 1975–2015: Volume I. Secondary School Students. Ann Arbor: Institute for Social Research, The University of Michigan. Referenced 2024. <https://nida.nih.gov/research-topics/trends-statistics/monitoring-future>

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ACTIVITY
ONE**TAKE A TOBACCO AND NICOTINE SURVEY****Skills:** Assessing risks and consequences
Approx. Time: 25 minutes25
minutes

Early adolescence is a time in which significant changes in attitudes and behaviors are typical. One of these behaviors may involve experimentation with tobacco and nicotine.³ At the same time, young people are becoming more independent and may start to spend more time with their friends. They will get a lot of their information (or misinformation) from their friends, potentially causing them to make decisions they will later regret. Teaching students the health consequences of tobacco and nicotine use in this program is one important way to communicate the facts and help them make the decision to be nicotine free.

This activity is a student survey designed to help you launch your nicotine prevention unit and generate class discussion. It is a two-part survey that will give you insight into your students' experience with tobacco or nicotine products, their perceptions about their use, and their prior knowledge of the topic. This information can help you more effectively implement this unit and address students' questions and concerns. The topics presented in the survey will be addressed throughout the program materials. For example, students will be provided with facts related to the health consequences of tobacco and nicotine use, along with reasons why some adolescents choose to use nicotine products, and why most choose to remain nicotine free.

Part One of the survey asks students about their experience with tobacco and nicotine. It includes

questions taken from the CDC's National Youth Tobacco Survey (NYTS) 2024 Questionnaire, a survey that can be used to estimate current use of tobacco products and selected indicators related to tobacco and nicotine use among U.S. middle school and high school students. These surveys are periodically done by the government to assess tobacco and nicotine use. The survey and report are available online at <https://www.fda.gov/tobacco-products/youth-and-tobacco/results-annual-national-youth-tobacco-survey-#2023%20Findings%20on%20Youth%20Tobacco%20Use> (Referenced 2024)

Part Two of the survey consists mostly of open-ended questions that ask students what they think or know about the prevalence and health consequences of tobacco and nicotine use, quitting, and why some young people use tobacco. Students are also asked if they've ever felt pressured to use tobacco or nicotine.

Since the survey asks students about their personal experience with tobacco and nicotine, it should be done independently and anonymously.

Once the survey is complete, share with your students the facts listed in the answer key to dispel misperceptions they may have about tobacco and nicotine use, and to reinforce the message that most young people are nicotine free.



ACTIVITY ONE (CONTINUED): TAKE A TOBACCO AND NICOTINE SURVEY

Before starting the activity, ask your students:

- What have you learned about tobacco and nicotine?
- What/who has given you information about smoking, vaping or use of other tobacco and nicotine products? (e.g., television/media, magazines/ books, parents/family members, teachers, peers/friends)

Explain to your class that they are going to take a survey about tobacco and nicotine. And, let them know that they will learn facts about tobacco and nicotine use and tips for coping with peer pressure in this unit.

Copy and distribute the activity. Tell students not to put their names on the pages because you will collect them afterward and you want the sheets to be anonymous. Encourage them to answer the questions as honestly as they can. Let them know that the first eight questions ask them about their experience with tobacco and nicotine and are only going to be used by you to get a sense of what they have experienced. Inform them that once they are done with the survey, you will share some information with them related to Part Two. Explain that being informed is an important element of making the right decisions. Encourage students to volunteer answers during your discussion if they feel comfortable. Once you have completed all activities, please dispose of all student surveys.



ANSWERS PART ONE:

Answers will vary.

1– 8. Review the answers students provided for questions one through eight. This will give you a sense of your students' experience with tobacco and nicotine, but should not be shared with the students.

PART TWO:

1–3. Explain to students that most young people do not smoke or vape. Only about 1 of every 100 middle school students (1.0%) reported that they had smoked cigarettes in the past 30 days, and 1 out of every 30 middle school students (3.3%) reported that they had used electronic cigarettes (vapes) in the past 30 days.¹ (Current is defined as having used tobacco on at least one day in the 30 days preceding the survey.) Point out to students that the younger people are when they start smoking, the more likely they are to become addicted.⁴

4. Ask students if they want to volunteer answers about why young people use tobacco and nicotine. Note their answers on the board. Explain to your students that some of the reasons young people try or start to use tobacco or nicotine include:^{4,5}

- They don't feel good about themselves (low self-esteem and self-image).
- They don't know about the health consequences of smokeless tobacco.
- They think lots of people smoke or vape (overestimating number of people who smoke/vape).
- They don't realize that they can become addicted (not understanding the addictive potential of nicotine).

5. Ask students if they want to volunteer answers about why they think young people choose to be tobacco and nicotine free. Explain that some people may choose to be tobacco and nicotine free because:^{4,5}

- Their friends don't use tobacco or nicotine.
- They know about the health consequences.
- They want to be nicotine free.

7. Explain to students that some young people try tobacco and nicotine because of a "lack of self-efficacy in the ability to refuse offers to use it,"⁴ or they don't know how to tell their friends they don't want to try it.

Explain to students that people their age are sometimes pressured to use tobacco and nicotine, and that pressure can be difficult to handle. Let them know that in this unit they are going to learn some ways to say "no" and cope with peer pressure so they can be nicotine free.

¹ CDC. Smoking & Tobacco Use. Fact Sheet Youth and Tobacco Use: Current Estimates of Youth Tobacco Use. Referenced 2024. www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/youth_data/tobacco_use/index.htm

⁴ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Preventing Tobacco Use Among Youth and Young Adults: A Report of the Surgeon General. Atlanta, Georgia: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, Washington, D.C., 2012. Referenced 2024. <http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/reports/preventing-youth-tobacco-use/full-report.pdf>

⁵ CDC. Guidelines for School Health Programs to Prevent Tobacco Use and Addiction. MMWR 1994; Vol. 43, No. RR-2: 1-18. Referenced 2024. <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/PDF/RR/RR4302.pdf>

ACTIVITY ONE (CONTINUED): TAKE A TOBACCO AND NICOTINE SURVEY

If students volunteer stories, remind them not to use names. Listen to their concerns and explain to students that feeling pressure from friends happens, but that they will learn some ways to deal with the pressure

8. Explain to students that there are health consequences related to tobacco use. According to the Surgeon General, symptoms such as coughing, shortness of breath, nausea, and phlegm production can develop in young people who smoke.⁴ Youth and young adults are also uniquely at risk for long-term, long-lasting effects of exposing their developing brains to nicotine. These risks include nicotine addiction, mood disorders, and permanent lowering of impulse control. Nicotine also changes the way synapses are formed, which can harm the parts of the brain that control attention and learning.¹ Tell them that they will learn more about the health consequences in Activities 2 and 3. If students want to volunteer answers, write them on the board and then revisit the list when you read Activity 2.

9. Students might have heard that quitting nicotine is difficult, but they may not know why. Read to your students the following passage from the Surgeon General's Report "Preventing Tobacco Use Among Young People":⁶

Most young people who smoke regularly are already addicted to nicotine, and they experience this addiction in a manner and severity similar to a manner and severity similar to what adult smokers experience. Most adolescent smokers report that they would like to quit smoking and that they have made numerous, usually unsuccessful attempts to quit. Many adolescents say that they intend to quit in the future and yet prove unable to do so. Those who try to quit smoking report withdrawal symptoms similar to those reported by adults.⁶

Students will learn more about addiction in Activity Three.

10. Answers will vary. However, explain to your students that a survey of teens reports that 65% strongly dislike being around smokers.

For additional information on factors that influence young people to use tobacco and nicotine and for reasons most of them abstain, review the Overview Booklet.

To end the lesson, display the "Nicotine: Myth or Reality?" poster and review the content with your students. The poster will reinforce the message that most young people are tobacco and nicotine free.



¹ <https://e-cigarettes.surgeongeneral.gov/knowtherisks.html#:~:text=Youth%20and%20young%20adults%20are,permanent%20lowering%20of%20impulse%20control.>

⁶ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Preventing Tobacco Use among Young People: A Report of the Surgeon General. Atlanta, Georgia: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 1994.

ACTIVITY TWO

TOBACCO AND NICOTINE USE - THE HEALTH CONSEQUENCES

Skills: Assessing risks and consequences
Approx. Time: 10 minutes



Young people often feel invincible. They may think using nicotine like smoking and vaping causes health problems for adults, but that those same health risks won't apply to them. According to the CDC, "many children and adolescents do not understand the nature of tobacco addiction and are unaware of, or underestimate the important health consequences of tobacco use."⁵ This activity outlines and explains some of the health consequences caused by cigarettes, vapes and smokeless tobacco. Knowing the facts may prevent students from experimenting or stop them if they've already tried tobacco or nicotine. This activity explains some of these health consequences.

The CDC reports each year that more deaths are caused by tobacco use than by all deaths from motor vehicle injuries, illegal drug use, alcohol use, human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), and firearm-related incidents.⁷ Share this statistic with your students. To introduce this activity, write the following tobacco and nicotine - related health consequences on the board:^{4,8}

- halitosis (bad breath)
- shortness of breath
- stained teeth
- cracked lips
- mouth sores/bleeding in the mouth
- coughing/wheezing
- smelly hair (non-health related)
- nicotine addiction
- tooth loss
- throat cancer
- gum disease
- stroke
- heart disease
- emphysema
- lung cancer
- oral cancer
- mood disorders
- permanent lowering of impulse control
- impact to attention and learning
- kidney cancer

Ask students to review the list. Use the Internet (www.cdc.gov/tobacco) to define any unfamiliar terms. Then, ask students which issues on the board they believe are health consequences of tobacco and nicotine use. Check each one the students suggest. Next, tell them that all of the items on the list are health consequences of tobacco and nicotine use—and they are real. Some students might be concerned about consequences such as bad breath and the smell, while others may be more concerned about the diseases.

This activity sheet outlines some of the health consequences caused by cigarettes, vaping and smokeless tobacco. Knowing the facts may prevent students from experimenting, or stop them if they've already tried tobacco and nicotine products.

Share the activity link with your class or open the activity on your interactive whiteboard. Then, review the information provided in the activity.

Before completing this activity, display the health consequences poster ("Look what tobacco will do."). Read the facts with your students. Remind them that these are real issues that affect people who use tobacco. Deciding to be tobacco free will help them stay healthy.

As a class, visit the CDC's Web site for additional information on health consequences at www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic_information/health_effects/index.htm

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY:

Cigarette smoking is responsible for about one in five deaths in the U.S. per year.⁷ Have students work in teams to research this fact and prepare presentations to encourage people to be tobacco free. They might use photos or images, Internet resources, books, or interviews with smokers who quit as their resources. They will then create a slideshow, poster, handouts for their peers, or any presentation method of their choice to demonstrate the health consequences of tobacco use that generate this statistic. Determine a timeframe that is appropriate for your group. Let them get creative and use whatever aids they find most effective to do their reports/presentations. Schedule each pair/group for a different day during the unit to present its findings so your students have enough time to prepare their projects. Invite other classes in to hear the presentations.

Use the supplemental "Total ly Caught" video to complement this section.



ACTIVITY
THREE**TOBACCO AND
NICOTINE ADDICTION**

Skills: Assessing risks and consequences
Approx. Time: 30 minutes



As mentioned above, adolescents may not understand the nature of nicotine addiction. This activity will explain what nicotine is and how it affects the body so that students understand the concept of addiction as they make their decisions to be tobacco and nicotine free.

To introduce this activity, ask students to define “addiction.” Write their thoughts on the board or chart paper. Students might give you examples of things people might be addicted to, such as drugs, alcohol, or tobacco. Encourage them to define the term. Then, have a student provide the dictionary definition of “addiction.”

Explain to your students that they are going to reach about nicotine addiction. Then, share the digital activity link below with your students. Have them complete the activity, including questions and answers, and then review the answers together. You may wish to present it on an interactive whiteboard or have students go directly to the activity on their computers. Have them work in groups to assess the risks and health consequences for the smoking/vaping scenario. Note that they may navigate back and forth between the activity screens by clicking the “Page” tabs at the bottom of the activity.

ANSWERS:

- 1) TRUE. Nicotine is a drug.
- 2) FALSE. In order to be “True,” the statement should say: The adrenaline (or epinephrine) released by the body after absorbing nicotine stimulates the body and causes an increase in blood pressure, respiration, and heart rate.
- 3) FALSE. In order to be “True,” the statement should say: Most smokers or vapers use tobacco regularly because they are addicted to nicotine.
- 4) FALSE. In order to be “True,” the statement should say: Each year, nearly 35 million smokers want to quit.
- 5) TRUE. Nicotine causes the same changes in the brain as heroin and cocaine.
- 6) TRUE. Without nicotine, a smoker/vaper can feel irritable and depressed.

Next, share the following additional facts with your class:

- Studies have shown that addiction can occur after smoking as few as 100 cigarettes. And, some young people have shown symptoms of dependence within the first few weeks of using tobacco.⁹
- Tobacco smoke contains more than 4,000 chemicals. The most dangerous chemicals in cigarette smoke, besides nicotine, are tar and carbon monoxide. Tar causes lung cancer, emphysema, and bronchial diseases. Carbon monoxide causes heart problems.¹⁰
- In 2021, 65.3% of youth (middle and high school students) who currently used tobacco products reported that they were seriously thinking about quitting the use of all tobacco products.¹¹
- The younger people are when they begin smoking cigarettes or vaping, the more likely they are to become strongly addicted to nicotine.⁴
- Young people who try to quit cigarettes or vapes suffer from the same nicotine withdrawal symptoms as adults.⁴
- Young people who try to quit tobacco suffer from the same nicotine withdrawal symptoms as adults.⁴
- Cigarette smoking is responsible for about 480,000 deaths per year in the U.S. – approximately one out of every five deaths.¹² This fact from the CDC is very real. Even more startling, based on current smoking patterns, an estimated 25 million Americans alive today will die prematurely from smoking-related illnesses.¹²

To wrap up the activity and reiterate the health consequences of tobacco and nicotine use and the addictive nature of nicotine, discuss the warning labels that appear on tobacco and nicotine products.



⁹ Milton, M.H., Maule, C.O., Yee, S.L., Backinger, C., Mosacher, A.M., Husten, C.G. Youth Tobacco Cessation: A Guide for Making Informed Decisions. Atlanta, Georgia: U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; 2009. Referenced 2017. www.cdc.gov/tobacco/quit_smoking/cessation/pdfs/youth_tobacco.pdf

¹⁰ National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA). Research Report Series—Tobacco/Nicotine. NIH Publication Number 16-4342. Referenced 2017. https://d4r4mgtwz7f5a.cloudfront.net/sites/default/files/tobaccorrts_1_2016.pdf

¹¹ CDC. Smoking & Tobacco Use. Fact Sheet—Quitting Smoking. Referenced 2017. www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/cessation/quitting/index.htm

¹² CDC. Smoking & Tobacco Use. Fact Sheet—Tobacco-Related Mortality. Referenced 2017. www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/health_effects/tobacco_related_mortality/index.htm

¹³ CDC. Smoking & Tobacco Use. History of the Surgeon General's Reports on Smoking and Health. Referenced 2017. www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/sgr/history/

ACTIVITY THREE (CONTINUED): TOBACCO AND NICOTINE – USING IT IS UNHEALTHY

Explain to your students that the U.S. Surgeon General serves as the head of the United States Public Health Service and is the leading spokesperson on such matters for the U.S. government. There are specific health warnings placed on cigarette packages and advertisements on a rotating basis.¹³ Display the following warnings for your students to see, or write them on the board:

- SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING: Smoking Causes Lung Cancer, Heart Disease, Emphysema, and May Complicate Pregnancy.
- SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING: Quitting Smoking Now Greatly Reduces Serious Risks to Your Health.
- SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING: Smoking by Pregnant Women May Result in Fetal Injury, Premature Birth, and Low Birth Weight.
- SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING: Cigarette Smoke Contains Carbon Monoxide.

The Comprehensive Smokeless Tobacco Health Education Act of 1986, as amended, requires that there be one of the following warning labels

on smokeless tobacco packaging and advertisements. They are:

- WARNING: This product can cause mouth cancer.
- WARNING: This product can cause gum disease and tooth loss.
- WARNING: This product is not a safe alternative to cigarettes.
- WARNING: Smokeless tobacco is addictive.

Ask your students:

- Have you seen these warning labels before?
- Were you aware that these health issues could result from tobacco use?
- Why do you think these labels are important?

Conclude by telling students that you hope their knowledge of these health risks and the addictive nature of nicotine will help them make the right decision to be tobacco and nicotine free.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY:

As a group, brainstorm positive, healthy activities students can engage in as alternatives to using tobacco and nicotine products. For example, they could exercise, paint, draw, sing, dance...the list is endless.



HOW FRIENDS FIT IN (INTERPERSONAL SKILLS)

ACTIVITY FOUR

PEER PRESSURE AND INFLUENCE — DO YOUR FRIENDS AFFECT YOUR DECISIONS?

Skills: Understanding peer relationships/Dealing with peer pressure
Approx. Time: 30 minutes



Before starting the activity, remind your students that peer pressure occurs when the words or actions of our friends push us to do something we don't want to do. Peer influence is the urge we sometimes feel to do something other people are doing because we want them to think highly of us. (See the Overview Booklet for additional information about peer pressure and influence.)

It's important for your students to understand that no one enjoys being excluded by peers or doing things that will make peers like them any less. We can and should make decisions based on what we think is best for us, rather than on what we want others to think of us. For instance, read the following examples and comments to your students:

- Peer influence and peer pressure can have positive effects. For example, one of the boys on the football team is lazy, but when he sees all the other boys lifting weights to get ready for the upcoming season, he joins in. His decision was not based on his desire to do the work but by his desire to fit in with his teammates.
- Peer pressure can have negative effects as well. When a group of students who we want to like us all decide to cut math class and they invite us to join them, we might do so. We don't really want to miss the class, and we wouldn't cut it if no one else did, but we decide to go along because we like the approval we receive from the others in the group. Explain to students that when they understand peer pressure, they don't have to give in to it. For example, we can decide that we will go to math class, even if it costs us some popularity with the others.

In this exercise you will give your students four situations, one at a time. Have the students read each situation, and then open the class for discussion. For each situation, ask students:

- Put yourself in the character's position. What sort of conflicting feelings might the character have?
- What choices does the character have?
- Do you think you would give in to the pressure or influence in this situation?
- Have you ever been in this situation or a similar one?



ANSWERS:

Answers about the characters' feelings and what students would do may vary. The situations are examples of:

1. peer pressure 3. peer influence
2. peer pressure 4. peer pressure

After discussing these vignettes, break the class down into small groups and ask each group to come up with two scenarios. In one, have them devise an example of positive peer influence. Then have them devise an example involving tobacco in which negative peer influence is felt. Each group should act out its scenarios for the rest of the class.

To wrap up, talk about the difference between influence and pressure (or coercion), emphasizing the fact that—whether positive or negative—friends and peers can only encourage a certain behavior. A person is always ultimately responsible for his or her decisions and the consequences.



Use the supplemental “Eggin” video to complement this section.

HOW FRIENDS FIT IN (INTERPERSONAL SKILLS)

ACTIVITY FIVE

PEER PRESSURE AND INFLUENCE — DO YOUR FRIENDS AFFECT YOUR DECISIONS?

Skills: Understanding/Dealing with peer pressure, influence, and acceptance
Approx. Time: 25 minutes



Research shows that peer influence, or a child's internal desire to be accepted, is a stronger influence of nicotine experimentation than overt peer pressure.¹⁴ Many young people will try tobacco or nicotine products because of the kind of reaction they think they will get from their peers, even if they don't feel pressured by those peers.

This activity will help students evaluate their need for acceptance or approval by their peers, as well as the need to be themselves. Hand out the list of phrases related to things that are important to people this age. Ask students to rank the importance of each item.

When they have finished, read to them the scenario that follows the chart in the **"You Decide!"** section. Encourage discussion about why the character Tyrell does what he does, and what it might say about what he feels is important. Lead the students in a discussion of why Tyrell did what he did.

Ask students:

- Why do you think it was important to Tyrell that he try tobacco and nicotine?
- What were his motivations to use tobacco and nicotine?
- Do you think he would have tried smokeless tobacco if he had not been in that environment?
- Do you think things changed for him (or not) in the group once he adopted this behavior?

To wrap up, get the students to talk about priorities—what is most important to them—and ask them how being tobacco and nicotine free reflects their priorities. Next, ask them how Tyrell might have been able to use his own "inventory of priorities" to think through his decision and choose to be tobacco and nicotine free.

ACTIVITY SIX

THINKING YOUR WAY TO GOOD DECISIONS

Skills: Understanding peer relationships/Dealing with peer pressure and influence
Approx. Time: 25 minutes



This activity is designed to help students use their knowledge of peer pressure and influence (or the desire for acceptance) to reassess their thoughts and preconceptions about what happens in peer groups.

Organize the students into small groups and then distribute the activity. Ask them to read the first scenario and talk among themselves about what they think might happen. They should use the questions listed on the activity as a framework for discussion.

Discuss each scenario separately. In the first one, get the students to talk about why they might get tired of their friend asking to copy homework. Ask if there is a part of them that does want to give him the homework, and if so, why?

Ask students:

- Is it possible that the decision not to share the homework might change the relationship?
- Is it possible that it won't change the relationship?

- Would you be ready to live with the consequences of your action?

Wrap up the discussion by talking about how relationships are bound to have conflicts and disappointments, and that these might generate some anger or hurt feelings, but in most cases these feelings subside. Talk about how we can value our relationships enough to accept the good with the bad.

In the second scenario, have the students examine whether or not they would feel as though they would be treated differently by their friends. Will you still be welcomed in the home after school? Do you want to be there? Do you have any feelings about your friend's smoking?

To conclude, zero in on the decision not to smoke. Explain that in some cases, people continue to smoke even if they initially don't like it. Reinforce the wisdom of the decision not to smoke, and how it reflects priorities. (For example, "It's more important not to do something I don't like than it is to be accepted in my peer group.")

HOW FRIENDS FIT IN (INTERPERSONAL SKILLS)

ACTIVITY SEVEN

FACING TOUGH SITUATIONS

Skills: Refusal Skills
Approx. Time: 40 minutes



It can be uncomfortable for students to reject pressure from friends (or from within) to do something they don't want to do.

Ask students to share examples about when they might have found themselves in uncomfortable situations, and how they managed to get out of them.

Hand out the activity sheet and review the suggestions for saying "no" to tobacco and nicotine. Display the poster that provides refusal tips while doing this activity.

Next, have students work in groups for the "Act It Out!" exercise. Select some groups to act out the scenarios for the class. Ask the rest of the class which refusal techniques might work best. Discuss the possible

consequences that might ensue from the different techniques.

In discussion, get students to talk about which refusal techniques work better than others. Explain that in order to choose the best technique for them, they need to feel comfortable with it. They also need to consider whom they are refusing and how that person will receive the refusal. (Is this someone who responds well to humor? to confrontation? to politeness?)

Get students to talk about the usefulness of practicing these sorts of strategies ahead of time so they are comfortable using them.

ACTIVITY EIGHT

LET ME ILLUSTRATE

Skills: Analytical reasoning/Researching and creating reports
Approx. Time: 25 minutes and research time



In this activity, students will demonstrate what they've learned about the health consequences of tobacco and nicotine use and the refusal skills presented in previous activities to create illustrations about saying "no." This will help you reinforce the message and assess students' understanding of the material.

Have students work independently or with a partner to complete the page. When they are done, have students present their illustrations to the class.

For the "Draw It!" section, brainstorm topics with your students to get them thinking about other common situations they encounter to which they can apply the refusal skills they've learned. Have students share their illustrations and then post them on a bulletin board under the heading "When Saying 'No' Is the Way to Go."

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY:

Students need to be equipped with skills to refuse tobacco and nicotine offers. They should also be aware of policies, rules, and laws that relate to tobacco and nicotine use and possession in your area. According to the CDC:

"School programs to prevent tobacco and nicotine use and addiction will be most effective if they—

- Prohibit tobacco and nicotine use at all school facilities and events at all times.
- Encourage and help students and staff to quit using tobacco and nicotine projects.
- Provide developmentally appropriate instruction in grades K–12 that addresses the social and psychological causes of tobacco and nicotine use.
- Are part of a coordinated school health program through which teachers, students, families, administrators, and community leaders deliver consistent messages about tobacco and nicotine use.
- Are implemented within the context of and reinforced by communitywide efforts to prevent tobacco and nicotine use and addiction."¹⁵

Have your students work in groups to research and report back to the class on the following:

- The school's smoke-free or nicotine-free policy—Students should describe the policy, when it was implemented, and what the consequences are for breaking the policy. If your school does not have a policy, students can find out what can be done to implement one.
- State and federal laws regarding tobacco and nicotine product possession and/or use by minors—Students should prepare oral presentations to convey their findings.

HOW I AM (INTRAPERSONAL SKILLS)

ACTIVITY NINE

MY PERCEPTION

Skills: Building self-esteem/Understanding personal values

Approx. Time: 25 minutes



One predictor in the experimentation and escalation phases of tobacco and nicotine uptake is self-image—some adolescents turn to tobacco and nicotine because they think it will give them a better image.⁴ Low self-esteem is another factor that influences a young person's decision to use it. To start this activity, ask students to brainstorm words or phrases that come to mind when they think of people using tobacco or nicotine. Explain that youth smoking rates among middle and high school students have declined over the past decade, but e-cigarette use is on the rise.¹

When a comment reflecting the perception that smoking or vaping makes people look “cool” is raised, challenge students to explain why. Ask them to provide specific instances to support their notion that it looks cool. Chances are that any student thinking it looks cool will point to media representation. Ask these students:

- Would the person be cool even if he or she did not smoke or vape?
- What other characteristics make the person cool?
- Do characters tend to hold cigarettes or vapes more often than smoke them? (It may be more common to see them holding cigarettes or vapes than inhaling or spitting tobacco, since these actions are usually less appealing to see.)

Spend time discussing how important “image” should be, especially when there is a difference between image and reality. Remind students of the health consequences of tobacco and nicotine use, and show them the poster with the images depicting these health issues. There is nothing “cool” about these pictures.

For additional resources related to media representation, see the resource section in the Overview Booklet and visit www.cdc.gov/tobacco.

In this exercise students will examine how they see themselves and the image that they want to portray. They should write 10 adjectives that they feel are self-descriptive. Then, they will look at an illustration of young people using tobacco and nicotine and write 10 adjectives to describe their perception of the characters. Once their lists are completed, students should compare them. Create two columns on the board with the headers “Us” and “The Characters.” Ask for volunteers to share adjectives and write them under each column. If you feel your students might be reticent to share their lists, you can suggest adjectives for the “Us” column.

Remind students that perceptions are subjective. Encourage them to talk about what they might have learned about themselves and about how others see them. Then move the conversation in the direction of what constitutes a positive self-image, and raise the issue of how some people begin using tobacco and nicotine products like vapes simply because of how they think it makes them look.

Refer back to the list of words on the board. If your students have a positive perception of the characters in the illustration, ask them to explain why. See if some students a) think it looks cool to smoke/vape, b) think it looks cool but isn't worth the risk, or c) think it looks ridiculous. Try to bring the conversation around to a discussion of how, when it comes to tobacco and nicotine, there aren't any “positive” images.

To emphasize the point, display the poster depicting the health consequences of tobacco use. Refer to the list of words and tell students, “Keep in mind that the pictures and facts on the poster are reality.”

Look what tobacco will do.

IF YOU SMOKE OR USE SMOKELESS TOBACCO... YOUR HEALTH IS AT RISK.

Mouth Sores, Bleeding in the Mouth, and Cancer	Lung Cancer, Pneumonia, Bronchitis, and Emphysema	Heart Disease and strokes
Smokeless tobacco (known as chew, dip, spit, or snuff) can cause sores and bleeding in the mouth. ¹ Smokeless tobacco and smoking are both known causes of mouth and throat cancer.	Smokers have more respiratory, or breathing, problems than nonsmokers. ² Smoking is also connected with chronic coughing and wheezing. ³	Cigarette smoking causes coronary heart disease and strokes. ⁴ And, it has been linked to sudden cardiac death, ⁵ which means your heart stops.
Smokeless tobacco contains 28 cancer-causing agents. ²	Smoking during teen years slows lung growth and causes lungs to decline at an early age. ²	A young smoker's resting heart rate is two to three beats faster per minute than a nonsmoker's. ⁶
Smokeless tobacco use can lead to nicotine addiction. ²	teens who smoke are likely to be less physically fit than teens who don't. ²	Cigarette smoking approximately doubles a person's risk of having a stroke. ⁴

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¹https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/fast_facts/trends-in-tobacco-use-among-youth.html

⁶National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA). Research Report Series—Tobacco Addiction. What Are the Extent and Impact of Tobacco Use? 2017. www.drugabuse.gov/publications/research-reports/tobacco/what-are-extent-impact-tobacco-use

UNIT QUIZ

Skills: Comprehension/Analyzing data
Approx. Time: 25 minutes



When you are done with the lessons and your students have completed the activities, copy and distribute the unit quiz to help you assess your students' understanding of the content. The quiz includes two parts: Part One has nine multiple choice questions, while Part Two consists of five short answer responses. In Part Two, students are asked to provide three items for each response except for number three, which asks for four items. This format allows you to base your students' scores on a 25 point scale—9 points for Part One, and 16 points for Part Two.

ANSWERS: PART ONE

1. **B.** Most middle schoolers are not current cigarette smokers/vapers.
2. **D.** all of the above
3. **C.** a drug found in tobacco leaves
4. **A.** True
5. **C.** Smoking cigarettes can damage nearly every organ in your body.
6. **A.** True
7. **B.** False
8. **C.** irritable and depressed
9. **A.** True

ANSWERS: PART TWO

Answers for Part Two will vary. Students should include the number of items requested in their responses.

1. List three health consequences of tobacco use.

- strokes
- emphysema
- pneumonia
- chronic coughing
- heart disease
- bleeding gums
- shortness of breath
- increased risk of infection
- cancer
- impaired lung growth
- cataracts (which can cause blindness)
- gum disease
- bronchitis
- wheezing
- phlegm production
- mouth sores
- hardening of the arteries
- damaged immune system
- being less physically fit

2. List three nicotine withdrawal symptoms.

- irritability
- craving
- cognitive and attentional deficits

- sleep disturbances
- increased appetite
- depression

3. Describe the difference between peer pressure and peer influence. Then give an example of each.

- Peer pressure is obvious, or overt pressure from friends, and tends to involve teasing, taunting, challenging, encouraging others, or giving someone attitude. Peers pressure friends with words and actions to do something they don't want to do—it can be positive or negative.
- Peer influence is less obvious. It's an internal pressure people put on themselves to do something they don't want to do because they think it will help them be accepted, maintain friendships, or fit in. Peers don't actually say or do anything to encourage the friend.
- Examples will differ but should reflect the above differences.

4. List three things to consider when making a decision.

Students should include any three of the following steps:

1. Situation: Why do you need to make a decision?
2. Goals: What do you want to happen?
3. Choices: What are your options or the alternatives?
4. Consequences: What could happen?
5. Decision: What will you do?
6. Think About It: Did you make the right decision?

5. You want to be nicotine free. List three ways you could say “no” to a friend who offers you a cigarette, vape or smokeless tobacco.

- Say “no” and suggest something else.
- Say “no” and talk about the consequences.
- Say “no” and give a reason or explain why you said “no.”
- Say “no” and reverse the pressure.
- Say “no” and change the subject.
- Say “no” and add some humor.
- Say “no” and walk away.

NICOTINE FREE PLEDGE

You've now completed the program. Your students have learned about the health consequences of tobacco and nicotine use, refusal skills, and decision-making skills. To conclude the unit, encourage your students to sign the reproducible nicotine-free pledge found in the back of this booklet. There's also a reproducible pledge for parents and guardians that you can send home with your students so that parents and guardians can commit to helping their children be nicotine free.

Encourage your students to fill out the form and keep it someplace where they can refer to it as a reminder of their commitment to remain tobacco free. Congratulate students for their effort to stay tobacco and nicotine free.

These pledges are also available for download online at www.rightdecisionsrightnow.com/resources/pledge-forms/.

CONGRATULATE YOUR STUDENTS WHO MAKE THE DECISION TO BE NICOTINE FREE.



I PLEDGE TO BE NICOTINE FREE



I Pledge to Encourage My Child to Be Nicotine Free

By signing below, I pledge to encourage my child to be tobacco and nicotine free.

I will talk with my child about the importance of not smoking, not vaping, or using smokeless tobacco, nicotine pouches or any other nicotine products.

I will respect my child, listen to them, and answer their questions.

Signed

Date:



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Understand that nicotine products have health risks and consequences.

I choose to say "no" to nicotine and pledge to stay nicotine free.

This means I will not smoke cigarettes, use smokeless tobacco, nicotine pouches, vape or using any other nicotine products.

List three reasons why you pledge to stay nicotine free]

By signing below, I pledge to be nicotine free:

Date:



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ACTIVITY ONE

TAKE A TOBACCO AND NICOTINE SURVEY



This survey is a reality check. The questions are meant to help you, your teachers, and class engage in a discussion about tobacco and nicotine. Do NOT put your name on the paper. Put a check next to your answers to the questions in Part One, and then write your answers to the questions in Part Two. Try to answer all of the questions as honestly as you can. If you do not want to answer a question, leave it blank.

PART ONE¹²

- Have you ever tried cigarette smoking, even one or two puffs? Yes No
- During the past 30 days, on how many days did you smoke cigarettes?
 0 Days 1 or 2 days 3 to 5 days
 6 to 9 days 10 to 19 days 20 to 29 days
 all 30 days
- Have you ever tried an e-cigarette or vape?
 Yes No
- During the last 30 days, on how many days did you vape?
 0 Days 1 or 2 days 3 to 5 days
 6 to 9 days 10 to 19 days 20 to 29 days
 all 30 days
- Have you ever used chewing tobacco, snuff, or dip?
 Yes No
- During the past 30 days, on how many days did you use chewing tobacco, snuff, or dip?
 0 Days 1 or 2 days 3 to 5 days
 6 to 9 days 10 to 19 days 20 to 29 days
 all 30 days
- How many of your four closest friends smoke or vape?
 none one two
 four not sure three
- How many of your four closest friends use chewing tobacco, snuff, or dip?
 none one two
 four not sure three
- If one of your best friends offered you a cigarette, vape or other nicotine product, would you try it?
 definitely yes probably yes
 definitely not probably not

- Do you think it is safe to smoke or vape or use any other nicotine product for only a year or two, as long as you quit after that?
 definitely yes probably yes
 definitely not probably not

PART TWO

- Do you think most middle school students smoke?
 Yes No
- Do you think most middle school students vape?
 Yes No
- Do you think most high schoolers smoke?
 Yes No
- Do you think most high school students vape?
 Yes No
- Do you think most young males use smokeless tobacco?
 Yes No
- Why do you think young people smoke cigarettes, vape, or use smokeless tobacco or nicotine pouches?

- Why do you think young people who do not use tobacco or nicotine choose not to?

- Have you ever felt pressured to use tobacco or nicotine?

- Have you learned ways to say "no" to offers of tobacco and nicotine?

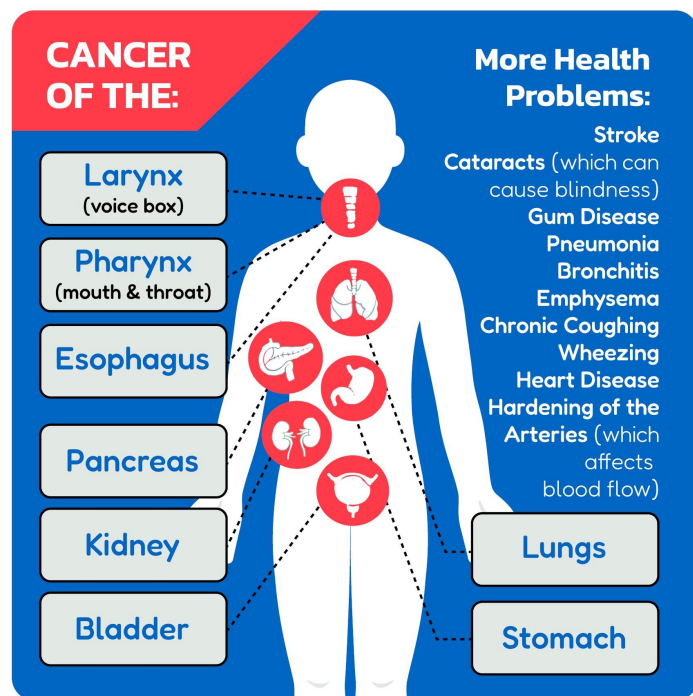
- Do you think there are health consequences from using tobacco and nicotine? If so, what do you think they are?

- Do you think it's easy or difficult for people to quit using tobacco and nicotine? Explain your answer.
 Easy Difficult _____
- Do you think most young people like or dislike being around smokers?
 Like being around smokers
 Dislike being around smokers

Like playing sports? Need to climb stairs every day? Do you sing or dance? Then make sure you have the breath to do it by not using tobacco or nicotine!

ACTIVITY
TWOTOBACCO AND NICOTINE USE –
THE HEALTH CONSEQUENCES

You've probably heard that using tobacco and other nicotine products like vapes, smokeless tobacco and nicotine pouches is unhealthy. Take a look at some of the diseases and health problems using tobacco and nicotine causes:¹⁸



Smoking also damages the immune system, which increases a person's risk of getting infections. And, once they get sick, smokers often take longer to recover than people who don't smoke.¹⁴

What About Other Nicotine Products?

Chew, dip, snuff, or spit tobacco—it's all smokeless tobacco. But, it's not a safe alternative to smoking cigarettes.²⁰ There are health risks with using smokeless tobacco:

- It is a known cause of cancer—increasing a user's risk of oral cancer.¹⁹
- It can cause bleeding gums and mouth sores.²⁰
- It can lead to nicotine addiction.¹⁹
- Youth and young adults are also uniquely at risk for long-term, long-lasting effects of exposing their developing brains to nicotine. These risks include nicotine addiction, mood disorders, and permanent lowering of impulse control. Nicotine also changes the way synapses are formed, which can harm the parts of the brain that control attention and learning.¹

Still not convinced it's harmful? Read this: According to the CDC, a high school athlete who used spit tobacco died of oral cancer when he was 19!²⁰

Chemical Reaction: Count to 10

After smoke is inhaled, it only takes 8 seconds for nicotine, an addictive chemical found in tobacco, to reach the brain.²¹ Cigarettes, vapes and smokeless tobacco all contain nicotine. Nicotine is absorbed through the lungs with cigarette smoke, and through the mouth with smokeless tobacco.²¹ Nicotine affects the brain's reactions²¹ and narrows a person's blood vessels, making it tougher for the heart to work.²⁰

Think Young People Can't Be Affected? Guess Again!

Young people who smoke cigarettes are likely to be less physically fit and have more respiratory (breathing) problems than people their age who don't smoke.²² Coughing, wheezing, shortness of breath, and phlegm production are symptoms that young people who use tobacco report they are more likely to experience than their non-smoking peers.²²

And then there's the issue of addiction. The younger a person is when he or she starts smoking, vaping or using other tobacco products, the more likely he or she is to become addicted to nicotine.²² Most young people who smoke regularly are addicted to nicotine, making it hard for them to quit.²²

What Else Is There?

Tobacco causes bad breath and stains your teeth.²⁰ Smoke can make your clothes and hair stink.²⁰

What Else Is There?

Secondhand smoke is made up of smoke that comes off the burning cigarette and the smoke that the smoker exhales.²³ According to the Surgeon General, "No amount of secondhand smoke is safe...Scientists believe even a little tobacco smoke can be dangerous."²³

Visit www.cdc.gov/tobacco for additional information about diseases and health consequences related to tobacco and nicotine use.

¹⁸ 2024 Surgeon General's Report: The Health Consequences of Smoking—50 Years of Progress | CDC https://archive.cdc.gov/www__cdc__gov/tobacco/sgr/50th-anniversary/index.htm

¹⁹ CDC. Smoking & Tobacco Use. Fact Sheet—Smokeless Tobacco Facts. Referenced 2024. www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/smokeless/health_effects/index.htm

²⁰ CDC. Smoking & Tobacco Use. Information Sheets. You(th) and Tobacco—What Youth Should Know About Tobacco. Referenced 2024. www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic_information/youth/information-sheet/index.htm

²¹ NIDA for Teens. Mind Over Matter Teaching Guide and Series. Mind Over Matter: Nicotine. Referenced 2024. <https://teens.drugabuse.gov/teachers/mind-over-matter/nicotine>

²² U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Preventing Tobacco Use Among Youth and Young Adults: A Report of the Surgeon General. Atlanta, Georgia: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health; Washington, D.C., 2012. Referenced 2024. www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/reports/preventing-youth-tobacco-use/full-report.pdf

²³ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The Health Consequences of Involuntary Exposure to Tobacco Smoke: A Report of the Surgeon General—Secondhand Smoke: What It Means to You. Referenced 2024. www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/reports/secondhand-smoke-consumer.pdf

ACTIVITY
THREE

TOBACCO AND
NICOTINE ADDICTION



According to a report from the U.S. Surgeon General, most teens who smoke want to stop. “Most young people who smoke regularly are already addicted to nicotine.” Read the following selected excerpts from several National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) publications to better understand nicotine and addiction:

- Nicotine is the drug in tobacco leaves. Whether someone smokes, vapes, chews, or sniffs tobacco, he or she is delivering nicotine to the brain.²⁶
 - Immediately after exposure to nicotine, there is a “kick” caused in part by the drug’s stimulation of the adrenal glands and resulting discharge of adrenaline (epinephrine). The rush of adrenaline stimulates the body and causes an increase in blood pressure, respiration, and heart rate.²⁷
 - Most people who use tobacco regularly because they are addicted to nicotine. Addiction is characterized by compulsive drug seeking and use, even in the face of negative health consequences. It is well documented that most smokers identify tobacco and nicotine use as harmful and express a desire to reduce or stop using it, and nearly 35 million of them want to quit each year. Unfortunately, more than 85 percent of those who try to quit on their own relapse, most within a week.²⁷
 - Nicotine also attaches to neurons (brain cells) that release a neurotransmitter called dopamine. Nicotine stimulates neurons to release unusually large amounts of dopamine. Dopamine stimulates the brain’s pleasure and reward circuit, a group of brain structures called the limbic system involved in appetite, learning, memory, and feelings of pleasure.²⁸
 - In 40 minutes, half the effects of nicotine are gone. So tobacco and nicotine users get the urge to light up for another dose of the drug. After repeated doses of nicotine, the brain adjusts to the overwhelming surges in dopamine (and other neurotransmitters) by producing less dopamine or by reducing the number of receptors that can receive signals. As a result, dopamine’s impact on the reward circuit of the brain of someone who smokes can become abnormally low, and that person’s ability to experience any pleasure is reduced.
- This is why a person who abuses drugs eventually feels flat, lifeless, and depressed, and is unable to enjoy things that were previously pleasurable. Now, the person needs to keep using tobacco and nicotine again and again just to try and bring his or her dopamine function back up to normal—which only makes the problem worse, like a vicious cycle.²⁸
- These changes in the brain and body make nicotine highly addictive. Other addictive drugs of abuse, including heroin and cocaine, cause the same changes in the brain.²⁸
 - Nicotine withdrawal symptoms include irritability, craving, depression, anxiety, cognitive and attention deficits, sleep disturbances, and increased appetite.²⁷



ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS BASED ON THE ABOVE PASSAGE.

1. Nicotine is a _____.
2. Most people use tobacco and nicotine regularly because they are _____ to nicotine.
3. The _____ released by the body after absorbing nicotine stimulates the body and causes an increase in blood pressure, respiration, and heart rate.
4. Each year, nearly 35 million smokers want to _____.
5. Nicotine causes the same changes in the _____ as heroin and cocaine.
6. Without nicotine, people who use it can feel _____ and _____.

²⁶ NIDA for Teens. (2016, May). Drug Facts: Tobacco, Nicotine, & E-Cigarettes. Referenced 2017. <https://teens.drugabuse.gov/drug-facts/tobacco-nicotine-e-cigarettes>
²⁷ National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA). Research Report Series—Tobacco/Nicotine. NIH Publication Number 16-4342. Referenced 2017. https://d14rmgtrwzf5a.cloudfront.net/sites/default/files/tobaccorr_1_2016.pdf
²⁸ National Institute on Drug Abuse. Drugs, Brains, and Behavior: The Science of Addiction. Referenced 2017. <https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugs-brains-behavior-science-addiction/drugs-brain>

HOW FRIENDS FIT IN (INTERPERSONAL SKILLS)

ACTIVITY FOUR

PEER PRESSURE AND INFLUENCE



Peer pressure can influence a person's decisions. Friends might pressure you by teasing you or giving you a lot of attitude. Other times you might feel pressured to do something you don't want to do because you think your friends want you to do it, but they don't actually say or do anything to encourage you at all. This is peer influence—you make a decision to do something because you think your action will make you fit in better.

Read each situation below. First, decide if it is an example of peer pressure or peer influence and put a check by your answer. Then think about how the person being pressured might feel. Next, decide what you would do in the situation.

1. Letisha has a sister who is in the grade ahead of her. Letisha likes it when her sister lets her hang out with her and her friends because at their school it's considered pretty cool to be seen with kids older than you. One afternoon Letisha is at home with the older girls. There are no adults around. The older girls let Letisha hang out with them. The next thing she knows, they are all vaping. One of the girls holds a vape in front of Letisha and offers her one. Letisha shakes her head "no," but the girl is insistent. The other girls, including Letisha's sister, join in encouraging her to have one.

Peer pressure _____ Peer influence _____
What might Letisha be feeling? _____
What would you do? _____

2. Steve likes a particular group of guys because they always spend time together and seem to laugh a lot. They don't socialize much with other students, preferring to spend most of their free time together. Lately, some of them have been talking casually with Steve, and he has expressed to them his interest in becoming a part of their group. The guys tell Steve he can become part of the group but first he has to go down to the neighborhood supermarket and steal one candy bar for each guy.

Peer pressure _____ Peer influence _____
What might Steve be feeling? _____
What would you do? _____

3. Morgan is at a party at an older student's home. The girl's parents are home for a while, but they then go out for the evening. Shortly after, a few students take out beer from the refrigerator and begin to drink. Soon, several people are drinking. Morgan doesn't want to drink and would like to go home. But she lives too far away from where the party is being held to walk and may have to wait for a ride home.

Peer pressure _____ Peer influence _____
What might Morgan be feeling? _____
What would you do? _____

4. Three of José's friends have gotten their hands on next week's history exam. They offer to show José, but José declines. They warn him not to tell. When the three all get unusually high grades for the test, the teacher is suspicious and asks them if they cheated. They say "no." The teacher then asks the class if any of them have any knowledge of whether these three had an unfair advantage.

Peer pressure _____ Peer influence _____
What might José be feeling? _____
What would you do? _____

HOW FRIENDS FIT IN (INTERPERSONAL SKILLS)

**ACTIVITY
FIVE**

WHAT'S IMPORTANT TO ME!



Below is a chart with a list of phrases that describe things people may value, or find important. After each word or phrase, check the box that indicates how much value it has in your life.

PHRASE	LOW IMPORTANCE	MEDIUM IMPORTANCE	HIGH IMPORTANCE
Being a member of the "in group" at school			
Being a successful athlete			
Having more freedom to come and go as I please			
Having good friends			
Maintaining good eating and hygiene habits			
Having a nice appearance			
Doing what is right			
Getting good grades			
Having interests outside of school			
Being liked by my teachers			
Being very popular			
Being tobacco and nicotine free			
Being respectful			
Being willing to experiment and take risks			
Being considered funny by my friends			
Standing up for myself			
Having money to spend			
Being respected			
Having the latest styles in clothing, jewelry, etc.			
Saying "no" to my friends when they do something I don't want to do			
Having more responsibility at home			
Fitting in			
Deciding what I want to do when I become an adult.			

YOU DECIDE

Tyrell is walking home from school with a group of friends. In the past few weeks, some of them have started using smokeless tobacco on the way home. This goes on for several days, after which most of Tyrell's friends have picked up the behavior. One day, Tyrell reaches into his pocket, pulls out a pouch of smokeless tobacco, and starts dipping. Could this be you? Take a look at the list of what's important to you. How would using tobacco go against what's important to you? _____ How could Tyrell (or you) deal with the peer influence when it comes to using tobacco and nicotine?

ACTIVITY SIX

THINKING YOUR WAY TO GOOD DECISIONS



Imagine yourself in the two hypothetical situations below. Read each one and then discuss the questions that follow with your group. Talk about what you think might be the consequences for the friendships, and how you might deal with the consequences if this were to happen to you.

FIRST SITUATION:

Your friend did not do his science homework and asks if he can copy yours. He is not doing well in the class and will get detention if he does not hand in his homework. He has asked to copy your homework before, and you are tired of it. You tell him you won't let him copy.

- What do you think will happen?
- Do you think your friend will do or say anything to you right away?
- How will you deal with the immediate consequences?
- Do you think your friend will act differently toward you a few weeks after the incident?
- Do you think your decision will have any negative long-term effects on your friendship?

SECOND SITUATION:

Your best friend has started vaping because her older sister does. You're at their house after school, and they are smoking with some other friends. You ask for a vape because you think it will make you fit in. You hate it. The next two times you hang out, they offer you a vape, but you say "no."

- What do you think will happen?
- Do you think your friends will act differently toward you for not smoking? Why or why not?
- If they do act differently, how will you deal with it?
- Why is it more important to do what you think feels right than to do something just to go along with the group?

YOU DECIDE!

Sometimes we think the outcome of doing something difficult, like saying "no" to our friends, is going to be worse than it is. Chances are that your friends will respect you more for standing up for what you believe in and doing what's right for you than for just going along with them for the sake of wanting to be the same. It might just be a matter of how you look at the situation and how you approach it.

ACTIVITY SEVEN

FACING TOUGH SITUATIONS

Sometimes preparing for situations before they happen can help you deal with them when or if they do happen. For example, learning ways to say “no” to your friends who pressure you to do things you don’t want to do can be helpful.

When you are feeling pressure to use tobacco or nicotine products because they are being offered to you, you can refuse in any number of ways. Check out the techniques and examples below.

A small group of students has gathered at a friend’s house one evening. When vapes come out, Susan is offered one by a casual friend. She chooses not to accept. She responds to the offer by saying...

- “No, thanks, I’d just rather not. Let’s go talk to Erika instead.” (Suggest something else.)
- “No. I’d like to keep my brain developing.” (Add some humor.)
- “No, I’m really trying to take care of my health and vapes just aren’t good for me.” (Talk about the consequences.)

- No, I think I’ll pass.” Then, if the person persists, Susan says, “I’m not going to do that, and I’m going to ask you to please stop pressuring me.” (Stand up for yourself.)
- “No. If I do this I’m sure I’ll be caught by my parents, and they’ll really have a fit.” (Give a reason.)
- “No, thanks. Did you watch that new show last night?” (Change the subject.)
- No. As a matter of fact, I think I’ll be taking off now. I’ll see you another time.” (Walk away.)
- “Why in the world would you want to use those things that’s expensive, illegal, and bad for your health?”²⁹ (Reverse the pressure.)

Which techniques might work for you? Why?

ACT IT OUT!

Read the scenarios below. With your group, role-play each situation. Be prepared to discuss how best to say “no” and “escape” each situation. Use the techniques listed above, or come up with your own.

- You are hanging out in a park with some friends. Some are smoking. One person offers you a cigarette by saying, “Here, you always refuse these, but it’s about time you try one.”
- You are with a friend and his older brother, who says to you, “Y’know, I waited until the seventh grade before I started using tobacco smokeless. I think it’s time you guys got started.” He gives his younger brother some, and the brother accepts it. It’s then offered to you.

²⁹ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The Health Consequences of Smoking—50 Years of Progress: A Report of the Surgeon General. Atlanta: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2014. Referenced 2017. www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/sgr/50th-anniversary/

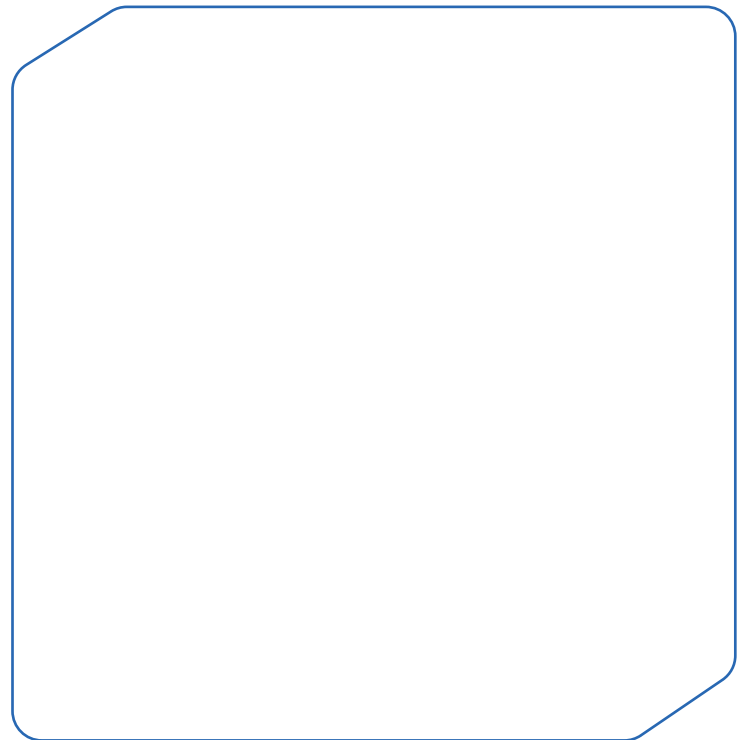
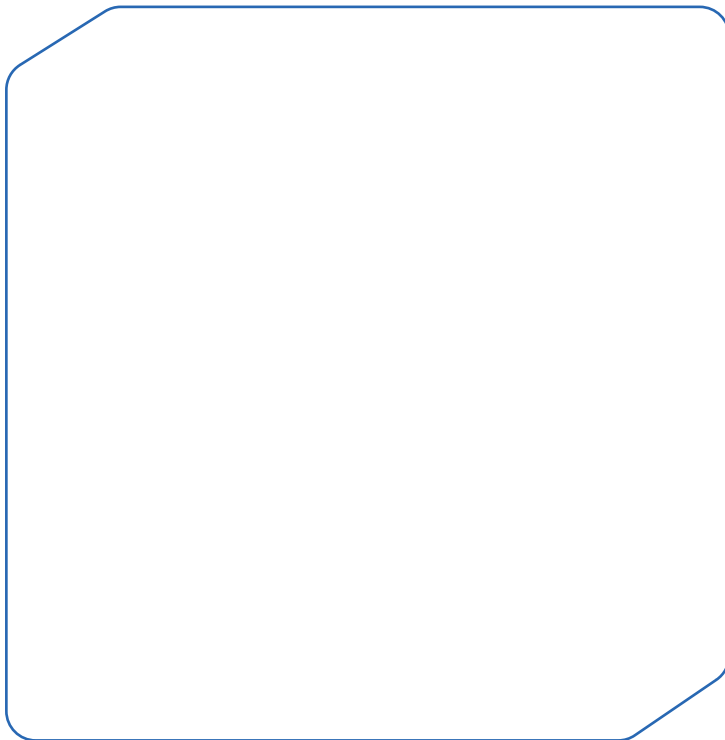


ACTIVITY EIGHT

LET ME ILLUSTRATE

It's time to put your knowledge about the health consequences of tobacco and nicotine use and techniques for saying "no" to work. In the boxes below, illustrate a situation in which someone your age is being pressured to use tobacco or nicotine or is thinking about trying it in the hope that it will help him or her gain acceptance from peers and friends.

In the first box, draw a picture to set up the scene. Use speech and thought bubbles if you want to include words in your illustration. In the second box, illustrate your character using one of the techniques you've learned for saying "no."



DRAW IT!

Create a second illustration on a separate sheet of paper to show another type of situation where refusal skills or the techniques for saying "no" can be applied. Maybe it involves bullying, cheating, lying—you decide.



ACTIVITY NINE

MY PERCEPTION

How would you describe yourself? List 10 positive adjectives that describe you. For example, maybe you are friendly, outgoing, smart, courteous, respectful, and tobacco and nicotine free.

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.
9.
10.

Take a look at the picture below. Write ten adjectives to describe the characters.

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.
9.
10.



Look at the two lists of words you wrote. Which list paints a better picture? If you want others to use your list to describe you, then keep this simple message in mind:

BE TOBACCO AND NICOTINE FREE!





ACTIVITY TEN

DECISION TIME

While you may not always think about it consciously, your mind goes through a series of six steps, or questions, when you make a decision. These include:

- **Situation:** Why do you need to make a decision?
- **Goals:** What do you want to happen?
- **Choices:** What are your options or the alternatives?
- **Consequences:** What could happen?
- **Decision:** What will you do?
- **Think about it:** Did you make the right decision?

Sometimes the process is easier than other times. And, there are also times when you might jump around—you might not go through the process in order, or you might rethink steps before making a decision. You might also skip some of the steps for less serious decisions, like figuring out what shoes to wear.

Think of three serious decisions you made recently. Write them on the lines. Then answer the questions below.

Decision 1 _____

Decision 2 _____

Decision 3 _____

Think of three serious decisions you made recently. Write them on the lines. Then answer the questions below.

If "Yes," how so?

Do you focus on one step more than others? Explain.

What factors influence your decisions? (your goals, values, friends, family, etc.)

How do you make decisions when you feel stressed?

YOU DECIDE!

Put your decision-making skills to work and think about what you would do in each situation below.

- Your best friend invites you and some other classmates over for the afternoon, and during the course of your time together tells you that he or she has taken up vaping. Your friend then takes a puff, as do the others. Then, your friend offers you a puff. What do you do?
- You and some friends are walking to a friend's home after school. You are in a hurry because you want to get to the house to play your favorite video game. You come upon a wallet with \$100 inside. There's also a driver's license. None of you recognize the person the license belongs to. What do you do?

UNIT QUIZ

Name: _____

Date: _____



PART ONE

Read each statement or question. Then circle the correct answer.

1. Which statement is true?

- A. Most middle schoolers are current cigarette smokers or vapers.
- B. Most middle schoolers are not current cigarette smokers or vapers.
- C. Most middle schoolers use smokeless tobacco.
- D. Most middle schoolers like to hang around with people who smoke.

2. Young people who smoke cigarettes can experience.

- A. shortness of breath
- B. coughing and wheezing
- C. nausea and phlegm production
- D. all of the above

3. What is nicotine?

- A. a neurotransmitter
- B. a neuron
- C. a drug found in tobacco leaves
- D. a form of glucose found in tobacco leaves

4. True or False? Nicotine addiction can occur after as few as 100 cigarettes.

- A. True B. False

5. Which statement is the most accurate?

- A. Smoking cigarettes can damage your lungs.
- B. Smoking cigarettes can damage your heart.
- C. Smoking cigarettes can damage nearly every organ in your body.
- D. Smoking cigarettes is only harmful to people who have smoked for a long time.

6. True or False? Using smokeless tobacco causes health consequences.

- A. True B. False

7. True or False? Nicotine does not affect or change the brain the same way heroin and cocaine do.

- A. True B. False

8. Without nicotine, a smoker can feel

- A. cold and sad
- B. energetic and thirsty
- C. irritable and depressed
- D. happy and alert

9. True or False? The younger a person is when he or she starts to use tobacco or nicotine products, the more likely he or she is to become addicted to nicotine.

- A. True B. False

PART TWO

1. List three health consequences of tobacco and nicotine use.

2. List three nicotine withdrawal symptoms.

3. Describe the difference between peer pressure and peer influence. Then give an example of each.

4. List three things to consider when making a decision.

5. You want to be nicotine free. List three ways you could say “no” to a friend who offers you a cigarette, vape or smokeless tobacco.



I PLEDGE TO BE NICOTINE FREE

- I understand that nicotine products have health risks and consequences.
- I choose to say “no” to nicotine and pledge to stay nicotine free.
- This means I will not smoke cigarettes, use smokeless tobacco, nicotine pouches, vape or use any other nicotine products because:

[Fill in three reasons why you pledge to stay nicotine free]

1.

2.

3.

By signing below, I pledge to be nicotine free:

Signed

Date:





I Pledge to Encourage My Child to Be Nicotine Free

By signing below, I pledge to encourage my child to be tobacco and nicotine free.

I will talk with my child about the importance of not smoking, not vaping, or using smokeless tobacco, nicotine pouches or any other nicotine products.

I will respect my child, listen to them, and answer their questions.

Signed

Date:

