



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.<sup>1</sup> But, research also shows that young people are most likely to try smoking for the first time between the ages 11 and 13, or grades 6-7.<sup>2</sup> Your students are at an age when they might be considering experimenting with tobacco and nicotine—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 tobacco and 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 tobacco and nicotine products (cigarettes, vapes, smokeless tobacco, nicotine pouches and any other products). 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 Nicotine 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.

Before starting the unit, read the Overview Booklet for background information about the program, its components, and how it works. You will find information about how to implement the program for your grade. 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.

This booklet and the accompanying portion of the RDRN: Be Nicotine Free website are designed for 8th and 9th grades. The program includes digital activities and a unit quiz for grades 8 and 9 on the website, at <http://www.rightdecisionsrightnow.com/grades-8-9/>. Instructions for implementing the activities and quiz are included. In addition, reproducible activities and a unit quiz for grades 8 and 9 can be found on pages 18 through 26 of this booklet, along with instructions for implementing them. There are also additional “Support Lessons” and a unit quiz found on pages 27 through 30 to culminate the unit for your students.

To use this program most effectively with your 8th and 9th 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 four 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 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.

- **Support Activities** – These are reinforcement lessons for 9th graders who completed the unit in 8th grade. Or, they can be used with 8th graders if your school ends at 8th grade. Note that the support activities are in print format only.

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, Choices and Consequences, 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/](http://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](http://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.

<sup>1</sup> 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/](http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/youth_data/tobacco_use/)

<sup>2</sup> 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>

## ACTIVITY ONE

### TAKE A TOBACCO AND NICOTINE SURVEY

**Skills:** Assessing risks and consequences

**Suggested Time Consideration:** 25 minutes



The first activity in this unit is a student survey which will enable you to better assess your students' understanding of and experience with tobacco and nicotine. It will help you more effectively implement the unit and address students' questions and concerns. The topics presented in the survey will be addressed throughout the program materials. For instance, students will be provided with facts related to the health consequences of tobacco use, and learn refusal skills they can use to remain tobacco and nicotine free.

Part One of the activity asks students about their experiences with tobacco and nicotine. It includes questions taken from the CDC's National Youth Tobacco Survey (NYTS) 2023 Questionnaire—a survey that can be used to estimate current use of tobacco products and selected indicators related to tobacco use among U.S. middle school and high school students. These surveys are periodically done by the government to assess tobacco use. The complete 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>

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

Collectively, the two-part survey will give you insight into your students' experiences with tobacco and nicotine, their percep-

tions about tobacco and nicotine use, and their prior knowledge of the facts.

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 help dispel misperceptions they may have about tobacco and nicotine use.

Before distributing the activity, explain to your class that they are going to take a survey about tobacco and nicotine. Instruct them that they will also 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 want to collect them afterward and you want the sheets to be anonymous.

Encourage students 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 in making the right decisions. Encourage students to volunteer answers if they feel comfortable. Once you have completed all activities, please dispose of all student surveys.



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

### 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.<sup>1</sup> Point out to students that the younger people are when they start smoking, the more likely they are to become addicted.<sup>3</sup>
4. Ask students if anyone wants to volunteer answers about why they think young people use tobacco or nicotine.

Explain to your students that some of the reasons young people try or start to use tobacco and nicotine include:<sup>3,4</sup>

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

5. Ask students if anyone wants to volunteer answers about why young people choose to be tobacco free. Explain that some people may choose to be tobacco free because:<sup>3,4</sup>

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

- 6 - 7. Explain to students that some young people try tobacco because of a "lack of self-efficacy in the ability to refuse offers to use tobacco"<sup>3</sup> 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 products, and that pressure can be difficult to

- 6 - 7. 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. 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 and nicotine use and they will learn more about them in Activities Two and Three. If students want to volunteer answers, write them on the board and then revisit the list when you read Activity Three to see which ones are listed on the page.

9. Students might have heard that quitting tobacco and nicotine is difficult, but they may not know why. To illustrate the difficulty of quitting, offer this CDC statistic: "Most students who use tobacco products want to quit and have attempted to do so. This includes e-cigarettes. In 2020, nearly 2 in 3 middle and high school students who used e-cigarettes reported wanting to quit. Similarly, about 2 in 3 reported trying to quit in the last year."<sup>1</sup> Tell students that they will learn about nicotine's addictive nature in detail later in the unit.

10. Answers will vary. However, explain to your students that most teens 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 nicotine free.



<sup>1</sup> CDC. Smoking & Tobacco Use. Fact Sheet Youth and Tobacco Use: Current Estimates of Youth Tobacco Use. Referenced 2024. [https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data\\_statistics/fact\\_sheets/youth\\_data/tobacco\\_use/index.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/youth_data/tobacco_use/index.htm) | <https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/features/back-to-school/index.html>

<sup>3</sup> 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](http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/reports/preventing-youth-tobacco-use/full-report.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> CDC. Guidelines for School Health Programs to Prevent Tobacco Use and Addiction. MMWR 1994; Vol. 43, No. RR-2: 1-18. Referenced 2024. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/8154552/>

<sup>5</sup> CDC. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, Quitting Smoking Among Adults – United States, 2001–2010. November 11, 2011. Vol. 47, No. 19. Referenced 2024. [www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6044a2.htm?s\\_cid=mm6044a2\\_w-tab1](http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6044a2.htm?s_cid=mm6044a2_w-tab1)

<sup>6</sup> 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. Referenced 2024. [http://profiles.nlm.nih.gov/NN/B/C/F/T/\\_/nnbcft.pdf](http://profiles.nlm.nih.gov/NN/B/C/F/T/_/nnbcft.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Milton, M.H., Maule, C.O., Yee, S.L., Backinger, C., Malarcher, 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; 2004. Referenced 2024. <https://stacks.cdc.gov/view/cdc/11319>

ACTIVITY  
TWO

## IT'S YOUR HEALTH

**Skills:** Assessing risks and consequences**Suggested Time Consideration:** 20 minutes

Your students know that there are health consequences with tobacco and nicotine use, but do they know the specifics? Do they think smoking and vaping-related diseases and illnesses can affect only adults or people who have smoked for years? The risks are serious! Health consequences such as cancer, heart disease, and emphysema<sup>8</sup> will give your students something to think about—especially if they are considering or currently using tobacco.

To introduce this activity, ask students what they think of when they hear the words “tobacco, nicotine or vaping.” Refute any notions that smoking or vaping is “appealing” by referencing the health consequences listed on this activity sheet. For example, if a student says smoking or vaping is appealing because it makes people look “cool,” ask what’s cool about a person whose hair and clothes reek of smoke and who coughs all the time. Distribute the activity and ask students to answer the questions independently. Review the answers as a class.

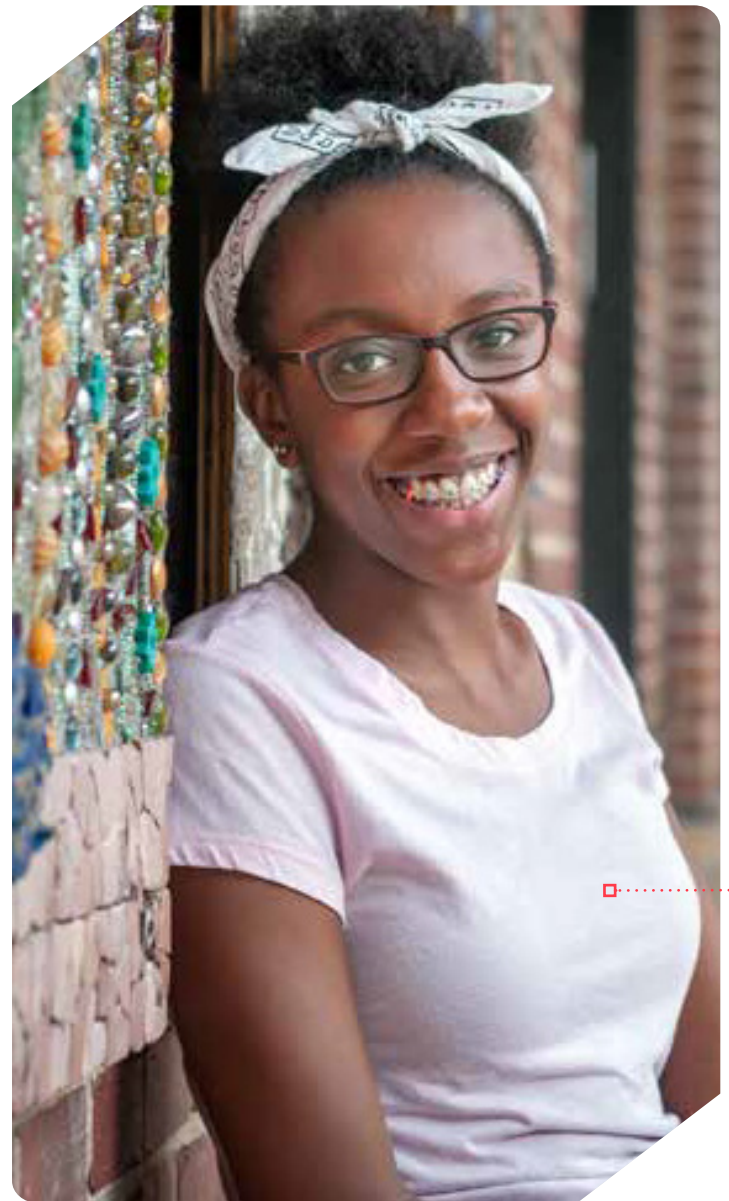
**ANSWERS:**

- B.** Stained teeth, bad breath, and bleeding in the mouth are all consequences of using tobacco.<sup>8</sup>
- D.** All of the diseases listed are health consequences of tobacco use.<sup>9</sup>
- C.** The toxic ingredients in cigarette smoke travel throughout the body.<sup>9</sup>
- D.** All of these diseases can be caused by smokeless tobacco.<sup>11</sup>
- B.** Cigarette smoking is responsible for about 1 out of 5 deaths per year in the U.S., or about 480,000 deaths.<sup>12</sup>
- True.** Each year about 41,000 of the 480,000 deaths noted above are the results of secondhand smoke.<sup>12</sup>
- B.** Worldwide, approximately 5.4 million people die each year resulting from tobacco use.<sup>13</sup>
- C.** Nicotine is an addictive drug that can affect adults and young people. Most young people who smoke regularly are addicted to nicotine.<sup>6</sup>

Review the information about nicotine addiction with your students. 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.”<sup>4</sup> Emphasize that tobacco addiction is real and that it can and does happen to young people—it’s not just an adult issue. The safest way to avoid addiction is never to use tobacco.

**FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY:**

Have your students research testimonials from people who use(d) tobacco and have tried to quit—successfully or unsuccessfully. Understanding the plight of others may deter some students from using tobacco.



<sup>8</sup> 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](https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic_information/youth/information-sheet/index.htm)

<sup>9</sup> 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 2024. <https://stacks.cdc.gov/view/cdc/21569>

<sup>10</sup> How Tobacco Smoke Causes Disease: 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, 2010. Referenced 2024. <https://stacks.cdc.gov/view/cdc/12057>

<sup>11</sup> CDC. Smoking & Tobacco Use. Fact Sheet—Smokeless Tobacco Facts. Referenced 2024. [www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data\\_statistics/fact\\_sheets/smokeless/health\\_effects/index.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/smokeless/health_effects/index.htm)

<sup>12</sup> CDC. Smoking & Tobacco Use. Fact Sheets: Tobacco-related Mortality. Referenced 2024. [https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data\\_statistics/fact\\_sheets/health\\_effects/effects\\_cig\\_smoking/index.htm#smoking-death](https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/health_effects/effects_cig_smoking/index.htm#smoking-death)

<sup>13</sup> CDC. Global Tobacco Control. Referenced 2024. [www.cdc.gov/tobacco/global/](https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/global/)

## ACTIVITY THREE

### TOBACCO AND NICOTINE USE - THE HEALTH CONSEQUENCES

**Skills:** Assessing risks and consequences

**Suggested Time Consideration:** 25 minutes



While your students have learned about the health consequences of tobacco and nicotine use in previous grades, it is a good time to refresh their knowledge about these issues. Developmentally, your students are at a pivotal stage. It's a time when more of them may be experimenting with tobacco and nicotine products, may be current users, or may have friends who are. This activity is designed to remind students about some of the health consequences associated with smoking cigarettes, vaping and using smokeless tobacco. Knowing the facts and understanding the severity of the health risks may prevent students from experimenting or stop them if they already use tobacco or nicotine.

You might consider having the school nurse or health teacher join you for this activity. Distribute the activity page and review the information with your class. Have a dictionary or health textbook on hand so students can look up unfamiliar terms and share them with the class. After reading the page, have a discussion to get students' reactions to the health consequences. Ask students: *Knowing this information, why do you think some people risk using tobacco or nicotine?* Students' answers will vary. Remind them that these health consequences are facts based on research.

Before completing the lesson, present the "Look what tobacco will do" poster depicting some health consequences associated with tobacco use. Read the poster with your students and ask them to comment on the facts that are presented. Emphasize to students that these are health risks tobacco users face. The best way to avoid these issues is not to use tobacco.

To reinforce the seriousness of the situation, students might research stories of young people affected by tobacco use or speak to a local health care provider. Or, as a class, visit the CDC's Web site for additional information on health consequences at [https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data\\_statistics/fact\\_sheets/health\\_effects/effects\\_cig\\_smoking/index.htm#smoking-death](https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/health_effects/effects_cig_smoking/index.htm#smoking-death)

### FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY:

Have small groups of students research the health consequences of tobacco use and create posters of their findings to educate other students and encourage them to be tobacco and nicotine free.



Use the supplemental **"Gamers"** video to complement this section.

# 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**



Smokeless tobacco (known as chew, dip, spit, or snuff) can cause sores and bleeding in the mouth.<sup>1</sup> Smokeless tobacco and smoking are both known causes of mouth and throat cancer.

Smokeless tobacco contains 28 cancer-causing agents.<sup>2</sup>

Smokeless tobacco use can lead to nicotine addiction.<sup>2</sup>

**Lung Cancer, Pneumonia, Bronchitis, and Emphysema**



Smokers have more respiratory, or breathing, problems than nonsmokers.<sup>3</sup> Smoking is also connected with chronic coughing and wheezing.<sup>1</sup>

Smoking during teen years slows lung growth and causes lungs to decline at an early age.<sup>3</sup>

teens who smoke are likely to be less physically fit than teens who don't.<sup>3</sup>

**Heart Disease and strokes**



Cigarette smoking causes coronary heart disease and strokes.<sup>4</sup> And, it has been linked to sudden cardiac death,<sup>5</sup> which means your heart stops.

A young smoker's resting heart rate is two to three beats faster per minute than a nonsmoker's.<sup>3</sup>

Cigarette smoking approximately doubles a person's risk of having a stroke.<sup>6</sup>

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 1. American Cancer Society. (2020). Mouth and throat cancer. Retrieved from <https://www.cancer.org/cancer/mouth-and-throat-cancer/about-the-risk-factors/mouth-and-throat-cancer-causes.html>.  
 2. American Cancer Society. (2020). Mouth and throat cancer. Retrieved from <https://www.cancer.org/cancer/mouth-and-throat-cancer/about-the-risk-factors/mouth-and-throat-cancer-causes.html>.  
 3. American Lung Association. (2020). Lung disease. Retrieved from <https://www.lung.org/lung-disease>.  
 4. American Heart Association. (2020). Heart disease and stroke statistics. Retrieved from <https://www.heart.org/health-topics/heart-disease/heart-disease-and-stroke-statistics>.  
 5. American Heart Association. (2020). Sudden cardiac death. Retrieved from <https://www.heart.org/health-topics/sudden-cardiac-death>.  
 6. American Heart Association. (2020). Stroke. Retrieved from <https://www.heart.org/health-topics/stroke>.  
 © 2024 RJRT. All rights reserved. For more information on tobacco and nicotine use, visit [https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data\\_statistics/fact\\_sheets/health\\_effects/effects\\_cig\\_smoking/index.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/health_effects/effects_cig_smoking/index.htm).

# HOW FRIENDS FIT IN (INTERPERSONAL SKILLS)

## ACTIVITY FOUR

### PEER POWER

**Skills:** Understanding/Dealing with peer pressure, influence, and acceptance

**Suggested Time Consideration:** 60 minutes



In this activity, students will write and act out skits that depict peer pressure and peer influence so that they can better understand options for how to handle these feelings. (See the Overview Booklet for additional information about peer pressure and peer influence that you can share with your students.)

Begin by reminding students about the difference between peer pressure (which is exerted when peers try to coax a person into doing something) and peer influence (which occurs when a person is not coaxed or coerced, but comes to behave in a certain way because he or she thinks it's what will make others accept him/her). Provide examples for students:

- Peer pressure: You are at the high diving board at the county pool, and your friends are diving off. You don't want to, but they say you're a baby if you don't. They dare you, so you go ahead and try it.
- Peer influence: Someone at school is taking up a collection for a hurricane relief fund. You gave money to a similar fund yesterday, so you don't want to do so again. But when the person comes to your lunch table, you notice that all of your friends donate money. You do too, because you think they will think ill of you if you don't.

Organize the students into small groups and hand out the activity. Explain that each group's assignment is to create a skit that displays peer pressure or peer influence. Peer influence and peer pressure can be depicted as positive or negative.

Instruct the students to prepare two endings to the skit: one in which the character succumbs to pressure or influence; and one in which the character withstands it.

After each group performs its skits, ask the students why they chose their topic, and why they depicted it the way they did. Open the discussion to the entire classroom and ask for feedback. *Was the skit realistic? Could other students identify with the dilemmas that were presented?*

To wrap up, have students reiterate the notion that they don't have to succumb to peer influence or pressure to be liked and accepted by their true friends. One way to do this is to ask students whether they would think any less of a friend who refused to be pressured into something by them. If not, why should they expect any less from that friend? For instance, pose this scenario:

- You want to borrow money from a good friend, but she turns you down. You remind her of the times you've lent her money. You tell her how much you need the money, and you tell her that this is what friends do for one another. She answers by telling you that while she very much appreciates the times you have lent her money, she simply can't afford to lend you any right now.

Ask your students:

- How would you react if you were the one in need of money?
- You may be disappointed with your friend, but will you abandon her as a friend?

Emphasize to your students that they are unlikely to abandon a friend for saying "no." Nor would the friend abandon them if they did the same.



## ACTIVITY FIVE

### WHEN SAYING “NO” IS THE WAY TO GO

**Skills:** Refusal Skills

**Suggested Time Consideration:** 30 minutes



Students need to be reminded that it sometimes takes skill to extricate themselves from uncomfortable or embarrassing situations. If, for instance, a girl is asked out on a date by a boy she has no interest in, but whose feelings she doesn't want to hurt, she is going to want to use tact in her refusal.

In this activity, students will practice saying “no” to their friends. Distribute the activity and explain to students that they are to decide if they will say “yes” or “no” to the situation. Let them know that as a group, you will discuss different ways of saying “no.”

Before they start, display the refusal skills wall poster that came with the program and go over the tips about how to say “no” to different situations. For instance:

- **Humor can be useful:** “I want to keep my pearly whites— they come in handy when meeting girls/guys.”
- **Change the subject:** “Nah, I don't want a beer. But let's get a pizza.” Or “No thanks, I don't want a cigarette. What happened on our favorite TV show last night?”
- **Talk about the consequences:** “No thanks. In fact, I don't want to ever start smoking, and I'll tell you why. I don't want lung cancer.”
- **Reverse the pressure:** “Why in the world would I want to break into that abandoned house? Why would you want to do such a dumb thing?”
- **Suggest something else:** “No, I don't want to get into your parents' liquor cabinet, but how about going into the kitchen for something to eat?”
- **Give a convincing reason:** “I'm not gonna let you copy my homework, because it's not fair.” OR “I'd love to stay out later, but my parents have set a ridiculous curfew, and they're really inflexible about it.”
- **Walk away.**

Go over your students' answers together. In discussion, keep in mind how important it is for students of this age to “save face” and “fit in” with their peers. Try to get the students to talk about how to manage a situation in which they want to both say “no” and remain a valued member of the group.

To wrap up, talk about the difference between rejecting an idea or an action (“I don't like the idea of smoking ...”) and rejecting a person (“... but that doesn't mean I don't like you”).



Use the supplemental “Geek at the Party” video to complement this section.

# HOW TO SAY NO!

You're in control of your decisions. If your friends pressure you to do something you don't want to do:

1. Say “no” and... suggest something else.
2. Give them a reason or explain why you said “no.”
3. Reverse the pressure.
4. Talk about the consequences.
5. Change the subject.
6. Add some humor.
7. Walk away.

Your friends should not make your decisions - you should.

**Do what's right for you!**

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# HOW I AM (INTRAPERSONAL SKILLS)

## ACTIVITY SIX

### DEALING WITH STRESS

**Skills:** Understanding stress triggers/Taking care of one's health

**Suggested Time Consideration:** 25 minutes



Adolescence can be a time of high stress. Students are growing and changing biologically. They are eager to gain independence from their parents, who are not always willing to grant it. They are increasingly aware of the stressors that exist in the wider society (street violence, unemployment, war, disease, etc.). Schoolwork is more difficult. Peers and peer approval grow in importance. But, peer approval is not always easily earned.

Learning to manage and reduce stress can be an important life skill for adolescents. Some adolescents may have the misperception that alcohol, tobacco or nicotine can help them reduce stress. The information below can help you dispel that myth. What students must learn in these years is how to identify stress, what to do to cope with it, and what to avoid when coping with it.

The chart in this activity will help students identify sources of stress in their own lives and offers some tips for coping.

Distribute the activity and have students fill it out independently. Once they are done with the chart and have read the suggestions that follow, ask students to consider what situations are the most stressful to them. Tally their answers on the board. Discuss the patterns of similarity and difference in their responses. Find out if your students were surprised by some of the responses.

Next, discuss the coping strategies that are listed. Do any students engage in them? How effective are they? Ask students if there are other coping mechanisms they employ that are not listed.

Take a few minutes to talk about tobacco and nicotine use. Students may have the misperception that people smoke to relax. Explain to your students:

- *Using tobacco increases the resting heart rate of young people and causes respiratory illnesses<sup>14</sup> – which are not relaxing.*
- *Adolescents who use tobacco or nicotine often hide this fact. This in itself becomes a constant source of stress.*
- *People under 18 can't purchase tobacco or nicotine products legally. So trying to get them, as well as the cost involved, can cause stress.*

### FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY:

After students have gone over this material, organize them into small groups to research and devise strategies for reducing and coping with stress. Explain that there are lots of ways people cope with stress. Some people do breathing exercises or meditate.

Others exercise or do yoga. Some people listen to music or talk to friends. It's a personal decision. Each group should research a way young people can reduce stress and present the method to the class. They can then create a brochure or a poster to reflect what they have learned.

Some suggestions might include:

- Organizing peer support groups
- Organizing daily exercise times
- having a family therapist come to the school to talk with students and parents about how they can reduce tensions at home
- Creating a brochure of stress management techniques
- Suggesting music to listen to
- Practicing abdominal breathing exercises
- Relaxing muscles
- Visualizing



Use the supplemental "Stressed" video to complement this section.



<sup>14</sup>CDC. Smoking & Tobacco Use. Fast Facts and Fact Sheets. Health Effects of Cigarette Smoking. Referenced 2024. [www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data\\_statistics/fact\\_sheets/health\\_effects/effects\\_cig\\_smoking/](http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/health_effects/effects_cig_smoking/)

# HOW I AM (INTRAPERSONAL SKILLS)

## ACTIVITY SEVEN

### SENDING SIGNALS

**Skills:** Building self-esteem/Understanding personal values

**Suggested Time Consideration:** 20 minutes



What's important to an individual influences his or her decisions. This exercise is designed to help students understand what sorts of things they value and how they communicate that information to others. It will help them think about what image they want to portray.

Distribute the activity and ask students to make a list of things that are important to them. You may want to offer some examples (e.g., family, religion, a pet, sports, honesty, etc.). In other words, items of importance can be people, places, things, or even concepts.

While there is no set amount of items, encourage students to come up with at least ten.

After students make their lists, ask them to write down ways in which they communicate or show others what is important to them. Again, you may want to offer some examples. A religious person, for instance, may wear a religious icon around his or her neck. An athlete may hang a poster of his or her favorite team in his or her locker. A person who values honesty may have a reputation for beginning sentences with, "I don't know if you want to hear this, but to be honest with you..."

In getting students to talk about their lists, encourage discussion about positive and negative ways of communicating values. Get them to discuss not only what they are communicating but how it is being received by the other person. For instance, one young man may put a great deal of importance on his role as a member of the school's football team, but if he is conveying this to someone who tried out for the team but didn't make it, he might make that person feel envious and resentful.

You may want to role-play some of these. For instance:

- Choose two students.
- Give one a piece of paper on which you have written: "You have just been introduced to the person across from you. One of the most important members of your family is your pet dog, Oscar. You never tire of telling Oscar stories, and you decide to communicate Oscar's importance in your life to this person."
- Give the other person a piece of paper on which you have written: "You have just been introduced to the person across from you. During the course of your conversation this person is going to communicate to you something that is important to him or her. Recently, your family had to put your 14-year-old family dog to sleep."
- Have the class discuss this from two perspectives: 1) There is nothing wrong with knowing what is important to you and communicating it to others; and 2) this should be done with sensitivity.

Ask students to volunteer answers to the question in the "You Decide!" section, which asks how being tobacco and nicotine free reflects what's important to them. Take the opportunity to encourage students to see that using tobacco and nicotine does not reflect a positive image or healthy lifestyle. Ask students to give you examples of words and actions that do exhibit positive images and a healthy lifestyle. Write their ideas on chart paper and post it in the room as a reminder to students.



## ACTIVITY EIGHT

### DECISION DECISIONS

**Skills:** Decision Making

**Suggested Time Consideration:** 20 minutes



In this activity, students will apply what they have learned about themselves and the decision-making process to evaluate a series of situations they may experience. (See the Overview Booklet for additional information about decision making that you can share with your students.)

Before starting the activity, review with your students the decision-making steps outlined on the activity. Then, to reinforce the steps, present them with the following example before they complete the page:

*Your parents have gone out, and you have been put in charge of watching your little brother for the night. Your friends call you and want to come over to hang out with you. You aren't supposed to have anyone over when your parents are not there. But your friends are being pushy, and you really want to hang out with them. What do you do?*

Take your students through the decision-making steps, by asking them:

- *What's the goal? Or what do you want to happen?*
- *What choices or alternatives do you have?*
- *What are the possible consequences for each option?*
- *What would you do?*

Next, distribute the activity and have students complete the page independently or in groups. Regroup to review the answers as a class. Ask students to volunteer their lists of options, consequences, and decisions for each hypothetical situation.

To wrap up, encourage students to talk about how helpful it is to break down the decision-making steps. Ask them how some of these decisions (or other decisions they've made in their own lives) might have been made differently if they had thought them through.



# HOW I AM (INTRAPERSONAL SKILLS)

## ACTIVITY NINE

### CONFLICT - LEARNING TO DEAL WITH IT

**Skills:** Conflict management

**Suggested Time Consideration:** 30 minutes



Begin this activity by brainstorming with your students about what they think of when they hear the word "conflict." They might have conflicts with their parents, siblings, friends, or even internal conflicts with themselves. Internal conflicts your students experience may be the result of peer pressure and peer influence—or just wanting to fit in.

Write their answers on the board. If there are only negative answers, ask students to consider whether having tickets to two events on the same night is a conflict. It is, but it is not necessarily negative.

Explain to students that some conflicts can involve other people, such as a disagreement with your parents about your curfew; while others can be internal, such as feeling conflicted about how you want to settle a misunderstanding with a friend.

Distribute the activity sheet and go over the tips for conflict resolution with your students. Then have them read the scenarios in the **"You Decide!"** section, giving them time to fully digest each one. Open the class for discussion and have students talk about how they would manage each conflict.

Then, ask students:

- *What kind of conflicts might students encounter related to tobacco or nicotine? (Students might feel pressured by friends to use tobacco or nicotine. It can also cause a conflict between friends. It can also cause an internal conflict as the student being pressured tries to figure out how to handle his or her friends.)*
- *What are some ways you could handle conflict if you were in this type of situation?*
- *How could you handle your friends?*
- *What can you do to make yourself feel better if you have a conflict with a friend? (Encourage students to keep in mind their goals and what's important to them if they have a conflict with a friend. For example, they should remind themselves why they chose to be tobacco free and focus on that while they resolve the conflict with their friend.)*

Choose one situation from the **"You Decide!"** section to roleplay. Have one of the students be particularly resistant to finding a resolution.

In discussions with the students, encourage them to be imaginative in devising positive resolutions to conflicts. Recap what works and what doesn't work. Discuss the role of anger in an argument and how things like raised voices can impede the resolution of the conflict.

Wrap up by pointing out that the existence of conflict is not necessarily a bad thing; two people who work through their conflicts creatively and peacefully are demonstrating just how much their relationship means to them.



### SUPPORT ACTIVITY 1

#### UNDERSTANDING TOBACCO AND NICOTINE ADDICTION

**Skills:** Assessing risks and consequences/Reading comprehension

**Suggested Time Consideration:** 20 minutes plus project time



Your students have learned about the health risks associated with tobacco and nicotine use, yet the CDC indicates that 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.

Hand out the activity and read the passage with your students. There are additional facts in the answer section under Activity Two for Grade 8 and 9 that you can share with your students to reinforce the seriousness of the health issues related to tobacco and nicotine use. Then, ask your students:

- Were you aware of the effect nicotine has on the body?
- Do you know of anyone who has ever tried to quit using tobacco or other nicotine products? What did they experience?
- In addition to the physical effects, what other implications does nicotine addiction have?

Next, have students work in small groups to complete the **“Research It!”** section of the activity to find additional details about the physiological effects of nicotine. Have them create posters or computer-generated images to reflect these effects and the risks associated with tobacco and nicotine addiction. This will reinforce their learning and understanding of addiction.



## SUPPORT ACTIVITIES: HOW I AM (INTRAPERSONAL SKILLS)

### SUPPORT ACTIVITY 2

#### WHO I AM

**Skills:** Building self esteem/Understanding personal values

**Suggested Time Consideration:** 20 minutes

20  
minutes

The purpose of this activity is to have students assess their self-perceptions and goals. Explain to them that this is an exercise in clarification; it is offered to give them a clear picture of things they are very happy with and things they may want to change. Self-confidence and self-esteem are important for making healthy decisions.

Explain that this sort of inventory changes over the years, and they might want to take it a few more times later on in life.

Students will be most forthcoming in a survey such as the one on the top of the page if they feel it will be kept confidential. Encourage them to look it over, reflect on it, and discuss their answers with anyone of their choosing, or with no one at all. Students might keep this page handy as a reminder of things that are important to them.

After students complete the **“You Decide!”** section of the activity, ask for volunteers to share their answers and the goals that they

have. Let them know that it can be helpful to listen to others to learn tips for overcoming obstacles and staying on track to reach a goal. Ask students:

- *What could you do if you encounter obstacles while trying to reach a goal? (Encourage them to talk it out with a trusted adult.)*
- *What can you do if you encounter an obstacle related to your goal of being tobacco and nicotine free? (Remind students that they have learned refusal skills that they can practice in order to be prepared to say “no” if pressured. They can associate with friends who don’t use tobacco or nicotine.)*

Encourage students to reflect on the strategies they have learned throughout this unit to not only make the decision to be tobacco and nicotine free, but to make the right decisions for themselves in other areas of their lives.



# SUPPORT ACTIVITIES: HOW I AM (INTRAPERSONAL SKILLS)

## SUPPORT ACTIVITY 3

### IN THE NEAR FUTURE

**Skills:** Decision making

**Suggested Time Consideration:** 30 minutes



This activity is designed to have students think about decisions that they expect to face in high school—decisions that will be new to them. By thinking about these potential decisions ahead of time, they can evaluate the options and possible consequences so that they can make informed decisions.

Explain to students that in high school they may face a wide range of decisions they may not have dealt with when they were younger. For example, they may have the freedom to try out for a varsity sport or to learn how to drive.

Review the decision-making steps presented in previous units. (See the Overview Booklet for more information about the steps.) You might offer this as an example to review the steps:

A high school senior who thinks you're pretty cool for an underclassman invites you to a party. Once you get there, you realize you're the only underclassman. The senior who invited you is drinking a beer. He comes over to you and offers you one. How do you handle this?

Evaluate the choices and consequences with your group and then ask volunteers to explain what they would do and why.

Distribute the activity and review it with your group. Have students complete the page independently and then reconvene to talk about it. Ask for volunteers to share their ideas. Let them know they might learn decision-making tips by listening to others.

Explain that regardless of age, everyone encounters tough decisions and that the pressure to "fit in" does not necessarily go away. Talk about what can be learned when we find ourselves having to work through difficult decisions, such as the one in

the example. The key is to think before you act and be sure that you are comfortable with the potential consequences resulting from the decision.

Also reinforce the notion that the student is never alone: even if alone at the moment of a decision, friends and family still constitute an important support network. Point out how, in the example you cited, the student was alone in his (or her) decision (the student had no friends at the party; everyone else was older), but he/she could still turn to a support network after the fact for assurance that he/she made a good decision and learned from the experience.

In the **"You Decide!"** section, students are asked to indicate why they feel good about the decision to be tobacco and nicotine free. To conclude the unit, ask students to share their responses to this question. Write the answers on chart paper and display it on a bulletin board to remind students of the reasons they choose to be tobacco and nicotine free.

### FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITY:

Have your students put their knowledge of the decision-making process and refusal skills into practice by writing and performing skits for younger students. Students can work in small groups to create skits about common situations they encounter, such as peer pressure and peer influence to use tobacco or nicotine products or engage in other risk behaviors. Watching older peers may reinforce the important lessons presented in this program and help prevent younger students from using tobacco and nicotine.



## UNIT QUIZ

**Skills:** Comprehension/Analyzing data  
**Suggested Time Consideration:** 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 10 multiple choice questions, while Part Two consists of six short answer responses. In Part Two, students are asked to provide two to three items for each response. This format allows you to base your students' scores on a 25-point scale—10 points for Part One, and 15 points for Part Two.

## ANSWERS:

## Part One

1. - **D.** Less than 5% of middle schoolers are current cigarette smokers or vapers.
2. - **B.** Most high schoolers do not vape.
3. - **C.** Cigarette smoking
4. - **D.** Both A and B
5. - **A.** True
6. - **C.** Smoking cigarettes can damage nearly every organ in your body.
7. - **C.** Both A and B
8. - **B.** False
9. - **C.** Heart rate, breathing rate, and the brain's reaction
10. - **A.** True

## 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.

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

## 2. List two nicotine withdrawal symptoms.

- irritability
- craving
- cognitive and attentional deficits
- sleep disturbances
- increased appetite
- depression

## 3. List three things to consider when making a decision.

Students should include any of these 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?

## 4. List two ways of handling conflict.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Respond; don't react.     | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't resort to violence or insults. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Focus on the problem.     | <input type="checkbox"/> Be reasonable.                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Talk. And listen.         | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't take sides.                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Be willing to cut a deal. | <input type="checkbox"/> Let it go.                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Know when to walk away.   |   |

## 5. Read the following scenario. Then list three possible ways Carlos could say "no" and be tobacco free.

*Carlos' friend Mike started vaping because his older brother does. They're all hanging out one day, and Mike offers Carlos a vape. Carlos does not want to vape. He's not sure how to react because everyone is watching him to see what he does.*

Students' answers should include three of the following strategies:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Say "no" and suggest something else.                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Say "no" and reverse the pressure. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Say "no" and talk about the consequences.                | <input type="checkbox"/> Say "no" and change the subject.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Say "no" and give a reason or explain why you said "no." | <input type="checkbox"/> Say "no" and add some humor.       |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> Say "no" and walk away.            |

## 5. Create a scenario that is an example of peer pressure. Then create a second scenario that's an example of peer influence.

Students' examples should reflect the differences between peer pressure and peer influence. For example:

- 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.




# 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 pledge and keep it someplace where they can refer to it as a reminder of their commitment to remain nicotine free. Congratulate students for their effort to stay nicotine free!

These pledges are also available for download online at [www.rightdecisionsrightnow.com/resources/pledge-forms/](http://www.rightdecisionsrightnow.com/resources/pledge-forms/).

**Congratulate your students who make the decision 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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### 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 using 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: \_\_\_\_\_



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## ACTIVITY ONE

## TAKE A TOBACCO AND NICOTINE SURVEY

This survey is a reality check. Do **NOT** put your name on the paper. The questions are to help you, your teacher, and your class engage in honest discussion about tobacco and nicotine.

Check or circle 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. If you do not want to answer a question, leave it blank.

### Part One<sup>15</sup>

- 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 or use an e-cigarette?  
 Yes  No
- 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 use vapes?  
 None  One  Two  Three  Four  
 Not sure
- How many of your four closest friends use chewing tobacco, snuff, or dip?  
 None  One  Two  Three  Four  
 Not sure
- If one of your best friends offered you a cigarette, vape or other tobacco or nicotine product, would you smoke it?  
 Definitely yes  Probably yes  Probably not  
 Definitely not
- Do you think it is safe to smoke or vape or use other tobacco and nicotine products for only a year or two, as long as you quit after that?  
 Definitely yes  Probably yes  Probably not  
 Definitely 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 use vapes?  
 Yes  No
- Do you think most young males use smokeless tobacco?  
 Yes  No
- Why do you think young people smoke, vape, use smokeless tobacco or any other nicotine product?  


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---
- Why do you think young people who don't use tobacco or nicotine products choose to be nicotine free?  


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- Have you ever felt pressured to use tobacco or nicotine? If so, what did you do?  


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- Have you learned ways to say "no" to offers of tobacco or nicotine? If so, explain how you would refuse the offer.  


---



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- 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 or 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
 

---

### DID YOU KNOW?

According to a survey of teens, 82% said they would rather date people who **DON'T** smoke.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> National Youth Tobacco Survey (NYTS) 2023 Questionnaire. Referenced 2024. <https://www.fda.gov/tobacco-products/youth-and-tobacco/results-annual-national-youth-tobacco-survey#2023%20Findings%20on%20Youth%20Tobacco%20Use>

<sup>16</sup> 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. <chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED604018.pdf>

ACTIVITY  
TWO

## IT'S YOUR HEALTH



Shortness of breath. Heart disease. Cancer. These are just a few of the health consequences of using tobacco and nicotine products.<sup>17</sup> Think they can't happen to you if you use tobacco or nicotine? Guess again. If you use tobacco or nicotine products, you are at risk for any of these health consequences or diseases. Think you would quit before the consequences set in? Some of the effects happen fast. Young people who smoke report experiencing coughing, wheezing, and phlegm production.<sup>18</sup> If you currently smoke, this may all sound familiar. If you don't smoke or use other nicotine products, don't start—it's that simple!

Answer the multiple choice questions in this health test. Check your responses with your teacher.

- Using tobacco can cause me to have bad breath (halitosis), stained teeth, and \_\_\_\_\_.
  - oily skin
  - bleeding in the mouth
  - acne
- If I smoke, I am at risk for the following disease(s):
  - heart disease
  - lung cancer
  - emphysema (a lung condition resulting in labored breathing and susceptibility of infection)
  - all of the above
- If I smoke, the toxins released from cigarette smoke travel \_\_\_\_\_.
  - to my heart
  - to my lungs
  - everywhere the blood flows in my body
- If I use a smokeless tobacco, I am at risk for the following disease(s):
  - gum disease
  - mouth sores
  - cancer of the mouth
  - all of the above
- In the U.S., \_\_\_\_\_ is the leading preventable cause of death.
  - alcohol
  - cigarette smoking
  - drugs
- Secondhand smoke exposure kills people in the U.S.
  - true
  - false
- Throughout the world, tobacco use results in approximately \_\_\_\_\_ deaths per year.
  - 1 million
  - 6 million
  - 10 million
- Nicotine is a chemical found in tobacco that is \_\_\_\_\_.
  - not harmful
  - addictive for adults only
  - addictive for adults and young people

<sup>17</sup> 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 2024. <https://stacks.cdc.gov/view/cdc/21569>

<sup>18</sup> 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](http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/reports/preventing-youth-tobacco-use/full-report.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> National Institute on Drug Abuse. Drugs, Brains, and Behavior: The Science of Addiction. Referenced 2024. [www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugs-brains-behavior-science-addiction/drugs-brain](http://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugs-brains-behavior-science-addiction/drugs-brain)

## UNDERSTANDING NICOTINE

Read the following selected excerpts from the National Institute on Drug Abuse to better understand nicotine's addictive nature and how it affects the body:<sup>19</sup>

- Nicotine is the drug in tobacco leaves. Whether someone smokes, chews, or sniffs tobacco, he or she is delivering nicotine to the brain.
- Nicotine raises the heart rate and respiration (breathing) rate, and causes more glucose, or blood sugar, to be released into the blood.
- 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.
- In 40 minutes, half the effects of nicotine are gone. So smokers 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 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.
- 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.

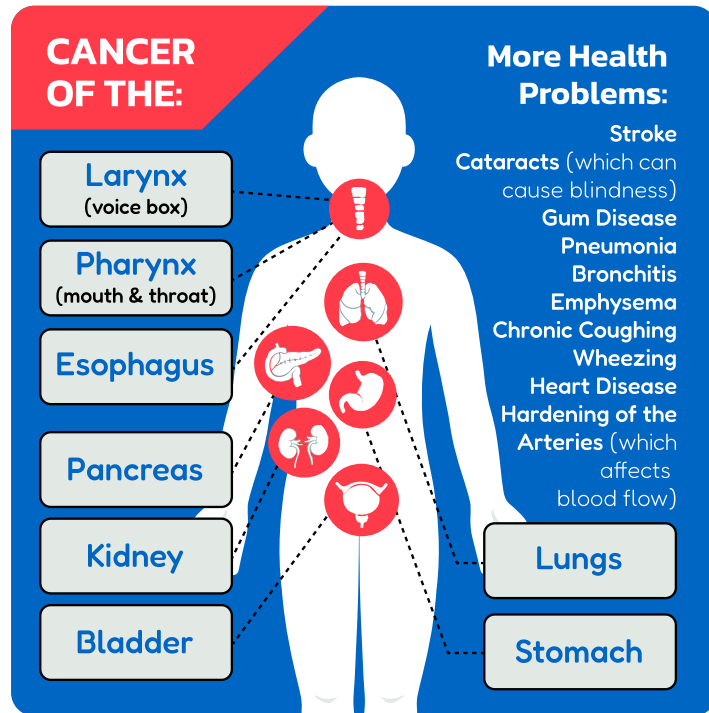
For the complete article, check out [www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugs-brains-behavior-science-addiction/](http://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugs-brains-behavior-science-addiction/).

## ACTIVITY THREE

## TOBACCO AND NICOTINE – THE HEALTH CONSEQUENCES



You've probably heard that using tobacco and nicotine is unhealthy. Take a look at some of the diseases and health problems smoking and using nicotine products causes:<sup>20</sup>



- It is a known cause of cancer—increasing a user's risk of oral cancer.<sup>21</sup>
- It can cause bleeding gums and mouth sores.<sup>22</sup>
- It can lead to nicotine addiction.<sup>21</sup>

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!<sup>16</sup>

### 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.<sup>23</sup> Cigarettes and smokeless tobacco both contain nicotine. Nicotine is absorbed through the lungs with cigarette smoke, and through the mouth with smokeless tobacco.<sup>23</sup> Nicotine affects the brain's reactions<sup>23</sup> and narrows a person's blood vessels, making it tougher for the heart to work.<sup>22</sup>

### 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.<sup>24</sup> Coughing, wheezing, shortness of breath, and phlegm production are symptoms that young people who use tobacco report they are more likely to experience than non-smoking peers.<sup>24</sup>

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.<sup>20</sup>

Did you know nicotine use can harm the developing adolescent brain. The brain keeps developing until about age 25.<sup>1</sup> Using nicotine in adolescence can harm the parts of the brain that control attention, learning, mood, and impulse control.<sup>2</sup> Each time a new memory is created, or a new skill is learned, stronger connections – or synapses – are built between brain cells. Young people's brains build synapses faster than adult brains, but nicotine changes the way these synapses are formed. Using nicotine in adolescence may also increase risk for future addiction to other drugs.<sup>4</sup>

### What About Smokeless Tobacco?

Chew, dip, snuff, or spit tobacco—it's all smokeless tobacco. But, it's not a safe alternative to smoking cigarettes or vaping.<sup>15</sup> There are health risks with using smokeless tobacco:

And then there's the issue of addiction, making it difficult to stop doing something. The younger a person is when he or she starts smoking cigarettes, the more likely he or she is to become addicted to nicotine.<sup>24</sup> Most young people who smoke regularly are addicted to nicotine, making it hard for them to quit.<sup>24</sup>

### What Else Is There?

Tobacco causes bad breath and stains your teeth.<sup>22</sup> Smoke can make your clothes and hair stink.<sup>22</sup>

### What is Secondhand Smoke?

Secondhand smoke is made up of smoke that comes off the burning cigarette and the smoke that the smoker exhales.<sup>25</sup> According to the Surgeon General, "No amount of secondhand smoke is safe...Scientists believe even a little tobacco smoke can be dangerous."<sup>25</sup>

Visit [www.cdc.gov/tobacco](https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco) for additional information about diseases and health consequences related to tobacco use.

<sup>1</sup>[https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic\\_information/e-cigarettes/Quick-Facts-on-the-Risks-of-E-cigarettes-for-Kids-Teens-and-Young-Adults.html](https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic_information/e-cigarettes/Quick-Facts-on-the-Risks-of-E-cigarettes-for-Kids-Teens-and-Young-Adults.html)

<sup>2</sup>[https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic\\_information/e-cigarettes/Quick-Facts-on-the-Risks-of-E-cigarettes-for-Kids-Teens-and-Young-Adults.html](https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic_information/e-cigarettes/Quick-Facts-on-the-Risks-of-E-cigarettes-for-Kids-Teens-and-Young-Adults.html)

<sup>3</sup>[https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic\\_information/e-cigarettes/Quick-Facts-on-the-Risks-of-E-cigarettes-for-Kids-Teens-and-Young-Adults.html](https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic_information/e-cigarettes/Quick-Facts-on-the-Risks-of-E-cigarettes-for-Kids-Teens-and-Young-Adults.html)

<sup>4</sup>[https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic\\_information/e-cigarettes/Quick-Facts-on-the-Risks-of-E-cigarettes-for-Kids-Teens-and-Young-Adults.html](https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic_information/e-cigarettes/Quick-Facts-on-the-Risks-of-E-cigarettes-for-Kids-Teens-and-Young-Adults.html)

<sup>20</sup> 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 2024. <https://stacks.cdc.gov/view/cdc/21569>

<sup>21</sup> CDC. Smoking & Tobacco Use. Fact Sheet—Smokeless Tobacco Facts. Referenced 2024. [https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data\\_statistics/fact\\_sheets/smokeless/health\\_effects/index.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/smokeless/health_effects/index.htm)

<sup>22</sup> CDC. Smoking & Tobacco Use. Information Sheets. You(th) and Tobacco—What You(th) Should Know About Tobacco. Referenced 2024. [https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data\\_statistics/fact\\_sheets/smokeless/health\\_effects/index.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/smokeless/health_effects/index.htm)

<sup>23</sup> NIDA for Teens. Mind Over Matter Teaching Guide and Series. Mind Over Matter: Nicotine. Referenced 2024. <https://nida.nih.gov/research-topics/parents-educators/mind-matter-series>

<sup>24</sup> 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

## ACTIVITY FOUR

### PEER POWER



Do you sometimes do things you don't want to do because of your friends? Maybe your friends get you to do something good, like work out. Or maybe they get you to do something that's not so good, like skipping class. Friends can have a lot of power—but only if you let them.

### PRESSURE VS. INFLUENCE—WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

If your friends coax you into doing something you don't want to do because of their words or actions, that's peer pressure. If you convince yourself to do something because you think your friends want you to, or you think it will make you part of the group, that's peer influence. Your friends don't push you—you push yourself.

With your group, write a skit that depicts peer influence or peer pressure. You may choose from one of the following general themes:

- tobacco and nicotine use
- lying
- cheating
- bullying
- gossiping
- betraying a confidence

When you write your skit, keep in mind some of the key elements of peer pressure or influence, such as:

- the desire to be liked by others
- the desire to be accepted by a particular group
- the desire to exhibit behavior that is similar to others'
- the embarrassment of being ridiculed for not doing something
- the pain of feeling excluded
- the need to sort out one's choices
- the need to understand the consequences of each choice
- the price we sometimes pay for making what we believe to be unpopular choices

### Planning Your Skit

With your group, brainstorm ideas before you start your skit. You should prepare two endings—one in which the character gives in, and one in which the character withstands the pressure or influence.

Topic: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Characters: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Situation: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Choices: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Possible consequences: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Resolution (character gives in): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Resolution (character withstands pressure or influence): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## ACTIVITY FIVE

### WHEN SAYING NO IS THE WAY TO GO



What happens when your friends pressure you and you say “no”? Do they get mad? Do they walk away? Do they stop talking to you? Or does nothing happen? It can be tough to say “no” because you may be worried about how your friends will react.

Check out each situation below. How would you respond to each one? First, think about your options and the possible consequences (short- and long-term) for each scenario. Then decide if you would want to say “no” to what is being proposed. (Be honest!) What might make it difficult for you to say “no”? Decide how you would respond and explain why. Remember: It’s YOUR decision. YOU have to live with the consequences.

SITUATION	OPTIONS	CONSEQUENCES	I'D SAY "YES" OR "NO"	HOW I'D SAY "NO"
Your best friend has called you in a panic. He needs your help studying for tomorrow’s biology test. You’ve had a rough few days and really want to be home alone and chill out for the night.				
You join a group of your friends for an all-day trip to an amusement park. As the day goes on, two of your friends start vaping. They ask you to join them, and you say “no.” But they continue to ask, and each time it is with increasing insistence.				
You’re with a friend at a store, and you notice that he slips some sunglasses into his backpack. He asks you to stand in front of him while he “loads up.”				
A group of friends agrees to tell their parents that they will be sleeping over at one friend’s house. What they don’t tell their parents is that there won’t be any adults there—the friend’s parents are out of town. If asked, they will lie about it. You are invited to join them.				

### HERE ARE SOME WAYS YOU CAN SAY “NO”:

- Add some humor.
- Suggest something else.
- Change the subject.
- Give a reason and explain why you said “no.”
- Talk about the consequences. n Just say “no” and walk away.
- Reverse the pressure.

## ACTIVITY SIX

## DEALING WITH STRESS



You probably have some days when you feel overwhelmed, worried, anxious, or stressed. Maybe you have a test and a paper due on the same day. Maybe you're arguing with your friend or your parents. This chart is designed to give you a sense of where stress comes from in your life and how you deal with it. These are examples—some may bother you and some may not. Fill it out and add your own "sources of stress" if you can identify other ones.

SOURCE OF STRESS	THIS BOTHERS ME A LOT.	THIS BOTHERS ME A LOT.	THIS DOESN'T BOTHER ME AT ALL.
Difficult schoolwork			
Finding the right social group for me			
My feelings about how I look			
My feelings about whether or not I can succeed in school			
Family crises (divorce, death in the family, etc.)			
Tensions/problems between one or both of my parents & me			
Being involved in too many activities			
Dating			
Arguments or disagreements with friends			
Pressure to do things I don't want to do			
Family responsibilities and chores			
Relationships with siblings			
School bullies			
Not enough time to relax			
Societal problems (crime, unemployment, war, etc.)			

### So, What Do You Do About Stress?

**TAKE INVENTORY** - Take a look at the list you made. Use this as a starting point to compile a list of things that cause you stress. Decide which ones you can avoid and how to avoid them. This reduces the amount of stress in your life.

**MAKE A PLAN** - Every day or so, make a list of the things you realistically want or need to accomplish for that day. Prioritize the list and allot yourself the time to accomplish each task. Planning reduces stress by giving you a sense of control.

**BE HEALTHY** - Take care of your body by getting enough sleep, exercising, and eating properly. Feelings of stress can be caused or heightened by sleep deprivation or poor diet. Exercise (running, basketball, swimming, etc.) is an excellent way to burn off feelings of tension. We store stress in our bodies, so taking good care of them reduces stress.

**GET SUPPORT** - Discuss sources of stress in your life with a parent, trusted grown-up, or a friend. They might be able to give you tips on how to manage specific situations. In addition, just knowing that they care about you (and can relate to your struggles) makes you feel less stressed because it makes you feel less alone.

**GIVE YOURSELF A BREAK** - When you're doing something you find stressful, take an occasional break. Play with a pet, listen to some music, draw a picture, or read a book. These are good temporary "release valves" that allow you to return to the task a little refreshed.

**BREAK IT DOWN** - When you are stressed out over a big job, break it down into little jobs. Instead of saying "I have to write a ten-page history paper by next week! I can't do that!" say, "Today and tomorrow I will do my research. The next day I will write an outline. The day after that I will write the first five pages of the first draft, and the day after that I will write the second five. The day after that I will write my second draft. So, the only thing I need to concern myself with at this moment is beginning my research. I can do that."

If you're tobacco and nicotine free, there are some stresses you don't have to worry about: **1.** health issues related to tobacco and nicotine use **2.** hiding tobacco and nicotine from your parents **3.** getting or accessing tobacco and nicotine products

**NICOTINE FREE IS THE WAY TO BE!**



## ACTIVITY SEVEN

### SENDING SIGNALS

People's perceptions of us and our perceptions of others are based largely on what we do or say. Take a look at the picture to the left. How would you describe each person?

Many people would probably find the person on the phone to be inconsiderate. We may perceive the other person to be assertive and tactful. In both instances we learn not only something about each person's character but also about his/her values—meaning what's valuable, or important, to them. The person on the phone valued what he believed to be his right to talk on the phone wherever he wanted. The person who approached him values the quiet of the library.

So, how do you see yourself? What do you want others to see in you—or what kind of image do you want others to have of you? One way to think about it is to decide what's important to you. How do your words and actions show what's important to you? People often make decisions based on what's important to them.

In the chart below, make a list of things that are important to you. It can be anything from people (girlfriend, boyfriend, sister, movie actor), to things (bracelet, bicycle, new clothes), to ideas (religion, respect, justice). Then write down ways in which you communicate to others how important these things are to you. You may find that you communicate it verbally, or you may communicate it with actions. For instance, you may make a point of telling people, "Don't call me between 6:30 and 7:30 because that's when my family eats dinner."

#### Things that are important to me

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#### What I do or say to let others know this is important to me

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#### You Decide!

Think about what's important to you. How does being tobacco and nicotine free demonstrate what's important to you?

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## ACTIVITY EIGHT

## DECISIONS, DECISIONS

Face it—as you get older, you have more decisions to make. That can be a good thing, but it can also be tough at times. It's important to think about what's important to you and then look at your options and the possible consequences for each option before you make a decision. Check out the situations below. For each one, think about the choices and consequences and then decide what you would do in the situation.

SITUATION	GOALS	CHOICES	CONSEQUENCES	DECISIONS
You and four friends are at the park. You're sitting in the middle. One of your friends pulls out a pouch of smokeless tobacco, puts some in his mouth, and then passes the pouch along. In turn, each of your other friends takes some tobacco. You don't want any. <i>How do you handle this?</i>				
You and four friends are at the park. You're sitting in the middle. One of your friends pulls out a pouch of smokeless tobacco, puts some in his mouth, and then passes the pouch along. In turn, each of your other friends takes some tobacco. You don't want any. <i>How do you handle this?</i>				
A bunch of friends are going out after school for pizza. You really want to join them, but you promised yourself you would head home immediately after school to study for tomorrow's exam. <i>What do you do?</i>				
There is a new student at school no one seems to like very much. The attitude among your friends is, "The guy's a loser, and anyone who hangs out with him is, too," but you're not so sure. A little while back you happened to be sitting with him on the bus, and you found him to have a good sense of humor. <i>Do you try to befriend him?</i>				
Your cousin is visiting from out of town. It's Saturday and your friends are headed to the mall to hang out, but your cousin has already said she would like to go to the local museum. <i>What do you do?</i>				

### DECISION-MAKING 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?

## ACTIVITY NINE

## CONFLICT – LEARNING TO DEAL WITH IT



Think about it: The person sitting in front of you at the movie theater is too tall for you to see around but he doesn't want to sit anywhere else. You want Italian food, and your sister wants Chinese food. You are invited to two parties at the same time on the same day. You and your best friend are competing for the same position on the soccer team.

Any of the above situations could be classified as conflict. A conflict might be defined as a clash between people, ideas, or interests. It does not have to be violent or a bad situation. One of the most important parts of a conflict is how you choose to respond to it. Before you react, stop and think! Decide how you can best manage the situation so it doesn't get out of hand, especially if you are upset. You have to live with the consequences.

Listed here are some tips that might help you resolve a conflict in a healthy way. It might take practice to find out which strategies work for you.

- 1. Respond; don't react.** Stay calm and cool. Think about what you will say before you say it. Don't speak in a tone that will escalate the conflict. Do whatever you have to do to either get calm or stay calm.
- 2. Focus on the problem.** Don't let an argument become personal. Stay focused on the conflict itself and look for possible solutions.
- 3. Talk. And listen.** Be clear about what you see as the problem and about what you want. Don't be accusatory. And don't present your side as if you are right and the other person is wrong. Be a good listener. Give the other person room to speak. In order to show that you are listening, report what the person said and ask if you have heard him or her correctly.
- 4. Be willing to cut a deal.** Don't try to "win." Show a willingness to find a compromise you both can live with.
- 5. Know when to walk away.** Sometimes the atmosphere is not right for a settlement. Feelings may be too charged. Anger may outweigh reason. If need be, tell the other person you are not yet ready to work things out, but you are willing to try later.
- 6. Don't resort to violence or insults.** Don't let things escalate—it will only cause more issues.
- 7. Be reasonable.** And encourage your friends to be reasonable, too. Always look to see if the intensity of a person's reaction (including your own) is appropriate for the conflict at hand. Encourage everyone to keep cool heads and maintain perspective.
- 8. Don't take sides.** When friends are in a conflict, be impartial.
- 9. Let it go.** Accept your share of the responsibility for the conflict. Admit when you are wrong or at fault. Apologize and be prepared to forgive the other person if he or she apologizes.

### You Decide!

Read each scenario below and consider how you would resolve the situation.

- A friend can't find a textbook she lent you. She accuses you of never returning it, but you're sure you did. What do you do?
- You and a friend are alone, and he has some smokeless tobacco. He says he's never tried it and doesn't intend on making it a habit, but he wants to do it just once to see what it's like. He reminds you that the two of you have always done things together and this should be no exception. What happens?
- A group is planning to go to a football game. One of the guys wants to bring his younger brother, but the rest of you (including you) don't like his brother. You think he is demanding and spoiled, and you feel as though there are certain things you can't talk about when he's around. You don't want your friend to bring his brother. What do you do?
- A friend has promised to quit vaping, has tried on a number of occasions, but keeps going back to them. You notice now that she no longer even mentions trying to quit and in fact seems to be smoking more than ever. You are very concerned, and you decide to confront her. How do you do it?
- You have a set curfew, but a concert is coming up that you want very much to attend. The concert will end well after your curfew. What do you do?



## SUPPORT ACTIVITY 1

## UNDERSTANDING TOBACCO AND NICOTINE ADDICTION

Did you know that most teens who smoke want to stop?<sup>26</sup> Did you know that most young people who smoke regularly are addicted to nicotine?<sup>26</sup> Nicotine addiction, whether it's from cigarettes, vapes, smokeless tobacco or any other nicotine product, is a serious risk associated with tobacco and nicotine use—and it affects all users. Read the following selected excerpts from 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, chews, or sniffs tobacco, he or she is delivering nicotine to the brain.<sup>27</sup>
- 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.<sup>27</sup>
- Most smokers 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 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.<sup>27</sup>
- 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.<sup>28</sup>
- In 40 minutes, half the effects of nicotine are gone. So smokers 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 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. Think about how you long for a cold drink on a hot day. Or how you want a sandwich when you are hungry. Craving for tobacco is much stronger.<sup>28</sup>
- 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.<sup>28</sup>

Nicotine withdrawal symptoms include irritability, craving, depression, anxiety, cognitive and attention deficits, sleep disturbances, and increased appetite.<sup>27</sup>

For the complete article, check out:

<https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugs-brains-behavior-science-addiction/drugs-brain>

### RESEARCH IT!

Using the Internet or library, research additional facts about nicotine addiction and how nicotine affects the body. Create a graphical representation of the facts to educate others about the consequences.

**REMEMBER: THE EASIEST WAY TO AVOID TOBACCO ADDICTION IS TO NOT START!**

<sup>26</sup> 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, 2012. Referenced 2024. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/22876391/>

<sup>27</sup> National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA). Research Report Series—Tobacco/Nicotine. NIH Publication Number 16-4342. Referenced 2024. <https://nida.nih.gov/publications/research-reports/tobacco-nicotine-e-cigarettes/nicotine-addictive>

<sup>28</sup> National Institute on Drug Abuse. Drugs, Brains, and Behavior: The Science of Addiction. Referenced 2024. [www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugs-brains-behavior-science-addiction/drugs-brain](http://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugs-brains-behavior-science-addiction/drugs-brain)

# HOW I AM (INTERPERSONAL SKILLS)

## SUPPORT ACTIVITY 2

### WHO I AM



You're getting older and experiencing new things. Do you feel excited? scared? the same? You're probably busy with school, friends, family, and lots of activities. It can be helpful to pause now and then to think about what's important to you. Put some thought into each of the following ideas to complete the sentences. In some cases you may have more than one answer. For instance, in the first sentence you may want to mention several things you do well.

I am good at \_\_\_\_\_

I am not so great at \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to learn how to \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to be better at \_\_\_\_\_

Some thing(s) I value in a friendship is (are) \_\_\_\_\_

One thing I'd like people to know about me is \_\_\_\_\_

It's important for me to be \_\_\_\_\_

It's important to me that my friends are \_\_\_\_\_

My family helps me by \_\_\_\_\_

My friends help me by \_\_\_\_\_

I want my friends to see me as \_\_\_\_\_

I want my parents to see me as \_\_\_\_\_

One thing I really like about myself is \_\_\_\_\_

One thing I would like to change about myself is \_\_\_\_\_

It bothers me when other people \_\_\_\_\_

I like it when I see other people \_\_\_\_\_

I stay healthy by \_\_\_\_\_

Three things I would like to accomplish are \_\_\_\_\_

I would strongly consider ending a friendship if \_\_\_\_\_

When I am faced with a difficult decision I \_\_\_\_\_

### You Decide!

Now, think about a goal you have or something you want to accomplish. How will you get there? Having a plan can help. Answer the questions below to help you accomplish your goal.

My goal: \_\_\_\_\_

Potential obstacles I might face (for example, peer pressure, lack of time, etc.): \_\_\_\_\_

How I can deal with these obstacles (for example, staying focused on the goal, remaining tobacco and nicotine free, avoiding risks that have negative consequences, remembering what's important to me, etc.): \_\_\_\_\_

# HOW I AM (INTERPERSONAL SKILLS)



## SUPPORT ACTIVITY 3

### IN THE NEAR FUTURE

By now you know...you need to think before you act. That is, think about the choices you have in a situation and the possible consequences of these choices.

You make decisions every day. Some are more difficult than others. You're entering high school, where you may face decisions that you've never dealt with before. For example: Should you get involved in sports or another activity? Are you going to start driving? *Do you want to get a job?*

Is there a decision you expect to have to make? Think about one and how you might handle it. For instance, what would you do if an older student offered you a ride home in his car? Before you accepted, you might give some thought to such questions as:

- *How well do I know this guy?*
- *How safe a driver is he?*
- *How safe is his car?*
- *What if there are other people in the car with us and they all want to go somewhere else first?*

One of the first things you should ask yourself is: What are my options? In other words, before deciding whether to accept the ride, you would have to give a good deal of thought to what it is that's being offered, whether you can trust it, whether you will actually get what you want out of the transaction, and what other variables might be at stake.

Before you write about your upcoming decision, be prepared to think broadly about the situation you wish to describe, the goal you have in mind, the choices you have, and the consequences that come with each choice. Finally, be prepared to support the decision you do make.

A decision I'll be making: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

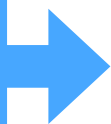
What I want to happen: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

The choices I have: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Possible consequences for these choices (positive or negative):  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

The decision I think I'll make: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Why I'll feel good about my decision: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



### You Decide!

When it comes to using tobacco and nicotine, you know your choices and you've learned about the consequences. The healthy decision is to be tobacco and nicotine free. Why will you feel good about this decision?



## UNIT QUIZ

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Part One

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

**1. Which statement is true?**

- A. 36% of middle schoolers are current cigarette smokers or vapers.
- B. 26% of middle schoolers are current cigarette smokers or vapers.
- C. 16% of middle schoolers are current cigarette smokers or vapers.
- D. Less than 5% of middle schoolers are current cigarette smokers or vapers.

**2. Which statement is true?**

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

**3. What is the leading preventable cause of death in the U.S.?**

- A. alcohol
- B. drugs
- C. cigarette smoking
- D. none of the above

**4. Young people who smoke can experience**

- A. shortness of breath, coughing, and wheezing
- B. nausea and phlegm production
- C. only A
- D. both A and B

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

- A. True
- B. False

**6. 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.

**7. Using smokeless tobacco can cause**

- A. cancer
- B. gum diseases & mouth sores
- C. both A and B
- D. none of the above

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

- A. True
- B. False

**9. Nicotine found in cigarettes, vapes, smokeless tobacco and nicotine pouches changes a user's:**

- A. heart and breathing rates
- B. heart rate and the brain's reaction
- C. heart rate, breathing rate and the brain's reaction
- D. none of the above

**10. True or False? The younger a person is when he or she starts to smoke cigarettes, 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.**

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**2. List two nicotine withdrawal symptoms.**

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**3. List three things to consider when making a decision.**

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**4. List two ways of handling conflict.**

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**5. Read the following scenario. Then list three possible ways Carlos could say "no" and be tobacco and nicotine free.**

*Carlos' friend Mike started vaping because his older brother does. They're all hanging out one day, and Mike offers Carlos a vape. Carlos does not want to vape. He's not sure what to do because everyone is watching him to see how he reacts.*

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**6. Create a scenario that is an example of peer pressure. Then create a second scenario that's an example of peer influence.**

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# 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 using 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:

