



SMOKING AND DRUGS – THINK FOR YOURSELF

THE IDEA

Children between the ages of 10 and 14 often face a lot of pressure to start smoking. They see adults smoking, their friends may encourage them to try, and advertising companies make smoking seem very attractive. To help them decide, children need to know about the effects of smoking on their health, their activities and their family life.

Children and adolescents may also try taking drugs, such as cannabis, which affect their bodies and minds. Alcohol is also a drug. They may be pressurised by their peers to take drugs, or they may think that these drugs will help them to cope with stress. Young people need to know why these drugs badly affect their health and lead to dangerous behaviour, risking injury and HIV infection. Young people can learn about safe ways of coping with stress to keep their bodies and minds healthy.

Young people need to learn critical thinking skills to help them to think for themselves. They also need to learn how to resist pressure and be assertive in making their own choices.

A smoker's story

Joseph, aged 12, lived with his family in a village. One day, on the way from school, he met a group of boys from his class. They were smoking. They offered Joseph a cigarette. Joseph puffed away. At first he felt sick, but he did not want these boys to think that he was a child. He finished his first cigarette. Soon he was smoking one cigarette a day ... then two, then five and then ten a day. He became addicted to cigarettes, so he felt sick if he did not have one.

Joseph began to have a bad cough. It did not get better, so he went to the health clinic. The health worker told him that his cough was caused by smoking. She knew this because his breath smelled and his teeth were stained yellow. 'Girls don't like boys to smell, you know,' she said to Joseph. She also told him that smoking can cause cancer of the lungs and throat. Many people die from this. Joseph thought to himself, 'I must try to give up smoking.'

Joseph had always been a keen footballer, but after a few months of smoking he noticed that he could not run about the pitch as quickly as he used to without getting out of breath. He was very upset when he was not

chosen to play for his team in a big match. Joseph went to meet his friends outside the bicycle shop where they smoked and chatted. On the shop wall were cigarette advertisements showing famous sports people smoking. They looked fit and healthy. There was no one there to tell the boys that advertisements are not always honest.

For a few months, Joseph was happy. But he missed the football team and began to visit the sports ground where the team was practising. He longed to play again, but he knew that he must give up smoking and start training again if he wanted his body to be fit enough. He talked to several of his friends outside the shop, and three of them agreed to try to give up smoking. It was not easy. At first Joseph felt sick and his body longed for a cigarette. Twice he started smoking again, but Joseph tried again. In the end Joseph and one of his friends succeeded. Joseph began training again and after a while was fit enough to rejoin the team.

SMOKING
A threat to fitness and health.



Main information about smoking cigarettes

- **Smoking causes disease and poor health.** Cigarettes can cause cancer and heart disease. People who don't smoke are usually healthier and fitter than those who smoke.
- **Smoking harms non-smokers.** When people breathe in others' cigarette smoke, they are also harmed. If a pregnant mother breathes in smoke, it can harm the unborn baby.
- **Smoking is expensive** and takes money that could be used for food, clothes, and other things.
- **Smoking is addictive:** once people start, it is very difficult to stop.
- **As young people we can think for ourselves and make healthy choices.**



IMPORTANT
Smoking harms our bodies in many different ways.
It causes disease.

Cancer in the lung, throat, mouth and bladder

Smoking causes cancer. Cancer occurs when body cells grow out of control and form a lump called a tumour. A cancer is very serious because it prevents that part of the body from working properly. It can spread to other parts of the body and cause death. We cannot catch cancer from other people. Smoking can cause cancer.

Heart disease

Smoking makes the heart work harder. It increases the heart rate because there is less oxygen in the blood when people smoke. That means that children who play sport cannot do so well if they smoke. When they get older they are more likely to suffer from heart disease.

Lung damage

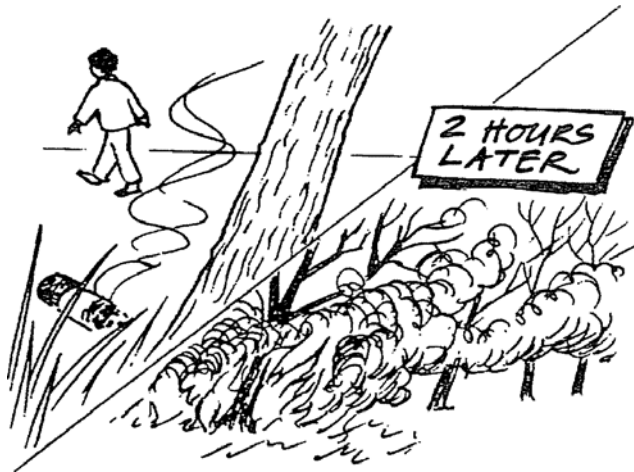
Tobacco contains tar, which stops the lungs from cleaning themselves properly. Smoking injures people's lungs so that they:

- get more coughs and colds
- are short of breath after exercise
- cough every day, especially when they wake up
- bring up thick, sticky mucous when coughing
- feel generally unwell.

Smoking is very harmful to babies. If a mother smokes, or breathes in another's smoke, the chemicals in the cigarette can harm her unborn baby. Babies can be born smaller and weaker, or even die if the mother smokes. Babies and young children can get chest problems – coughs and wheezes – if their parents smoke.

Smoke from cigarettes harms others who don't smoke. It causes eye and throat irritation, coughing and even cancer. Non-smokers still breathe in the smoke of those near them. Some people may be so affected by tobacco smoke, especially those with chest trouble, that they find it difficult to breathe.

Cigarettes and matches cause fires when they are thrown away carelessly. At home people's lives may be in danger. Burning cigarettes and matches also cause fires in fields and forests, markets, petrol stations, football stadiums, cinemas, and even in vehicles.



Cigarettes are poisonous

What actually causes the injuries to smokers and those around them? Cigarettes give out harmful chemicals:

- **Tar**, a sticky mixture of irritating chemicals and cancer-causing substances, collects in the lungs.
- **Nicotine**, a poisonous drug, makes the heart beat faster, and also affects blood vessels and nerves. It is very addictive.
- **Carbon monoxide and other poisonous gases** take the place of oxygen in the blood, which the body needs to stay healthy.

A costly habit

- Money is wasted on cigarettes when it could be used to buy more useful things for the family.
- Land which should be used for growing food is used for growing tobacco for cigarettes or for chewing.
- Smokers are ill more often than those who do not smoke, so they are unable to work and need more medical attention.
- Governments have to spend money trying to stop people from smoking and paying for their health care, while

cigarette companies spend a lot of money trying to get people to smoke.

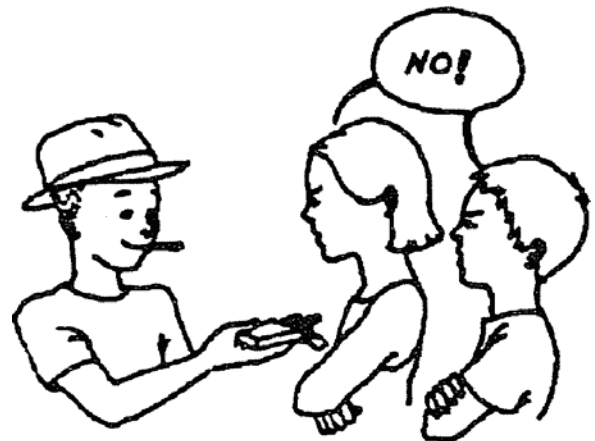
Why do people begin smoking?

Different people smoke for different reasons.

- Some people smoke because they see other people smoking, like their friends, parents, brother or sister, and they want to try it. Young people may feel peer pressure from their friends to try smoking.
- Some people smoke because advertisements encourage them to buy cigarettes. These make smokers seem attractive, young, healthy, rich and successful. **But this is not true.** Smokers are likely to have poorer health and to be less fit. Because they spend more money on cigarettes, they have less to spend on looking good.

REMEMBER

**It is easy to start smoking, but it can be difficult to stop.
So be smart – don't start!**



Giving up cigarettes

Many people want to feel better by giving up smoking. It is difficult, but it is possible. At first people may feel quite ill. They may have: poor sleep; bad dreams; difficulty in thinking and concentrating; depression and anxiety; and a craving for cigarettes. But this does not last. Friends and family can help a person who is trying to stop smoking. Before long, they will feel better and be healthier. Their clothes will not smell of cigarette smoke.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

In some countries, many people are deciding not to smoke. This means less money for the cigarette companies, so they want to encourage people in *other* countries to smoke more. They use advertising to get new customers.

Don't let the cigarette companies tell you what to do. Make up your own mind. Think for yourself!

**OTHER KINDS OF DRUGS****What are drugs?**

Drugs contain chemical substances that have an effect on our bodies and brains. Some drugs are helpful, some are dangerous. Helpful drugs are those we use for treatment when we are sick. We must only take the amount advised by the health worker. Most drugs are dangerous, and could even cause death, if we take too much or take them too often. We must also get drugs from the right place. Some drugs sold in the market are old, fake or given in the wrong amounts.

Dangers of drug abuse

Like cigarettes, alcohol and cannabis or marijuana are drugs which have an effect on people's minds and bodies. If people take alcohol and cannabis in large amounts, they cannot control their behaviour and may take dangerous risks, such as getting involved in violence or having unsafe sex.

Alcohol makes people's reactions slow, so they are more likely to have an accident. Some locally brewed alcohol can be poisonous and can cause blindness. Young people are safer avoiding alcohol. Cannabis or marijuana can cause a loss of memory and make it difficult to think clearly. It is illegal in most countries.

Some young people sniff glue or petrol. At first it might make them feel good, but it is dangerous and causes loss of control, as well as affecting memory and sight.

In some places, people inject drugs with needles. These drugs are very dangerous and can cause serious illness and death. When people share the same needle and syringe to inject drugs they also risk passing HIV and other viruses from one person to another.

Why do people abuse drugs?

- Some young people start taking drugs because of pressure from their friends, or because they see others around them taking drugs, such as alcohol.
- Some people take drugs to cope with stress and escape from their problems. However, the problems do not go away and the stress will only become worse.
- Many drugs are addictive, so once people start taking them, it is very difficult to stop. By then the body feels that it needs the drug, and the person feels sick if they do not get it. People can cure themselves, but it is very hard. It is much wiser never to get addicted.



Healthy ways to cope with stress

Taking drugs is not a good way to cope with stress. There are other things we can do to feel better about life and stay healthy. We can talk openly with a trusted adult, we can relax and laugh with friends, we can eat good food, take exercise and get enough sleep.

Activities

Preparing for this topic

- Find out the situation in your own area about smoking, alcohol and drugs abuse. What are the local names of those drugs which are available? What are children and young people exposed to? What are local attitudes and laws about different drugs? Collect any information and health education materials on the topic.

Understanding

- Read Joseph's story and talk about the lessons he learned.
- Bring in health education materials about smoking. Divide these up between groups of children. Ask them to read the materials and write down the main messages and any questions they have. Answer their questions. Then ask each group to present their messages. Later do the same activity on other drugs.
- Make a Question Box in the class, in which children can place questions about the topic anonymously (with no name). Make a time to answer these questions, or invite a health worker to come and talk with the children.



- Make up true and false statements about the information in this sheet. Put up on the classroom walls three signs: True – False – Don't know. Read out each statement. The children decide which sign to stand by. Ask each group why they are standing in each place. Correct any misunderstandings.

Finding out more

Children can find out more about the topic.

- **Advertisements.** Carry out a survey of billboards and advertisements from newspapers, magazines, the radio and cinemas. Find out:
 - How often are cigarettes advertised?
 - What ideas do the advertisements give?
 - How do they make you feel?
 - What do the advertisements NOT tell you?
 - Does the government put a health warning on the advertisements?
- **Smoking and the family.** Find out how many children in the group have parents, guardians, brothers or sisters who smoke. Talk about how smoking affects the whole family. What is it like to live with a smoker? Does the fact that someone in the family smokes make it more likely that the children will begin to smoke?
- **People who smoke.** Carry out a survey of people who smoke, including any in their own class or group.
 - What age did they start?
 - Why did they start to smoke?
 - Why do they smoke now?
 - Would it be easy or hard for them to stop smoking?
 - Have they tried to stop?
 - What effects have they noticed on their health?
 - Would they encourage young people to smoke?
 - How could others help them to stop smoking?

Make a bar chart to show the number of children in the class with parents or guardians who smoke. If appropriate, also show the number of children in the class who smoke at least one cigarette a week.

CHILD-TO-CHILD TRUST

- **People who don't smoke.** Talk to adults and young people who don't smoke.
 - Why did they decide not to smoke?
 - When did they decide not to smoke or give up smoking?
 - If they gave up smoking, how did they manage this?
 - What was difficult?
 - What helped them to succeed?

Invite someone who has given up smoking to come and talk to the group. Prepare questions before to ask the person. Afterwards the children can write and illustrate a report to show what they have found out.

- **Cost of smoking.** Find out the cost of one cigarette. Ask a regular smoker how many cigarettes they smoke in one day. Work out the cost of the number of cigarettes smoked each day, each week, each month, and for a whole year. Work out how much rice, flour or meal this money could buy.
 - **Poison in cigarettes.** Demonstrate the harmful substances contained in a cigarette. An adult smoker can take a white cloth and blow tobacco smoke through it. A brown stain will appear on the cloth. This is tar which collects in smokers' lungs.
 - Invite the health worker or an NGO worker to talk about drugs and drug abuse. Prepare questions beforehand. Use the question box to gather the questions without names, so children do not feel shy to ask about any concerns.
 - With the children, make a list of the dangerous drugs, including alcohol, which young people take in your area. Make a chart listing the drugs and explaining what they do and why they are dangerous.
 - Find out why some young people take dangerous drugs. If possible, ask an adult who used to be addicted to drugs to come and talk with the group. The class can prepare questions first, but check that the visitor is happy to answer these.
- From their surveys, write a list of reasons why people smoke and why they do not smoke. Compare the reasons. What ideas does the list give about:
 - How to encourage people to stop smoking?
 - How to help people to avoid starting to smoke?
 - What they will decide for themselves?
 - Organise a debate. Divide the group into two. One group prepares arguments in support of the topic, the other prepares arguments against it. Elect four to five members from each group to represent them in the debate. The teams sit opposite each other and take it in turns to argue their position. Afterwards the class votes to see which side won. Possible topics include:
 - Smoking should be allowed in all public places, including buses and trains.
 - The government should double the price of cigarettes through taxes.
 - Drinking alcohol helps people to cope with stress.
 - Prepare a role-play in groups. Five children arrange to meet at their favourite place. One of them produces some cigarettes (or cannabis) and tells the others to try. One refuses, but the others ask, 'Why not?' What does this child say? How do the others try to persuade and put pressure on their friend? What happens? Make up the role-play. Afterwards discuss what was learnt from the role-play. How can children resist peer pressure?
 - Prepare another role-play about an adolescent boy or girl who is facing a very stressful life. He or she agrees to a friend's suggestion to try alcohol or another drug to help forget their problems. What happens? What further problems arise? Afterwards discuss, how could this young person have stayed safe? How could he or she stay safe in future? What are healthier ways to cope with stress? Now role-play the situation again showing the young person making safer decisions.
 - Pass on the message to others, especially other children and young people. Before

Planning and taking action

Children talk about what they have learnt and plan what action they can take. Here are some ideas:

they start they can discuss and agree on their main messages about smoking, alcohol and other drugs. Children can:

- make picture stories to tell other children.
- write songs and poems to teach other children.
- make posters to display at home, at school or in other public places.
- make up plays to show in school or at an open day, like the story of Joseph in this sheet. Make the story longer to show how Joseph was able to help other friends and family to stop smoking.



Discussing results

- Can children now tell:
 - Why smoking is dangerous?
 - Why alcohol is dangerous?
 - Why other illegal drugs are dangerous?
 - Have any of the group talked with others about the dangers of smoking, drinking alcohol and other drugs? What happened? What would they do next time?
 - Have any of them faced situations when they have been offered these things? What happened? What would they do next time?

- Have any of the children in the group stopped smoking? What about friends, brothers or sisters or parents? Have the numbers changed? For better or for worse?

Doing it better

The situation around drugs and drug abuse varies in different countries. Be aware of what risks the children and young people in your group are exposed to. Make sure that they have a trusted adult, perhaps yourself or a school counsellor, whom they can talk with if they have concerns or need help. It is important to be able to talk about these matters openly, to set clear boundaries, but also to help children and young people to think clearly and make up their own minds.

USING THE SHEET

Teachers, school counsellors and head teachers can use these ideas for developing a smoking and drugs education programme in their schools. This can reinforce any topics already in the curriculum. The issue of drug abuse is closely linked to HIV prevention.

Health workers and NGO workers with a focus on drugs abuse and HIV and AIDS prevention can use these materials to work with young people in schools and youth groups. They can also use it to develop peer educators among the young people.

The media can use these ideas to work with young people in developing programmes on smoking, alcohol and drug abuse for radio, TV and newspapers.

OTHER RESOURCES

- This Activity Sheet can be used together with Activity Sheet 7.2 **Medicines – When and How They Can Help Us**.
- Life skills-based education develops the skills needed in this area to think critically, assess risk, and resist pressure. Find out what life skills materials are available.