

Date Used: _____

Group: _____

UP IN SMOKE

Topic: Nicotine Use

Purpose of this Session:

It is not the purpose of this discussion to condemn those who smoke, be they parents, relatives, schoolteachers, or church children's workers. Condemning smokers rather than voicing opposition to smoking can be confusing to young people, especially those whose parents and other adults close to them smoke. Use this discussion time to focus on what is in the best interests of your kids. You will need to take time to discuss the addictive nature of tobacco as the reason adults who smoke have such a difficult time quitting. Point out that most adults who do smoke would like to quit but can't. An addiction to tobacco is one of the most powerful addictions known.

To Introduce the Topic:

Collect several magazine cigarette ads that you can show the kids. Ask the group what messages these ads communicate to young people, then read the warning labels contained in the ads. Ask the group how these warning labels contradict the message being put forth by the cigarette companies. Ask which message is closer to the truth.

The Discussion:

Item #1: You will have a variety of responses depending upon the makeup of your group. This item indicates the potential peer influence for or against smoking in your community. As you begin your discussion, you will find it helpful to know that there is a significant correlation between parental smoking and a child's experimentation with smoking. Also, the children of smokers are more inclined to hold more positive attitudes toward smoking than the kids of nonsmokers.

Item #2: Ask the young people to look through the reasons and decide if any of them are good reasons to smoke. A great many young people try cigarettes or chew because they want to feel grown-up. Many of these reasons are legitimate needs kids have, but smoking won't meet those needs. Check the list again and determine how those that are needs can be met in more constructive ways.

Item #3: Let kids add any reasons not found on the list. Point out that there are many good reasons not to smoke and really no good reasons to smoke, yet young people every day try smoking. Explore with the group why this is so.

Item #4: Most kids will answer no to this question. Some may already have tried it, and some may say yes. Do not use this item to morally beat kids over the head. Rather, take this opportunity to reinforce saying no to smoking. Research indicates that young people who have puffed on cigarettes as children are more likely to further experiment as they grow up. Take this opportunity to help shape a more positive attitude toward saying no.

Item #5: This item helps young people affirm a negative stand toward the use of tobacco.

Item #6: Ask the group to write a statement that summarizes the passages of Scripture.

To Close the Session:

Summarize what has been said during your discussion. You will not want to preach against smoking as much as you want to emphasize what is in the best interests of your kids. Lecturing against the evils of smoking only serves to push kids toward the thing you want them to avoid.