

*The Trouble  
with Tobacco*

**Teacher's Guide**

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# *The Trouble with Tobacco*

**Time: 12 minutes**

## ***PROGRAM OVERVIEW***

As the program opens, a group of preteens goes to a deserted area to smoke cigarettes. One of the youngsters smokes because of peer pressure. Others smoke because it seems exciting and grownup. The narrator then explains that the tobacco industry spends billions of dollars every year to convince people that tobacco use is fun and glamorous. However, the reality of tobacco use is very different than what is depicted in expensive advertising campaigns. Tobacco use can restrict a person's athletic ability, it's expensive, and it leaves an unpleasant odor on one's clothing and hair. Moreover, tobacco in cigarettes contains more than 3,000 chemicals, many of them highly poisonous. Among the most dangerous is carbon monoxide, a gas that robs blood of oxygen and fosters the unhealthy buildup of fatty material on blood vessel walls. Both contribute to heart problems. Smokers also are more prone to eye and ear problems, infections, and several serious chronic diseases. Tobacco use also can lead to cancer.

## ***STUDENT OBJECTIVES***

After viewing this video and participating in the suggested activities, students should be able to do the following:

- (1)** Explain why people may think smoking is glamorous, exciting, fun and relaxing.
- (2)** Enumerate the major medical problems commonly associated with tobacco use.
- (3)** Tell at least three negative aspects of tobacco *use*, other than common medical problems.
- (4)** Briefly recount how nicotine affects the brain's chemistry.

## ***SUGGESTED LESSON PLAN***

### ***1. Introduction***

Ask the class why so many people smoke. Help your students understand that peer pressure and advertising often lead individuals to do things that may not be good for them. When individuals begin to use tobacco, do you think they admit to themselves that they may become addicted? Why or why not? Ask why people who want to stop smoking continue to puff away.

### ***2. Previewing Activities***

Tell the class they are going to see a video called *The Trouble with Tobacco*. What kind of troubles are often associated with tobacco use?

Continue your discussion by stating that there are many medical problems related to tobacco use, but there are also many other problems tobacco users encounter. Ask the class to pay close attention to discover the many different troubles an individual may face when he or she uses tobacco.

### 3. *Post Viewing Activities*

Write the following on the chalkboard:

- Specific diseases caused by tobacco
- Social problems caused by tobacco
- Safety problems caused by tobacco
- Medical problems caused by tobacco

List all the problems mentioned in the video, as well as any others you and your students know about.

Discuss the difference between *fantasy* and *reality*. Help your students understand that tobacco companies use fantasy to sell their products. The fantasy is that tobacco use is healthful, glamorous and fun. Point out that the video shows the stark contrast between the fantasy of advertisements and the reality of tobacco use. The unhealthy smokers seen in the program give a more realistic picture of what happens when individuals use tobacco.

Discuss passive smoke. Help your students understand that if they breathe the tobacco smoke of others, they may be adversely affected.

Ask a member of your community's cancer society or your school nurse to give a talk on tobacco use to your class.

### ***TRANSCRIPT OF THE VIDEO***

NARRATOR: Several weeks ago, Eric Simpson, in the baseball cap, and some of his friends went out to the lake front to smoke cigarettes.

FRIEND: So, yesterday you said you wanted to try cigarettes. So now we're here. Here you go.

NARRATOR: It was the first time for Eric, and he was edgy about it.

FRIENDS: Come on, Eric. What are you worried about? Take a puff. Go for it.

NARRATOR: Even though he was nervous, Eric didn't want his friends to think he was afraid.

As with Eric, lots of other kids have their first cigarette because their friends are experimenting with smoking, and they want to go along with the group.

For others, it just seems exciting and grown-up, maybe even a little bit adventurous.

But that's no surprise. After all, tobacco companies spend billions of dollars each year (that's right, *billions*) trying to convince people that smoking is healthful, glamorous, exciting, and even refreshing and relaxing!

Those messages are all around us -- on billboards, on the sides of trucks, on clothing, and in magazines and newspapers.

You even see the messages at sporting events! Almost all the advertising is carefully designed to convey the idea that smokers are active, beautiful and popular.

Of course, there are lots of things the ads *don't* tell.

For openers, smoking won't really make you popular, especially with people who know the facts about tobacco.

It's far more likely that they'll be disgusted with the stale, unpleasant odor of cigarette smoke that clings to the clothes and hair of smokers.

The ads don't mention something else, that smokers have a big disadvantage in sports and other physical activities.

That's because cigarette smoke disrupts the flow of the air the body needs to work at peak efficiency, which is, of course, very important when participating in athletic events.

Moreover, tobacco companies never discuss how expensive cigarettes are.

Depending on how much a person smokes, it can cost from several hundred to several thousand dollars a year to support the habit.

Those considering smoking might do well to ask themselves how they would prefer to spend their money -- on a cigarette, which, when you think about it, is nothing more than a paper cylinder filled with poisonous chemicals that can kill you (more on that in a minute), or on other things, perhaps video games, clothes, a CD or tape collection, sports equipment, or anything else that isn't harmful.

When you think about it, it's curious — perhaps "deceitful" would be a better word -- to portray cigarette smokers as robust and healthy, especially when all the scientific evidence points to something quite the opposite.

For example, smokers, for the most part, are not as healthy as non-smokers.

Unlike the beautiful and handsome models who appear in tobacco ads, many of them have become extremely ill because they've inhaled tobacco smoke, smoke that contains more than 3,000 different chemicals, many of them poisonous.

One of those poisonous chemicals is ammonia, which is found in toilet bowl cleaners and other cleaning compounds.

There are also pesticides in cigarette smoke. Pesticides are the chemicals farmers use to kill insects.

In large enough quantities, these substances can kill people, too.

Cadmium, a poisonous metal, is something else found in cigarette smoke. Cadmium is used in car batteries, and is so poisonous that its disposal is controlled by federal law.

Then there's carbon monoxide, the same invisible gas that comes out of the exhaust pipes of automobiles and home heating systems.

Hundreds of people die each year from accidentally breathing this gas.

In fact, carbon monoxide detectors are found in many homes so homeowners and renters can escape its deadly effects should their heating exhaust systems malfunction.

Nevertheless, when people smoke, that same poisonous gas moves down their windpipe, and then into their lungs, their heart, their blood vessels, their brain, and other parts of their body, where it can cause serious damage.

In blood, for example, the carbon monoxide, seen in blue, can take the place of oxygen, seen in white. But the body needs oxygen to survive.

So the heart, the organ that pumps oxygen-rich blood, must work harder to get enough oxygen to the various parts of the body.

In many cases, that extra work puts such a strain on the heart, that it beats out of control or simply stops.

In other words, the smoker has a heart attack.

It's a well-known fact among scientists and doctors that cigarette smokers are much more likely to have heart attacks than non-smokers.

Scientists also know that carbon monoxide in cigarette smoke affects not only blood, but blood vessels, as well.

Their research has shown that the gas helps build up a fatty substance called cholesterol on blood vessel walls.

In time, the cholesterol may completely block the flow of blood -- including the oxygen it carries, seen here as the white dots.

That can cause a heart attack, also, or a stroke, a condition in which a portion of the brain dies because it doesn't get enough oxygen.

Carbon monoxide in cigarette smoke can affect a person's eyesight, too. Smokers generally don't see at night as well as non-smokers.

In addition, cigarettes can reduce a person's alertness to sounds.

It's called "smoker's cough." And it's what can happen when another chemical in cigarette smoke, called "tar," begins to build up on the lung's air passages.

The passages are tube-like structures that have tiny, microscopic hairs in them that move back and forth, like waves.

This wave-like motion sweeps dust, germs and other disease-causing substances out of the lungs.

But tar paralyzes the hair, so the dust and germs build up. The body secretes mucus around the germs to prevent them from causing infections.

Smokers then attempt to clear their air passages by coughing up the gooey mess of mucus and germs.

However, they're not always successful. So many

germs stay in the body, where they cause various illnesses. The result? Smokers have more colds and other ailments than non-smokers.

Over time, the tar in cigarette smoke builds up on and in the lungs, which can have dire consequences.

One may be chronic bronchitis, a disease in which the airways to the lung become clogged with mucus.

People with chronic bronchitis find breathing difficult and painful.

Even worse, the chemicals in tar can trigger cancer growth.

Hundreds of thousands of smokers die of lung cancer every year.

Thousands of others suffer from emphysema, an incurable disease that keeps people from breathing normally. Those who are in the advanced stages of this disabling affliction, caused by tar build-up, are unable to walk for more than a few dozen feet without stopping to catch their breath.

Many need to carry a portable oxygen supply.

By the way, chewing tobacco and snuff, two products just as dangerous as cigarettes, also contain tar. They, too, can cause cancer -- on the lips, gums, and tongue, and in the mouth, throat, and windpipe.

And needless to say, tobacco chewers and snuff dippers can look awfully disgusting when they feed their habit.

Most people who chew or dip tobacco don't start with full-strength products. If they did, they would become sick, a sign that their bodies are rejecting all the poisons in the tobacco.

Instead, beginners use mild tobaccos often sweetened with fruity flavors to make them taste good. But those flavors are a trap because the chewer is also taking in still another poison found in tobacco -- nicotine, a very powerful drug.

As with many other drugs, nicotine changes the brain's chemistry so that the chewer or dipper or smoker craves more and more of it.

Put another way, the person becomes an nicotine addict. He can't feel normal without using the drug.

CHEWER: I don't know what I'd do without it.  
Relaxes me. Part of my life now.

NARRATOR: Scientists now know that nicotine is one of the most addictive among all drugs.

Once a person is hooked, tobacco use can be extremely difficult to stop.

Which brings us back to Eric and his friends.

Probably none of them thinks he or she will ever become addicted, just like practically every other person who started using tobacco and then eventually *did* become hooked.

And if they started using tobacco as a young person, they, too, probably thought it made them look grownup and sophisticated.

But adults, real adults, make decisions based on well-researched and reliable information.

Advertisements, as you've seen, can be very *unreliable*.

Moreover, real adults know that one's health is among the most important things in life and that risking one's health is very foolish.

Real adults also control their actions.

They don't let a chemical substance control them. So you might want think about it.

Is using tobacco really such a fun, glamorous and grownup thing to do?

Or is it something altogether different?

