Talking to Peers about Tobacco

Objectives
1. Students will understand how to say no to tobacco with confidence.
2. Students will understand how to communicate with their peers about the consequences of using tobacco.
3. Students will understand how to name at least one way you can communicate with peers without addressing them face to face.

Materials needed for this lesson
1. One writing a letter to a friend worksheet per student (blank provided)
2. One blank piece of paper
3. A writing utensil
4. Role play scenarios (provided)
5. One tobacco-free pledge per student (blank provided)

Background information and notes
Most students know that using tobacco products is unhealthy. Most students do not want to use tobacco products. Many simply don’t know how to cope in a situation when they are presented with the opportunity to use a tobacco product. They often succumb to peer pressure. Additionally, they are not taught to discuss other’s tobacco use with them. This lesson works on teaching kids effective communication skills. It also provides them with an opportunity to practice how to react in real-life situations.
Presenting the Lesson
Children begin to face the challenge of communicating with peers and family at a very young age. This can be particularly problematic when children experience peer pressure to begin using tobacco products. Children should be equipped with the proper communication skills and tactics for avoiding conflict. If students can communicate effectively, they can say no to using tobacco with confidence and become a role model for their peers.

Ask students to raise their hand if they’ve ever been misunderstood*. Ask volunteers to tell a story of a situation where they were misunderstood. Following the story or stories, ask the class for ideas on how the person telling the story could have communicated their wants/needs/desires more effectively. Do this to see how much students already know.

*Explain the term misunderstood if necessary. Use this opportunity as an example of unclear communication. You want them to answer a question, but they do not understand the vocabulary you are using. Therefore, the class and the teacher are not communicating effectively.

Students should understand that communication is not only about the words that you speak or write. Communication includes:

• Your body language
• How well you listen
• How well your actions and your words match
• Your tone of voice

When you are speaking face to face with someone, you should:

• Look them in the eye (make eye contact)
• Use a conversational tone (Do not yell or speak too quietly)
• Speak with confidence. Do not act afraid of the other person or unsure of your response(s).
• Use proper body language. Do not cross your arms, look down or away from the person you are speaking to, roll your eyes or make faces.
• Do not interrupt. Wait until the person speaking has finished.

Most important, do not say one thing and do another! If you say NO, show that you really mean NO.
Dealing with Peer Pressure: How to say NO effectively

Equation for success

Say NO with confidence + give a reason why + Make your action match your words (walk away if necessary) = Saying NO effectively

• **Say NO with confidence**: When someone wants you to do something that you know is wrong, unhealthy or unsafe, say NO as if you really mean it. Use a firm tone without yelling.

• **Give a reason why**: Give a specific reason why you do not want to do what you are being asked to. Show that you care about yourself enough to say NO. Expressing your opinion can be very powerful and you may be saving someone from harming themselves.

• **Make your actions match your words**: If you say no and then proceed to participate in the action/activity that you know is wrong, your peers will not take you seriously. You will be faced with this situation time and time again. Walking away from the situation may be necessary to prove your point and avoid more pressure.

• **Reasons to say NO to tobacco**
  1. All forms (cigarettes, chew, dip and cigars) can cause multiple health problems in the future. This includes gum disease and a variety of cancers.
  2. Smoking makes your teeth turn yellow and gives you bad breath.
  3. Smoking makes it difficult to breathe.
  4. Smoking makes it hard to be physically active.

• **Great ways to express your opinion about using tobacco. Simply say:**
  1. NO thank you, I care about my health.
  2. NO thank you, I plan to live a very long time.
  3. NO thanks, I like to spend my money on other things.
  4. NO thanks, I don’t do things that are illegal.
  5. NO thanks, I don’t want to smell horrible when I have to go home.
  6. NO thank you, it will affect my game in soccer (football, baseball, etc) or my ability to dance, do tai chi, karate, etc.
  7. NO thanks. I know that once you start it is very hard to stop.

** Always use “I” statements. Keep the situation positive by talking about how you feel about something.
**Learning Activity: Writing a Letter to a Friend**

**Explanation of the activity:**
When you are upset or hurt by a friend or family member, or they are doing something to hurt themselves, it can be difficult to talk to them face to face. There are several other ways to communicate with them. Students should learn alternate forms of communication, such as writing a letter.

Writing a letter gives students the opportunity to be heard, without being interrupted or challenged. Taking the time to write a letters shows that you care. You can also revise the letter as many times as you want before giving it to the recipient. That way, it will say exactly what you want it to say.

**Directions:**
1. Have students write a letter to a friend who has done something to upset them (can be a hypothetical situation). This can be a variety of things, and it does not have to be about tobacco.
2. The letter should be no more than one page.
3. The students should use “I” statements.
4. The students should use the following worksheet and sample letter as a guide.
Writing a Letter to a Friend

Who are you writing to? (Does not have to be a real person): ___________________

What has this person done to upset you? ________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________

Why did this bother you? ______________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________

What do you like about the person you are writing to? ______________________

_______________________________________________________________________

Why do you care about him or her? _______________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________

What should he or she do differently in the future to avoid hurting you or their self?

_______________________________________________________________________

_______________________________________________________________________
Writing a Letter to a Friend

Directions: Write a letter to your friend using the information you filled out on the worksheet. Use correct letter format. Make sure you use “I” statements.
Learning Activity: Role Playing

Explanation of the activity:
Students should be given the opportunity to practice their communication skills with their classmates. Role playing gives the students a chance to say NO in an unthreatening environment. It also gives them the opportunity to give each other feedback.

Note: This activity may be done on a separate day if time is a concern.

Directions:
1. Get three volunteers to do the example scenario for the class. This scenario has the ending written for the students.
2. As a group, the students should give the volunteers feedback on their performance. They should be judging their communication skills: tone of voice, body language, etc. Since the students have no input on the lines of the role play, they can’t be critiqued on that aspect of the scenario.
3. Divide the class into groups of six and hand out a scenario to each group.
4. Each scenario uses three people, a narrator and two people interacting. The endings are unwritten. Names may be changed to fit the people playing the roles.
5. Students should be given sufficient time to write the ending(s). After half the group acts out the scenario, then the other three members should be given the opportunity to act it out.
6. Have the students perform the scenarios in front of the class. Students should use the Role Play Feedback form to give positive comments and suggestions for improvement.

Activity Debrief:
The following questions will help to summarize the activity:

Scenario One: How did Brian try to convince Franco to try his brother’s cigarettes? What did Franco do that was really good in response? What else could either person have done?

Scenario Two: What was good about the ending the group came up with? What would have happened to the adults if they had been caught buying the cigarettes for the boys? What would have happened if the boys had been caught smoking?

Scenario Three: What was good about the ending the group came up with? Is it true that baseball players use real chewing tobacco? (No, they are banned from doing so.) Is chewing tobacco healthier than cigarettes? (No, it can lead to just as many health problems as cigarettes. No tobacco is safe.)

Scenario Four: How should you deal with telling an adult about a situation where you find someone you know and love smoking? What was good about the group’s ending?
Narrator: Brian and Franco are hanging out at Brian’s house after school. His parents are not home. They go into Brian’s older brother’s room to look for his football.

Brian: I will just go into Todd’s room to look for his football.

Franco: Ok, I’m going to go get a glass of water before we start to play.

Brian: Wait! Look what I just found- a pack of cigarettes! I didn’t know my brother smoked!

Franco: I’d put those back and ask him about them later. Let’s go play football.

Brian: We always play football, let’s take these cigarettes and sneak down to the creek.

Franco: Brian, you know how bad cigarettes are for you. They’ll make it hard for us to play ball.

Brian: Oh, come on, man. How bad can one cigarette be?

Franco: Bad enough! One leads to two and two leads to three. Before you know it, you’re addicted!

Brian: If my brother smokes, they can’t be that bad.

Franco: Maybe you should talk to him about what we learned at school. If he’s not going to stop, you should tell your mom. Smoking can really do damage to your health.

Brian: My brother would not be happy with me if I did that.

Franco: He’ll thank you one day!

Brian: Yeah, I guess you’re right. Let’s just go play football like always.
Complete this scenario. When you act it out, make sure you think about your body language and the equation for successfully saying NO!

**Narrator:** Two friends are walking home from school. They stop at a carry-out store to get a snack.

**Jose:** Come on, Maxwell! Hurry up and get your snack so we can get to your house! I want to have time to play before dinner.

**Maxwell:** Hold on, Jose. Look over there by the door.

**Narrator:** Maxwell points to two adults standing by the door of the carry-out talking.

**Jose:** Yeah, so what? They’re just talking. Come on, let’s go.

**Maxwell:** No, wait. They are definitely old enough to buy cigarettes. Let’s ask them to buy us some! My mom isn’t home yet, so we can try smoking when we get to my house.

**Jose:** Try to convince Maxwell to go home and not ask the adults to buy cigarettes for them.

**Maxwell:** Try to convince Jose to stay and ask the adults to buy cigarettes for them.
Complete this scenario. When you act it out, make sure you think about your body language and the equation for successfully saying NO!

**Narrator:** Two friends on a softball team are sitting in the dugout during a practice. Robyn spits out some chewing tobacco. Bethany notices that Robyn isn’t spitting out sunflower seeds like everyone else.

**Bethany:** Hey girl, that’s not sunflower seeds!

**Robyn:** Ha. Nope, it isn’t. It’s chewing tobacco, just like real baseball players use.

**Bethany:** You shouldn’t be doing that.

**Robyn:** Why not? I know smoking cigarettes is bad for you, but chew is much safer. That’s why all the baseball players use it. Here, try some and you’ll see.

**Bethany:** Respond to Robyn’s offer of chewing tobacco.

**Robyn:** Try to get Bethany to try the chewing tobacco.
Complete this scenario. When you act it out, make sure you think about your body language and the equation for successfully saying NO!

**Narrator:** A younger brother, Taylor, comes home to find his older sister, Stacey smoking on the back porch.

**Taylor:** Stacey! What do you think you are doing?

**Stacey:** Oh come on, Taylor. It’s not a big deal. It’s just a cigarette.

**Taylor:** It will be a big deal when mom and dad get home and I tell them!

**Stacey:** Oh, no, you won’t tell them! Everyone at school smokes, Taylor. It really is not a big deal.

**Taylor:** Try to convince Stacey not to smoke.

**Stacey:** Try to convince Taylor not to tell their parents and that smoking is not a big deal.
Role Play Feedback

What did you like about the group’s ending?

Rate their body language (10 is best): 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Rate how well their words matched their actions: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Did the group use facts and strong comments to defend their reasons for not using tobacco?  Yes  No
**Learning Activity: Signing a Pledge**

Explanation of the activity:
Students will sign a pledge that they will remain tobacco-free and use good communication skills to say no to peer pressure. They will attempt to communicate their concerns to other friends and family who use tobacco and/or attempt to use tobacco. Hang the students’ pledges in the hallway or around the classroom where others can see them.

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**Tobacco-Free Pledge**

- ✓ I will remain tobacco free. I will abstain from using:
  - Cigarettes
  - Cigars
  - Chewing Tobacco
  - Dip products

- ✓ I will use good communication skills to say no to people who ask me to use tobacco products.

- ✓ I will encourage others to not use tobacco products or to quit.

_________________________               _____________
Name            Date