

Activity: Refusal skills for vaping and e-cigarettes

Purpose:

This activity provides youth the opportunity to learn about and practice using refusal skills when faced with peer pressure.

Helpful info:

- There is a good chance that the young people in your life have been or will be exposed to vaping or e-cigarette products. Social media marketing has often portrayed vaping and e-cigarettes as being cool, adventurous or fun, and may be one reason youth start to vape.
 - Peer pressure is another reason why young people might start vaping. Despite all the education they've received about the potential risks of vaping, often they may be afraid of losing a friend, looking uncool, or being left out of the crowd.
 - Refusal skills specific to being pressured to use e-cigarettes should be taught and practiced with young people. Practicing saying "no" in a variety of ways and in a variety of scenarios will prepare them for real life situations.
 - Nicotine found in e-liquid is very addictive making it difficult to quit. Nicotine has a strong effect on the brain and changes the way it develops and grows. It can also affect memory and concentration.
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What you will need:

- Peer pressure scenario cards (6)
 - Refusal skills cards (10)
 - 2 bags
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Activity:


1. Start a brief discussion about peer pressure. Refer to the discussion questions section. Explain to participants that they are going to practice refusal skills in a fun way.
2. Place the 6 peer pressure scenario cards in one bag and place the 10 refusal skills cards in the other bag.
3. Split participants up into small groups of 3 to 4 students. For larger groups add a second set of the role playing scenario cards to the bag.

4. Have each group draw one card from each bag so that each group will have one scenario card and one refusal skill card. The facilitator may be required to read over the cards with each group and clarify if necessary.
 5. Give each group 10–15 minutes to create a skit that demonstrates the scenario and refusal skill they have chosen.
 6. Have each group present their skit to the larger group. If this is uncomfortable for participants, offer them the option to read their scenario out loud to the class and discuss how they would respond based on the refusal skill chosen.
 7. If time permits, give participants the opportunity to create their own scenario and problem solve within their group the refusal skills they could use. Provide time for each group to present their scenario and refusal skills.
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Discussion questions:

- What are some things that friends may encourage us to do that we don't want to?
 - What are some different ways that people can pressure us? Some examples can include:
 - Rejection—turning a person away, threatening to end a friendship
 - Put downs—calling a person names to make them feel bad
 - Reasoning—giving reasons why it's okay to try
 - Unspoken pressure—dirty looks, being left out, being offered to try
 - Can you think of some ways that you or a friend could handle peer pressure?
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Peer pressure scenario cards

1. You have just started going to a new school. One day, some of the students you've started hanging out with ask you if you want to try vaping and one student hands you an e-cigarette. You have never tried vaping before and you know it is addictive. However, at the same time, you want to fit in. One of the students senses you don't want to and says, "well you can't hang out with us if you don't want to vape." **Type of pressure: Rejection**
-  2. Before class one morning, you are standing around talking with a group of other students. Two of the students are arguing about which flavour of e-liquid they think tastes better. One of the students suggests that everyone in the group should try both flavours and give their opinion. Two vaping devices start being passed around the group, with each student taking a turn using them. When you receive one of the devices, you hesitate to use it but feel pressured because everyone is looking at you. **Type of pressure: Unspoken pressure**
3. On the bus on the way home from school, you notice that a few students sitting behind you are vaping. One of them taps you on the shoulder and hands a vaping device out to you. They say, "try it, it's mango flavoured." Right away, one of the other students says (about you), "they won't do it. They're too lame." You don't want to vape, but you feel pressured to prove them wrong. **Type of pressure: Put downs**
4. While you are in the school change room getting ready for gym class, a few of the other students are passing around a vaping device and taking turns using it. One of them eventually hands it to you. You have never tried vaping before and you don't want to, but you are hesitant to say no because everyone is looking at you. **Type of pressure: Unspoken pressure**
5. You are walking home from school with a few of your friends who are vaping. They are talking about their different vaping devices and all the different flavours, and you begin to feel a bit left out. One of your friends asks you if you want to try using theirs. You shake your head to say "no", but then they say "come on. We can't get in trouble here." **Type of pressure: Reasoning**
6. You are walking from one class to the next at school and stop to go to the washroom. You notice that some of your friends are in there and they are vaping. They ask you if you want to try. You say, "no thanks," but then one of them replies, "Why not? The teachers can't come in here and your parents will never find out." You still don't want to, but you also don't want them to make fun of you if you say no again. **Type of pressure: Reasoning**

Refusal skills cards

This activity provides 10 ways youth can respond to peer pressure. By learning a range of possible responses, they are more likely to come up with one that fits the situation when the time arises. This activity will help youth develop assertiveness skills as well as confidence.



1. **Make a joke.** Sometimes humour is the best way to respond to a situation, as it can lighten a serious mood. It can also take the attention away from you and onto something else.
2. **Give a reason why it's a bad idea.** Maybe vaping affects your asthma and you want to be able to run for the track team, or maybe you've learned about the negative health effects. Backing up your refusal with evidence gives it more power.
3. **Make an excuse of why you can't.** Maybe you have something else to do, you need to be somewhere at a specific time, you think your parents would be disappointed, or whatever you choose. Say it and stick to it.
4. **Just say no, plainly and firmly.** In some situations, just saying no without any arguing or explaining is the best response. Just make sure your "no" is a strong and determined one.
5. **Suggest an alternative substance-free activity.** There are many activities you can do that don't involve vaping or other substances. By thinking of something better to do, you're offering everyone an "out". You might be surprised of who will take you up on it.
6. **Ignore the suggestion.** Pretend you didn't hear it and change the topic. Respectfully act like you don't think the idea is even worth discussing.
7. **Repeat yourself if necessary.** Sometimes you might have to say "no" more than once, on more than one occasion. You don't have to give in just because someone asks several times.
8. **Leave the situation.** If you're feeling uncomfortable, you have the option of walking away. With you leading the way, other people might follow you as well.

9. **Shrug it off and say, “no thanks, I’m good”.** You can be polite and let people know you aren’t interested at the same time.
10. **The power of numbers.** Sometimes “we” feels stronger than “I”. Try to find someone who can back you up when you say “no”.

Adapted and translated with permission from the Southwest and Central East Tobacco Control Area Networks.
Ce document est également disponible en français.

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