

SPHE: First Year

TASK	A student's response to peer pressure to smoke	
TOPIC	Substance Use <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Smoking and its effects 	
LEARNING INTENTION	Students will explore the health and social implications of smoking, which hopefully will empower the student and help to prevent him/her from taking up smoking.	
TASK DESCRIPTION	<p><i>Respond to a student's 'agony aunt' letter regarding the peer pressure they are experiencing to start smoking.</i></p> <p>Following a general overview of both legal and illegal substance abuse, the class decided to focus on smoking. The teacher supplied a variety of resources on the topic and in groups the students made a list of the major implications of smoking. In addition to the physical effects, the students were also asked to consider what role peer pressure has to play in a young person's decision to take up cigarettes. The students were then asked to respond to the 'agony aunt' letter to outline the health and social implications of starting to smoke.</p>	
CRITERIA FOR SUCCESS	Students will be able to: Write a response letter to the 'frustrated' student displaying <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ the physical and social reasons as to why a person should not start smoking ▪ how the student could resist the peer pressure they are experiencing 	
WORK SAMPLES	HIGH SUCCESS	MEDIUM SUCCESS
	Nora	Michael

'DEAR LISTENER'

In your group, reply to this letter received by a newspaper advice column.

Dear Listener,

Every day, after school., I meet a group of friends at the local shops. They all smoke, but I don't. They've started teasing me. I tried to smoke without inhaling, but I don't really enjoy it. I'm finding it hard to say no. Even though I'm fifteen years old, I can't take the teasing.

*Yours hopefully,
'Frustrated'*

From: *On My Own Two Feet*
SPHE Support Service

"Dear Frustrated,

I know you are a young girl of fifteen, finding it hard to say "no" to smoking and also finding it difficult with the pressure of feeling you have to smoke to fit into the group and to not get teased. I know it does not seem like ~~if~~ if you don't smoke you will get teased, but soon them people will realise that you are right and they are wrong, especially about the nasty, filthy habit of smoking. ^A Even though you may not inhale that can also be bad for you and your health. Soon them people, so called your friends will get bored and in the long run will respect you for not following the crowd, sometimes it's just best to say "no". You say these people are your friends, not very good friends they are being teasing you about taking the high road, and encouraging you to do something, that is bad for you and others around you. so think what kind of friend is ^B that? "You don't enjoy it" don't do it, because in the future your friends will get bored of teasing you. In these cases it is always better ~~to~~ say "no". I don't see why people want

to smoke, because when they do most
w~~th~~ wish they could quit. It's up to
you, you could either start smoking
to keep your friends happy or don't
smoke and keep yourself happy, fit,
healthy and smoke-free.

Yours sincerely

'Lizner'.

Feedback for Nora

A.	You have a very good understanding of the pressure this young person is under to smoke in order to fit into the group. It would be helpful to give him/her some examples of what he/she could say to the friends to make them aware of the dangers of smoking.
B.	You have very clearly pointed out that this young person's friends may not be real friends at all. You have also suggested that the 'friends' will stop the teasing if they don't get a reaction. This is very good advice indeed.
C.	You state the two choices available to this young person very clearly – give in to fit in or don't give in and stay healthy. You might have considered saying <u>why</u> most smokers wish they could quit.

Commentary for teachers

- This student has focused on the peer pressure aspect of the task and has clearly made a very good effort.
- Her work could be improved by giving more concrete examples of how to withstand pressure. She highlights the transience of friendship groups at this age but could have exploited it more.

DEAR 'FRUSTRATED',

I GET MANY LETTERS EVERYDAY FROM YOUNG CHILDREN ASKING ME ABOUT THE SAME QUESTION - 'HOW DO I SAY NO?'. I TELL MANY OF THEM THE SAME THING. YOU HAVE TO BUILD UP YOUR CONFIDENCE AND JUST SAY NO! ^A DONT DO SOMETHING YOU DONT WANT TO DO. ~~SMOKING~~ EFFECTS YOUR HEALTH AND IF YOU JUST DO IT BECAUSE YOUR FRIENDS ARE IT MAY RUIN YOUR LIFE. ^B I CAN SEND YOU SOME LEAFLETS ABOUT THE EFFECTS OF SMOKING AND IT ~~IS~~ WILL SHOW YOU WHAT IT MAY DO. REMEMBER ONE SMOKE AND YOU COULD BE ADDICTED SO JUST SAY NO! ^C PEOPLE WILL RESPECT YOU MORE IF YOU DONT FOLLOW THE CROWD AND BE YOURSELF.

YOURS SINCERLY,

LISTENER

Feedback for Michael

A.	You have recognised how important confidence is when we are trying to resist peer pressure. It would be helpful if you could explain some ways to build confidence or perhaps to suggest that the student practises how to say no in private or maybe with somebody they trust.
B.	You have clearly said how smoking could have long term consequences for somebody. It might be more effective to clearly spell out the physical harm that smoking does. Suggesting sending leaflets is a good idea but one or two sentences here about the danger to heart and lungs would be helpful.
C.	You have brought up a good point about how people respect others who can stand up for what they believe in. Overall it is clear that you have made a great effort with this exercise.

Commentary for teachers

- While it is likely that this student took the task seriously and put effort into the exercise, he needs to be much more specific in his reply outlining in particular the physical dangers associated with smoking
- Michael has not suggested any concrete strategies regarding how the young person might resist the pressure from his/her peers.