

WHAT'S THE STINK ABOUT?

Tobacco



Was it your decision to start smoking or were you tricked into it by the tobacco companies? The answer to this question is yes. Ultimately, it is your decision to begin to smoke or to quit, but there are also strong marketing techniques and millions of dollars spent each year by tobacco companies to rope you into smoking.

- Nearly 4 billion dollars a year is spent on tobacco advertising.
- 79% of Americans 18 and older do not smoke.
- In the period from 1998 to 1999, money spent for cigarette advertising geared toward women increased by 22%.

Let's start with you, the new college student. There are several reasons why it is important to raise the issue of tobacco use as you are making the transition to life at college. Take a moment to step outside your body as you watch yourself as the star of a college-based reality show.

HERE ARE SOME ISSUES YOUR CHARACTER FACES ON THE SHOW:

Both you and your college friends are:

- ***Able to make decisions independently and free of parental influence for the first time.*** College gives you more freedom to live life the way you choose. About 80% of students choose not to smoke. Still, many of your fellow college students begin to smoke cigarettes. Those who already smoke, do more often because they don't have to be secretive.



- ***Faced with new stressors.*** Smoking is often associated with stress reduction. Individuals who smoke tend to smoke more when they encounter stressful situations such as exams or spats with friends. Keep in mind that this is just a perceived way to reduce stress. Smoking actually increases blood pressure and heart rate, subsequently exasperating your body's response to stress. Do you think you are likely to make this false association between smoking and stress reduction or will you try more successful techniques to reduce stress such as exercise and sleep?
- ***Experiencing new social situations.*** Situational inhibitors such as smoking at parties or after meals are one of the most difficult barriers to quitting smoking. Do you relate smoking to hanging out with friends?

Let's look at your character from the tobacco company's perspective. Tobacco companies are fighting to get you hooked on cigarettes so they can replace hundreds of people who die each day from tobacco-related illnesses.

Here are some of the challenges your character faces at the hands of tobacco company tactics:

- ***Tobacco companies spend millions of dollars each year to get you to begin smoking.*** In order to make money, they must continuously recruit new smokers because there are hundreds of people who die each day from smoking related illnesses.
- ***The United States government is currently sponsoring a cumulative ten billion dollar lawsuit against the six largest tobacco companies because their internal documents outline ways to target people under the age of 18.*** There are also internal documents showing how levels of the addictive components of cigarettes have been increased over the years.
- ***Investigations of the tobacco companies reveal that the fraudulent tactics of tobacco companies have occurred over a 50 year period.*** Although this has been reduced over the years due to successful lawsuits, there is still evidence to suggest that these fraudulent tactics are being employed in new ways.

As mentioned before, 80% of college students don't smoke. Let's assume for a minute that your character is part of the 20% who do smoke. After considering your options, you decide that you're interested in examining the possibility of quitting. You've been



unsuccessful at quitting in earlier episodes of the show, but now you're thinking of trying again.

TAKE A MINUTE TO DETERMINE YOUR CHARACTER'S READINESS TO QUIT BY ANSWERING YES OR NO TO THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

1. Do you want to improve your health or your life by quitting?
2. Is being a nonsmoker a high priority for you?
3. Have you tried to quit before?
4. Is smoking dangerous for your health?
5. Are you committed to quitting?
6. Do you have support systems such as family and friends that will help you quit?
7. Do you have other personal reasons to quit smoking aside from health reasons?
8. Can you recommit to quit if you slide back?
9. If you answered yes to 4 or more of these questions, your character is ready to quit. Although the reality show concept is fun, dealing with an addictive and destructive habit like smoking or chewing tobacco isn't. The scenario just explored is more common than you may think. Whether you are a smoker or non-smoker, and whether or not you chew tobacco, tobacco addiction affects you in more ways than most people know.

There are many resources out there to help you quit smoking, many of which that are funded through prior successful lawsuits against tobacco companies. Health professionals on campus will assist you in your journey. For more information about smoking and quitting for you or someone you know, use the resources mentioned in this section.

IF YOU ARE A SMOKER WHO IS LOOKING TO QUIT, CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING FACTS:

- Within 20 minutes after you smoke that last cigarette, your body begins a series of changes that continue for years. The short term changes can be a motivator to quit and to stay smoke free for the rest of your life.



- 20 minutes after quitting, your heart rate drops, thus reducing the stress on your heart and circulatory system.
- 12 hours after quitting, the carbon monoxide level in your blood drops to normal.
- 2 weeks to 3 months after quitting, your heart attack risk begins to drop and your lung function begins to improve.
- 1 to 9 Months after quitting your coughing and shortness of breath decrease.
- 1 year after quitting, your added risk of coronary heart disease is half that of a smoker's.
- 5 years after quitting, your stroke risk is reduced to that of a nonsmoker's.
- 10 years after quitting, your lung cancer death rate is about half that of a smoker's, and your risk of cancers of the mouth, throat, esophagus, bladder, kidney, and pancreas decreases.
- 15 years after quitting, your risk of coronary heart disease is back to that of a nonsmoker's.

Nothing is more real than true life. Once you decide to quit smoking, there are undoubtedly many forces that work against you. There are also many forces that discourage you from starting to smoke. These are the same forces that work to your benefit, once you decide to quit. With the right education and support, you can make the decision to be part of the 80% of college students who don't smoke.

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