



LESSON PLAN

Level:	Grades 7 to 9
About the Author:	This lesson has been adapted from Smoke-Free for Life, a smoking prevention curriculum supplement from the Nova Scotia Department of Health, Drug Dependency and Tobacco Control Unit.

Thinking Like a Citizen

Overview

In this lesson, students explore various avenues for expressing concern and influencing public opinion about the health hazards of smoking. Students assume the role of social activists, and brainstorm ways of focusing media attention on the risks of smoking.

Learning Outcomes

Students will demonstrate:

- an awareness of the role that activism plays in promoting awareness of issues such as tobacco
- an understanding of the difference between constructive forms of activism, and negative forms

Preparation and Materials

- For ideas on how to conduct discussion groups on this topic, see *Guidelines for Peer-Led Discussion Groups*, on the sidebar.

Photocopy the student handout:

- *Activists Say No to Tobacco*

Procedure

Class Discussion: 10 min

Tell students that they are going to assume the role of concerned citizens who feel that smoking kills too many people, and brings down the quality of life for both smokers and non-smokers. They feel that people are being misled and exploited by the tobacco industry. They want to do something about it, because they are assertive problem-solvers.

Explore the notion of problem-solving styles in this context:

- When is saying 'no' assertive, and when is it aggressive and counterproductive?
- When does 'taking a stand' become an infringement on the rights of others?
- When do good intentions turn sour because of inappropriate action?
- Discuss current and historical examples of social activism.



Ask students to suggest the types of social action available to them, such as: education in schools or through the media, influencing legislation, organizing boycotts, networking, rallies, etc.

Review the creative strategies outlined in *Activists Say No to Tobacco*.

- Which strategies do students feel would be most effective? Why?
- Many of these organizations have a Web presence. What role does/can the Internet play in promoting activism and public awareness?

Activity

Small Group Activity: 20 min

- Divide the class into groups. Tell students that their goal is to increase public awareness about the risks of smoking. Because each group is working with a small budget and can't afford expensive TV commercials or education programs, they will try to achieve their goal through other means.
- Review guidelines for brainstorming (all ideas are accepted, and all students have a chance to contribute). A note-taker records the group's ideas on a large sheet of paper taped to the wall or spread on the floor. At the end, the group assesses the pros and cons of each suggestion. Finally, the group decides on the strategy, or combination of strategies, it thinks will be most effective.

Class Discussion: 10 min

- Bring the class back together, and ask the note-takers to present the proposed strategies of their groups. Discuss the feasibility, appropriateness, and effectiveness of each approach.

Extension

- As a class, develop and implement an awareness campaign for your school.

Evaluation

- Group campaigns and presentations.

Encourage students to use the Internet to research current activities of activist groups. A list of Web sites to get them started is provided on the sidebar of this page.



Activists Say No to Tobacco

Some examples of consumer groups that have found creative ways of saying “No” to tobacco promotion are:

- An American organization of medical students and doctors called DOC (Doctors Ought to Care) wants to change attitudes with “non-traditional” educational resources. Their mission is to educate the public, especially young people, in humorous and refreshing ways, about various health topics, including smoking and tobacco use, and to empower young people with the motivation, knowledge and tools to improve their own health and health within their communities. They do this through classroom presentations, counter-advertising campaigns and the development of innovative health promotion materials. In the past, they have inserted stickers into magazines containing tobacco advertising. The stickers read: “Many of the ads in this publication are misleading, deceptive and/or a rip-off. For example, smoking does not make one glamorous, macho, successful or athletic. It does make one sick, poor and dead.”
- The Boston-based consumer group [Corporate Accountability International \(formerly INFACT\)](#) has launched a number of anti-tobacco campaigns.
 - In 1994, INFACT used a giant light projector to project facts about the effects of tobacco advertising on children and the number of youth hooked on smoking so far that year – a whopping 959,250 young people – onto the Park Avenue headquarters of Philip Morris.
 - In 1995, it began a campaign to give a human face to the rising death toll from tobacco use. The Human Toll of Tobacco photo project collected 8,000 photos of people who had died or who were suffering from tobacco-caused illnesses. (The number of photos symbolized the total number of people from around the world who died each day from tobacco use.) The photos were mounted on a banner and presented to tobacco companies at their Annual Shareholder meetings, and to the media and Congress in Washington.
 - Corporate Accountability International works with other anti-tobacco organizations to organize the annual International Week of Resistance to Tobacco Transnationals. During the week, anti-tobacco events are held across the globe to encourage the strong implementation of the World Health Organization’s Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.
 - INFACT initiated a boycott of food products from companies owned by Philip Morris. It also produced an award-winning documentary entitled *Making a Killing: Philip Morris, Kraft and Global Tobacco Addiction*, which fostered international grassroots support for anti-tobacco legislation.
- Like INFACT, the Canadian group [Adbusters](#) mounted a boycott against tobacco giant Philip Morris, which owned Nabisco and Kraft Foods Ltd at the time. Its aim was to “revive the citizen’s right to revoke a corporate charter to operate if it has violated the public interest.” Adbusters chose Philip Morris as the first “corporate criminal” to be put to the challenge. Its strategy included:
 - Mounting a TV and radio campaign exposing the truth about Philip Morris
 - Asking people to sign a petition demanding that the New York State Attorney General revoke Philip Morris’ charter



- Promoting a boycott of Philip Morris food brands (such as Kraft and Nabisco) by letting the public know that when they buy these products, they're supporting Big Tobacco.



- Campaigns by INFACT and Adbusters seem to be working. In November 2001, Philip Morris changed the name of its company to the Altria Group to distance its tobacco company from its food and brewing companies. Anti-tobacco groups saw this as a very strategic move:

Under the Altria umbrella, the company still has Philip Morris – the black sheep of the family – but it can also ride on the credibility of its more respectable companies, such as Kraft Foods and others, like Nabisco Holdings.

Joseph Cherner, Smoke-Free Educational Services
 “A Name Change at Philip Morris”, *New York Times*, November 19, 2001

In 2007, Altria spun off its Kraft Foods shares to its shareholders, and its holdings now only include tobacco companies, a winery and interests in a brewery.

- The *Smokefree Network* offers a letter-writing campaign. All you have to do is select a “action alerts” – a topic of interest – and write a letter that will be sent to the appropriate decision-maker.
- The website for *Tobacco Free Kids* features a “Take Action” section that includes ideas for creating an anti-tobacco rally, writing letters to the editors of magazines that accept tobacco ads, and writing letters to film producers who promote smoking in their films.
- In February 2001, the Kids Against Tobacco Summit (KATS) – Canada’s first youth tobacco summit – was held in British Columbia. Eighty young people got together to create action plans on reducing tobacco use in their communities.



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