

## *Tobacco prevention*

Tobacco use is a major health problem that affects children. Currently, more than three million teens smoke and more than a million chew tobacco. Nearly all first use of tobacco occurs before high school graduation. If kids can be kept tobacco-free, most will never start using tobacco.

Adolescents with lower levels of school achievement, with weaker refusal skills, with friends who use tobacco, and with lower self-images are more likely than their peers to use tobacco. Poorer kids are more likely than their middle class peers to smoke.

### **Media analysis critical**

Cigarette ads appear to increase young people's risk of smoking by affecting their perceptions of the how common and how cool smoking is. Thus media analysis is an important part of most effective tobacco prevention programs. *Every Ripple Effects tutorial in both the kids and teens program, has a media analysis component included right in the software.*

### **Strengths-based approach**

Ripple Effects smoking-prevention program, like all its prevention curricula, is based on developing strengths that can reduce risks. It builds a stronger sense of self, stronger refusal skills, critical thinking skills, and skills in managing feelings, like anxiety, fear, or anger, that students may be using tobacco to sublimate. The program strengthens norms against smoking by appealing to things young people think are important: not long term health risks, but immediate effects on appearance, and aversion to being manipulated by cynical corporations.

### **Prevention over cessation**

Teens for whom smoking is functional, who use it to accomplish something they otherwise feel they couldn't, can become the most strongly addicted and have the hardest time quitting. Most adolescents report that they want to quit, but can't. Cessation programs usually don't work for them. They experience relapse rates and withdrawal symptoms similar to adults. Thus prevention is key. Students who already have developed a smoking habit are likely to need more support to quit than they can get from Ripple Effects program. Nonetheless, the benefits they gain from correcting false images, identifying their own motivation, and developing core social-emotional abilities, can be a valuable supplement to group support, a nicotine patch or other methods they may be using.

# Goals of intervention

## Students will:

- Develop a stronger, firmer sense of self
- Understand their risk factors for smoking
- Internalize norms against use of tobacco
- Develop refusal skills
- Master cognitive-behavioral techniques for managing uncomfortable feelings
- Learn and use stress management techniques
- Practice critical thinking skills in analyzing media

## A suggested scope and sequence

### SKILL TRAINING TOPICS

#### Self awareness

Self image  
Goals  
Strengths  
Risk factors  
Resilience  
Norms

#### Assertiveness

Refusing  
Resisting pressure  
Standing up for beliefs

#### Decision making

Predicting consequences

#### Managing feelings

Physical sensations  
Self talk  
External triggers  
Handling stress  
Relaxing

#### Impulse control

Quitting habits

#### Connecting to community

Making friends  
Getting help

### CHALLENGE TOPICS

#### Chew Smoking

Depression  
Nail biting  
Nervous habits  
Relapse  
School failure



Tobacco "how to" screen shot