

DECISIONS DECISIONS

Teacher's Guide



Dear Teachers,

This book, DECISIONS, is about two young people, Frank and Jennifer, and how they reached a decision not to smoke cigarettes. This educational material, in a format called a photonovela, was developed with students of Franklin County Technical School. A ninth grade English class wrote the story and the Questions for Thought. A biology class wrote the fact sheet, Body News. Several other classes worked on counter-advertisements. Many students participated as actors, photographers, designers, and directors. We've listed the home towns of the various participants in the hope that your students may know some of the people involved.

Student produced health education material will, we hope, hold greater interest and appeal for your students and enable them to identify with the role models established by their peers.

The goal of the book is to support smoking prevention efforts. The story illustrates various steps in the decision making process. We offer this to you as an addition to your current health education efforts. We believe that this book can be used in various ways and serve as the basis for several lessons.

The Questions for Thought, when discussed in class, will enable students to explore Frank and Jennifer's decision. The book can serve as the basis for a reading lesson, as a motivation for a science or health lesson, and/or as a dramatization of media, peer, parental pressures regarding smoking behavior.

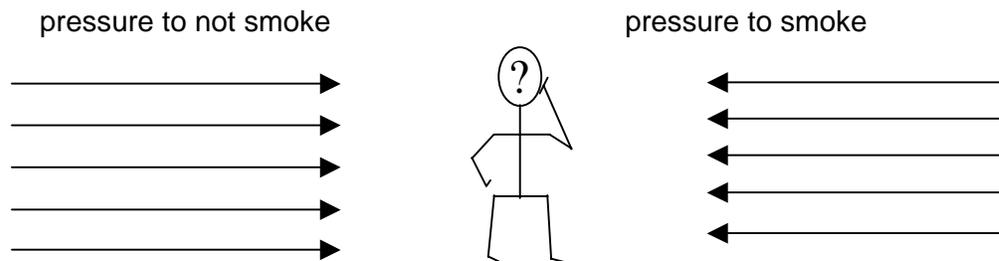
May we suggest a few additional activities?

GOAL: To enable students to identify, understand, and counter various pressures for unhealthy behavior.

OBJECTIVE A: Students can identify pressures for and against healthful behavior.

KEY QUESTIONS: Frank and Jennifer were trying to decide whether or not to smoke. Where did they get information: Who/what may have encouraged them to smoke? Who/what may have encouraged them not to smoke? Can we list out the pressures that they felt from both sides? Can we add any others?

ACTIVITY: Fill in the following chart.



OBJECTIVE B: Students can identify the techniques used by advertisers.

KEY QUESTIONS: What do ads try to tell us about smoking? Is this information true? How do ads try to make us feel? What techniques do they use?

ACTIVITIES: Students examine ads (one copy of a TIME magazine will yield 8 to 9 full page cigarette advertisements). Students write out the hidden message (e.g. smoking is tough, smoking is romantic). Students then develop their own counter ads. The counter ads in DECISIONS may serve as motivation. Students may wish to superimpose their own text over existing ads or may prefer to develop their own drawings and text.

OBJECTIVE C: Students will be able to demonstrate how decisions are influenced by group pressure.

KEY QUESTIONS: Do you think that Frank or Jennifer were influenced to try smoking? To what extent are our decisions influenced by other people? What tactics do people use to persuade someone to do something? Students may wish to list examples (e.g. flattery, logic, facts, threats, promise of reward).

ACTIVITY: Students try an experiment illustrating conformity to a group. The class is divided into two groups. Group 1 leaves the room. Group 2 draws lines of equal size (but of varying slopes) on the blackboard. Some students from group 2 agree to call line B the longest line. When group 1 returns to the room, students are asked to rank the lines according to size. Several students (from group 2) insist that line B is the longest. Record answers of students and discuss the experiment. Did people change their opinion when others insisted? Students discuss situations where they might be pressured to smoke because others are smoking.

OBJECTIVE D: Students will be able to role play assertiveness in various pressure situations.

KEY QUESTIONS: Why is it sometimes difficult to express our feelings and opinions? Why, at the start of the story in DECISIONS didn't Frank or Jennifer tell their friends that they do not smoke, have never smoked, or do not want to smoke?

ACTIVITIES: Situations are sketched out in which people are pressured to smoke. E.g. You are at a party and many of the people are smoking. John offers you a cigarette. Karen says, "Come on; join us!" Jean says, "What's wrong? Are you afraid?"

The class offers suggestions for handling the situation. Some students role play using the suggestions offered by the class. Discussion of the situations and alternative responses follows the role play.

GOAL: To enable students to identify and understand the decision making process.

OBJECTIVE A: Students will be able to identify how important decisions are made.

KEY QUESTIONS: How did Frank and Jennifer make their decisions? What steps did they take? How often do we make important decisions? How many of our decisions are made without thought? with careful thought?

ACTIVITIES: Students describe some difficult decision that they had to make recently and share with the class (1) how they made the decision, and (2) who or what influenced them to make the final choice.

Students list the steps people took to make their decisions and try to order the list (e.g. clarify, consider alternatives, obtain information, consider consequences, choose the best alternative, follow-through, share decision with others).

OBJECTIVE B: Students will identify and "measure" the decision making process of smokers and non-smokers.

KEY QUESTIONS: Do smokers actively decide to be smokers? What has influenced non-smokers?

ACTIVITIES: Class draws up an interview form so that they can interview adult smokers and non-smokers and then analyze results. Some of the questions might be: did your parents smoke? did many of your friends smoke? who was with you when you first smoked? when did you decide to become a smoker.? Students may want to have different interview forms for smokers and for nonsmokers.

Each student does two interviews: one with a smoker and one with a nonsmoker OR half the class interviews smokers and the other half interviews nonsmokers.

Class tallies results and discusses findings.

METHODOLOGY

Most smoking prevention educational efforts with school age children have concentrated on knowledge change with the assumption that increased knowledge about the harmful effects of smoking would discourage the onset of smoking. However, this has not been proven to work. For example, surveys of school age smokers have consistently indicated that they have a knowledge of the health effects of smoking.

Every day, approximately 4,000 children become smokers. About 100,000 children under the age of 13 are regular smokers. Among girls age 12 to 14, the percentage who smoke has increased eight fold since 1968.

Furthermore, research has indicated that those students who do smoke tend to have an external locus of control (a belief that fate or others outside of themselves control or determine their health). We believe that a focus on decision making and an understanding of how to counter negative pressures and arguments will enable students to develop an internal locus of control (a belief that they have the ability to control some of the factors that relate to their health) and help them make an active decision not to smoke.

Several studies in health education have indicated the important role peers, parents, and other models such as teachers have played. In addition, it has been found that a child's self perception also plays an important role. Within the last few years, there has been a shift away from knowledge change strategies to the use of affective educational activities such as discussions about feelings and emotions as they relate to cigarette smoking and the various pressures to smoke.

We hope that our photonovela, DECISIONS, will provide a stimulus for affective educational activities. We also hope that you enjoy the product as well as the process!

May we ask that you fill in the enclosed evaluation sheet once you have used the photonovela with a class. A Lifeways staff person will collect these forms from the main office. We would love to hear about additional lessons that you may have planned for the use of this book!

Thank you,

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QUESTIONS FOR THOUGHT

Do you think Frank or Jennifer felt pressure to smoke?

Why doesn't the coach want his players to smoke? Is this fair?

What does Jennifer learn in health class? Do you know more facts?

How does Frank's cousin feel about smoking? Why?

How does Jennifer's mother feel about smoking? Why?

Why did Frank and Jennifer try smoking when they were alone?

What do Frank and Jennifer learn about smoking?

What do they see? hear? read? feel?

What was Frank's decision about smoking?

What helped him make this decision?

What was Jennifer's decision about smoking?

What helped her make this decision?

This guide was reviewed by:
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