



Taylor's Story

"I started smoking when I was 14. My parents smoke and I thought I would try it to see what it was like. Sneaking around to get the cigarettes and finding a place to smoke seemed pretty exciting, but I worried about getting caught. Would someone smell the smoke on me?"

"When I told my friends about it, they sure gave me a lot of attention. *Look what I can do*, I thought. It was easy. I enjoyed the thrill of doing something I wasn't supposed to do. I know smoking isn't cool, but because you have to be older to smoke I used to think it made me feel older – more mature. I thought the other kids looked up to me.

"But now I *am* older. I know smoking is bad for me. I read the warnings on the packages and see the pictures of what smoking can do to you. I know it can kill me. My grandfather died of emphysema. My aunt has lung cancer. And boy, would my parents be mad if they knew I was smoking. But they smoke too, so what kind of an example is that?"

"I used to like it because it was supposed to be dangerous and forbidden, and I knew it wouldn't hurt me, at least not right away, even though I knew it was bad for me. It was my choice, my lungs, and I could do whatever I wanted. None of my friends got sick. I thought I could quit later, before it hurt me. So now that I'm 18, and I can do whatever I want, why do I keep smoking? Why can't I quit?"

"Is it peer pressure? I don't really look up to any of my friends because they smoke. I don't think anybody will give me a hard time if I quit. A lot of my friends don't smoke and nobody gives them a hard time about it. Do my friends really *care* if I smoke?"

"So I still smoke – but why? Is it really just a thing I do around my friends? Do I really need it? Does it really relax me, make me feel good? Do I really enjoy it? When I think about it, I get angry. I used to only smoke just once in a while with my friends, but now I'm smoking more and more often. Why can't I take a break without smoking? Am I smoking more than I used to? What will happen if I decide to quit – will I go through withdrawal? I can't stop thinking about it when I can't have a smoke for a long time or I run out of cigarettes. Is that what withdrawal is like?"

"Am I in control or is it in control of me? If I am in control, why is it so hard to stop smoking?"

Questions

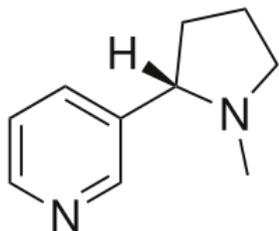
1) What is Taylor's main concern?

5) How can Taylor's friends help?

6) How could Taylor's friends have helped Taylor earlier on?

7) What is a habit?

8) What is an addiction?



<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Nicotine.svg>

Nicotine Factoid:

Nicotine acts on the brain in ways similar to heroin and cocaine, and may be even more addictive.

9) We may not see smoking as being as dangerous as other drugs, but the addiction can be just as difficult to stop. Some people may smoke because the harm it causes doesn't seem immediate. How does this make smoking more dangerous than it seems at first?

10) How would Taylor's story be different if you replaced smoking and cigarettes with another drug?

11) How would your answers to questions 1-6 have been different?

About peer pressure and fitting in

Health Canada Youth Smoking Survey 2004-2005

- 79% of youth in grades 5-9 have never tried any tobacco products. * Only 2% of youth in grades 5-9 are current smokers.

http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hc-ps/tobac-tabac/research-recherche/stat/survey-sondage_2004-2005-eng.php

Canadian Tobacco Use Monitoring Survey (CTUMS) 2006

- 9% of youth 15-19 years old reported smoking daily
- 6% of youth 15-19 reported smoking occasionally

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More statistics and survey results:

Tobacco Use Among Alberta Youth (AADAC)

PDF: <http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/Researchers/if-res-tayes-2008-highlights.pdf>

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"Am I in control or is it in control of me? If I am in control, why is it so hard to stop smoking?"

[The character, Taylor, has been presented here without gender reference in order to help student identification with the story and to emphasize that smoking is an issue for both male and female students. This may lead to a discussion of differences or similarities between genders when it comes to drugs and addictions.]

Questions

1) What is Taylor's main concern?

[Students may express a variety of concerns from health, social or family. The main concern that Taylor focuses on is the addiction component]

2) Determine what factors caused Taylor to start smoking.

a) What were the personal factors?

[Feeling insecure, wanting to grow up or be mature, wanting control, thrill seeking or risk, wanting to make parents angry, defiance of authority]

b) What were the social factors?

[Wanting attention, wanting friends to notice, wanting to show off or be seen as mature. Did any of Taylor's friends say that smoking was not cool, bad for you, or stupid?]

c) What were the environmental factors?

[Parents smoked, cigarettes were attainable, nobody noticed or caught Taylor, Taylor had unsupervised time to smoke]

3) Why does Taylor continue to smoke?

[Students may offer a variety of responses, as many of the personal, social and environmental factors persist. The habits and reinforcing factors from youth may continue into adulthood and may be reinforced among peers and in social settings. The physical addiction is a large component that contributes to Taylor's ongoing smoking behaviour. Taylor may also rationalize continuing smoking in a variety of ways. Understanding the nature of the addiction, cravings, habits, emotions involved are important parts of changing behaviour.]

4) What changes in behaviour would help Taylor to stop smoking?

[While nicotine patches, nicotine gum or other smoking cessation products may help with the physical addiction, other changes in behaviour may be necessary for Taylor to stay smoke free. Taylor should also have a plan for getting through the cravings before they begin. Some changes Taylor can make include not having cigarettes with him, not buying cigarettes (even for emergency or just in case), taking breaks in non-smoking areas, doing something else during breaks or regular smoking times like walking, drinking water, reading, playing music.]

5) How can Taylor's friends help?

[This is a good opportunity for students to brainstorm ideas for supporting each other as they quit. Refer to the behaviour changes suggested in question 4 and discuss ways students can support each other in a positive way to help change their behaviours.]

6) How could Taylor's friends have helped Taylor earlier on?

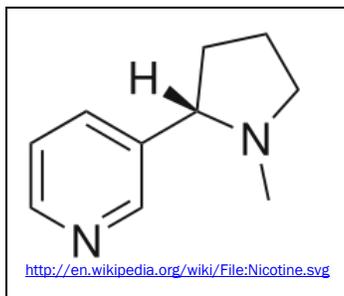
[They could express their concern for each other's health and well-being and by offering emotional support i.e. saying they accept Taylor already; "You don't need to smoke to get attention or be popular."]

7) What is a habit?

[A habit is a repeated unconscious behaviour. Have students brainstorm ideas and then research and compare definitions from a variety of sources.]

8) What is an addiction?

[An addiction is a physical compulsion that may have negative consequences. While they may strictly not fit the medical definition of addiction, some consider activities such as gambling to be addictions. Have students brainstorm ideas and then research and compare definitions from a variety of sources.]



Nicotine Factoid:

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- 9) We may not see smoking as being as dangerous as other drugs, but the addiction can be just as difficult to stop. Some people may smoke because the harm it causes doesn't seem immediate. How does this make smoking more dangerous than it seems at first?

[As there is no immediate perceived harm, the smoker has the feeling that they are safe or are not being harmed even though they are causing continuous harm. They may feel that they can stop if they start to experience symptoms. As a result, they may continue to smoke, exposing themselves to greater cumulative risk, and the habit of smoking will become normalized as part of their daily routines. Before they know it, smoking will have become a habit and an addiction.]

- 10) How would Taylor's story be different if you replaced smoking and cigarettes with another drug?

[Students may offer a variety of responses. The primary issues of addiction and many of the influencing factors may remain the same, while others may be amplified. Environmental, personal and social influences or pressures may be greater, contributing to use of other drugs. Family, school, social, and financial influences are all related to increased risk of using drugs. The consequences of Taylor's addiction may also be more immediate. The use of substances other than nicotine may affect involvement in school, grades, and relationships at school and at home. Taylor is also at greater risk of facing legal consequences for possession, and there is a greater risk that Taylor may become involved in other illegal or criminal activity in order to support an addiction.]

- 11) How would your answers to questions 1-6 have been different?

[Many of the answers may remain the same, although the influences and consequences may be more immediate or amplified.]

About peer pressure and fitting in

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[Optional exercise: Have the students figure out what percentage of youth are not smokers, or who don't smoke daily or occasionally]



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