

NOT AN EXPERIMENT

REFUSAL SKILLS EDUCATOR RESOURCE

Why is it important to teach youth refusal skills?

Refusal skills are a way for young people to handle situations where they feel pressure to make decisions. Teaching them effective and assertive ways to respond in these situations can increase their confidence and ability to make informed choices. By learning these skills, youth will be ready when faced with direct or in-direct pressure in circumstances that can impact health, such as deciding whether to get involved in risky behaviors, like vaping. ^(1,2)

Some effective refusal skills include:

- Delay giving an answer.
- Negotiate to reach an agreement to do something else.
- Refuse the offer.
- Ask questions.
- Suggest a different activity.
- Say it's not for you.
- Make a joke.
- Walk away.

Integrating classroom activities that teach and reinforce these skills can increase students' ability to set boundaries and honour the decisions that are right for them. Choose one or more of the activities below and follow up with a classroom discussion.

Facilitated Activities

Matching activity

Materials: List of refusal skills and examples.

Instructions: Write out each refusal skill on a chalk board or smart board. Cut out the refusal skills examples and place them into a hat or container. Students pick out an example and match it to the type of refusal skill. ⁽²⁾

List of refusal skills	Example
Delay giving an answer.	"I'm meeting up with my friend. I'll see you later."
Negotiate to reach an agreement to do something else.	"I don't think vaping is a good idea. Do you want to go play soccer instead?"
Refuse the offer.	"No thanks."
Ask Questions.	"Do you know the health risks of vaping?"
Suggest a different activity.	"I would rather beat you at basketball!"
Say it's not for you.	"I need my lungs to be healthy since I am on the track team."
Make a joke.	"I am already addicted to air!"
Walk away.	Turn your shoulder and talk to someone else.

As a follow up activity, provide groups of students with a scenario and allow them to generate ways to resist the pressure that feels most comfortable to them. Have them practice by acting it out.

Foam ball game

Materials: foam ball

Instructions: Have everyone sit in a circle. Start by providing students with a number of peer pressure scenarios and/or ask the students to come up with some on their own. Pass the ball to one student at a time. When a student receives the ball, they must come up with a creative idea to refuse the scenario. The response needs to be quick and no repeating. ⁽²⁾

The peer pressure scenario could be:

- Your friend asks you to try vaping with them in the park after school.
- Your friend offers you their vape in the school washroom.
- Your friend asks you if you want to go buy a vape after school.

Popcorn pressure game

Materials: List of prompts and a cup of popcorn for each participant.

Instructions: Put students into small groups. Provide a cup of popcorn to each student within the groups. Each group member individually chooses a prompt out of a hat/container and does not share their prompt with their group. Throughout the activity, some students will be pressuring others to eat the popcorn when they were advised not to, these students must use their refusal skills. After the activity, everyone can discuss why some gave in to eat the popcorn when they weren't supposed to and how others refused in a successful way. ⁽⁸⁾

List of prompts (cut out as many as you need):

Do not eat the popcorn.
Eat the popcorn.
Eat the popcorn and encourage others to eat their popcorn.

Bag of tricks

Materials: List of refusal skills.

Instructions: Cut out the refusal skills. Place each in separate containers. Place students in small groups and have them choose a refusal skill. Give the groups 10-15 minutes to create a skit that demonstrates the refusal skill and have each group perform their skit for the groups. Follow up with a group discussion. ⁽⁹⁾

List of refusal skills:

Delay giving an answer.
Negotiate to reach an agreement to do something else.
Refuse the offer.
Ask questions.
Suggest a different activity.
Say it is not for you.
Make a joke.
Walk away.
Say "No thanks."

Discussion prompts

- How do you think being able to say no in this activity will help you if you experience peer pressure to vape in your life?
- How might you think and feel differently if the scenario(s) happened in real life?
- Why is it hard for people to resist peer pressure?
- Why do you think it is important to resist peer pressure to vape?
- Can you think of some ways that you or a friend could handle peer pressure?

References

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