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Smoking and Peer Pressure

As you can see on the screen (would have a PowerPoint when presenting if I were to do this), our topic today is smoking. Most people, including myself, already know about smoking, but in recent years it has become more prevalent with the innovations of technology. New devices and innovations are adding fuel to the fire of an addiction that will negatively impact the lives of people in the future with intense use. In my speech, I will present information and facts about the health-related effects of smoking (both mental and physical), and some insight I have gained over the years personally from first-hand experience. However, many people will consider smokers bad people, but I don't believe this as there are many different reasons why a person will resort to smoking.

Firstly, I'll start with the facts, and my sources to get the boring stuff out of the way, and then move on to something a little less mundane. Without a surprise to anyone, smoking is bad and can cause numerous negative effects on your daily life, whether that be health-related, social, or mental.

According to the CDC, "More than 16 million Americans are living with a disease caused by smoking. For every person who dies because of smoking, at least 30 people live with a serious smoking-related illness", which is backed up by the fact that, "Secondhand smoke exposure contributes to approximately 41,000 deaths among nonsmoking adults and 400 deaths in infants each year" ("Health Effects"). For example, some of the diseases caused by smoking are cancer (lung cancer to be specific), heart disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and increased risk of pregnancy complications.

However, the one disease that stands out among these four is chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), because it is more directly correlated to smoking during the teenage years which has been becoming more and more of a problem in our society. Also, the American Journal of Epidemiology states, “However, it has been widely taken to illustrate that smoking does indeed cause suicide. Biologic mechanisms through which this could act (e.g., smoking suppressing brain serotonin levels) have been advanced, and a meta-analysis has been performed showing that most studies demonstrate the same thing” (Davey Smith). This touches on the mental aspect of smoking effects rather than more physical. However, smokers all have their reasons for starting their addiction. Some of the reasons why people smoke can be attributed to stress, peer pressure, and depression, so not all smokers are necessarily "bad people". Some ways can help people deal with this life-threatening addiction such as therapy, chewing gum, and exercising.

I keep mentioning that people think smokers are bad people, but this perspective constantly changes with me. I always disliked smoking when I was a kid because it caused problems with my asthma, and my dad would always smoke. This judgment I have about smokers fluctuates depending on what I see them smoking and what they look like. The younger they seem to have gotten me more disappointed because I feel that they do it to look cool, or were a victim of peer pressure, but I also realize that they might also be depressed. For example, I've known many classmates, especially girls who started out clean, and then either hung out with a bad crowd for popularity, or were turned into vape, jewel, and joint smokers (Hall, et al.). With advancements in technology old cool cigarettes were getting a little phased out, and replaced with new things like vapes which were marketed in a way that appealed to people as a healthier alternative to cigarettes. Smoking also serves as a distraction whether it be on the road, or being

under the influence if you smoke a substance like weed. According to the CDC, “Exposure to secondhand smoke (SHS) from burning tobacco products causes disease and premature death among people who do not smoke.

There is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke; even brief exposure can cause immediate harm” (“Health Effects”). This confirms the fact that second-hand smoking is very dangerous and is why you see a lot of “no smoking” signs, or smoking is prohibited in public areas like subway platforms to reduce the risk as much as possible. One would think that with proper ventilation, open windows, and air purifying devices the smoke from a cigarette would be cleaned, but this is not the case as smoke from one cigarette can linger for hours at a time while being immune to these effects. Smoke can travel regardless of where smoking originated. For example, smoke can travel between doorways, cracks in walls, electrical lines, ventilation systems, plumbing systems, and even between apartment buildings. One possible fix for this problem would be teaching individuals how to not succumb to peer pressure because most smokers puff their first cigarette/device in their teen years while in school with their friends.

In conclusion, it is evident that smoking is plaguing our society, and becoming more and more of a problem as the years go by. However, spreading awareness about how these addictions start, to forming people about the negative effects smoking can have on your well-being as a person can help keep people on the right track. Also, regulations are being put in place on what substances can be put in these products and regulated by law. More resources like therapy for depression, and rehabilitation can help people quit smoking with time, or show that there is a better life without addiction.

Works Cited

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- Davey Smith, George, and Andrew N. Phillips. "Re:"Cigarette smoking and suicide: a prospective study of 300,000 male active-duty army soldiers"." *American Journal of Epidemiology* 153.3 (2001): 307-308.