

## Tobacco Refusal Tactics

Irene van der Zande, Kidpower Executive Director/Founder

Kidpower is an educational charitable organization that, since 1989, has brought "People Safety" education to over 1.2 million children, teenagers, and adults, including those with special needs, from many different cultures - close to home and around the world. For publications; free articles, podcasts and e-newsletter; and information about our services and locations, please visit [www.kidpower.org](http://www.kidpower.org).

Copyright © 2009 Irene van der Zande. All rights reserved. Permission is granted to print this PDF and copy this article for personal or free charitable use only as long as the Kidpower information and this copyright notice are clearly visible. For example, this means you can use this article as an educator in your classroom. However, prior written permission is required to reproduce this article in any other printed or digital form for any other purpose including on websites, in newsletters, or as part of a paid publication or service. Please contact [safety@kidpower.org](mailto:safety@kidpower.org).

Peer pressure is one of the main reasons why young people start smoking, in spite of all the education they've received about how dangerous smoking is for your body and for the people around you. As a result, more and more experts are recommending that refusal skills specific to being pressured to smoke be taught and practiced with young people, starting by middle school.

Below are some examples of the tobacco refusal skills from a government website:

[http://www.saskatoonhealthregion.ca/about\\_us/documents/A12.pdf](http://www.saskatoonhealthregion.ca/about_us/documents/A12.pdf)

Some of the names of the tactics used on the site are originally from the excellent book *How to Say No and Keep Your Friends: Peer Pressure Reversal for Teens and Pre-Teens* by Sharon Scott, who has given permission to KIDPOWER to incorporate ideas from her books into our program. Her system of teaching peer pressure refusal skills is well-thought out and useful. I've added two other tactics she recommends: **Make a Joke** and **Use Flattery**.

### 1. Say "No Thanks"

*Ineffective :*

Offer: "Hey, you want a smoke?"

Response: "Uh, well ... I don't think so."

*Effective:*

Offer: "Hey, you want a smoke?"

Response: "No thanks."

### 2. Walk Away

Offer: "Hey, you want a smoke?"

Response: "No thanks."

Offer: "Come on. Just take a puff."

Response: "I don't want to."

Offer: "It's real cool. Just try it!"

Response: "I said No." (turn and leave with head up and back straight)

### **3. Be a Broken Record**

Offer: "Hey, you want a smoke?"

Response: "I don't smoke."

Offer: "Just one puff – it won't hurt you!"

Response: "I don't smoke."

Offer: "Is that all you can say?"

Response: "Yes, because I said I don't smoke!"

### **4. Give an Excuse**

Offer: "Hey, you want a smoke?"

Response: "No way! I don't want to get addicted."

### **5. Have a Better Idea**

Offer: "Hey, you want a smoke?"

Response: "I've got a better idea. Let's go \_\_\_\_\_."

(Insert a realistic activity appropriate to these youth.)

### **6. Make a Joke**

Offer: "Hey, you want a smoke?"

Response: "Do you know the REAL reason why dinosaurs became extinct? They smoked!"

### **7. Use Flattery/Turn the Tables**

Offer: "Hey, you want a smoke?"

Response: "I care about you. Why would you want to endanger your health like that?"

Encourage young people to come up with their own tactics and language for refusing a friend. Coach them to be both respectful and powerful in how they communicate their boundaries.