

Supporting the Whole Child: Connecting Brain Health, Systems, and Practice

Supporting Youth Through Vaping Cessation: Starting the Conversation

September 9th, 2026
Session #11



What This Series Is

- An ongoing, twice-monthly learning series
- Grounded in the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC) framework
- Interactive and case-based (not just presentations)
- Designed for multiple disciplines and perspectives
- Focused on real-world practice and collaboration

A space to learn, share, and problem-solve together in support of the whole child



Amanda Olinger, DO MA FAAP
**University of Kansas Health
System**

Associate Professor of Pediatrics
Site Director of Pediatric Services at
KU Marillac



Elly Leavens, PhD
**University of Kansas Medical
Center**

Assistant Professor and Licensed
Clinical Psychologist



Today's Session

- Starting supportive conversations about vaping cessation
- Understanding nicotine dependence and vaping triggers
- Using Ask, Advise, Connect and motivational interviewing strategies
- Responding to challenges and concerns about quitting
- Identifying next steps and cessation resources
- Practicing conversation strategies through case discussion
- WSCC component(s):
 - Health Education
 - Health Services



Learning Objectives

- 1) **Identify** strategies for initiating supportive, youth-centered conversations about vaping and cessation.
- 2) **Assess** a young person's current vape use and tailor conversations accordingly.
- 3) **Apply** strategies for responding to common challenges and concerns related to quitting vaping.
- 4) **Develop** realistic, youth-centered next steps to support vaping cessation.
- 5) **Identify** appropriate cessation resources and supports to connect young people with

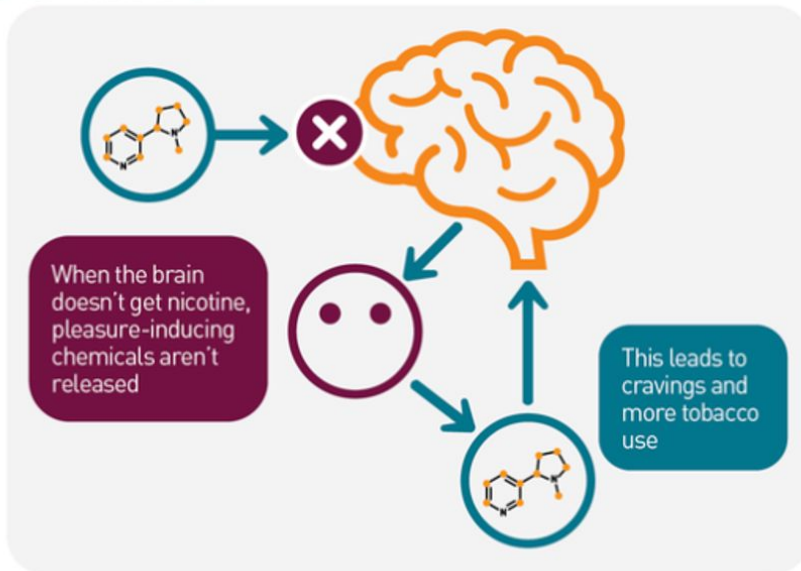
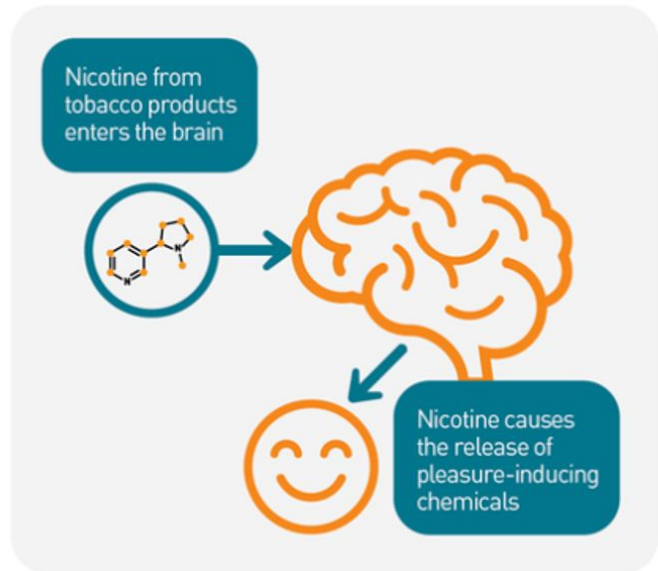


Typical patient case

15 year old teen struggling with balancing activities, school work and eager to pass learners permit test is now struggling with insomnia, diarrhea and fatigue. Turns out, he has been vaping to help him stay focused and reduce his anxiety. He does not want to rely on nicotine, but now he feels like he can't stop. He has tried himself and always goes back to vaping. "I don't want to let anyone down".



The Brain on Nicotine



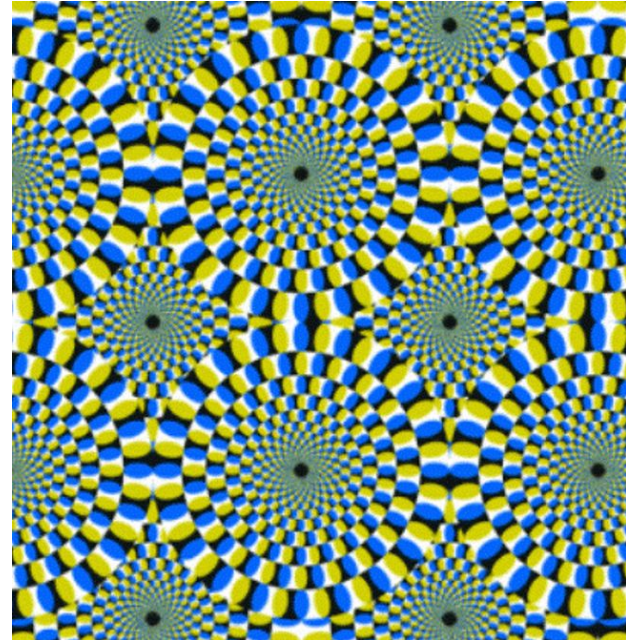
Nicotine's immediate effect on the brain = "The Hit"

- Throughout the brain and body nicotine triggers the quick release of neurochemicals, including **dopamine**, which produces feelings of **pleasure and reward**.
- Nicotine → release stress hormones → elevate heart rate, increase blood pressure, and cause increased alertness and physical tension.
- The nicotine "hit" → **temporarily masks underlying anxiety**.
- The immediate effect is a complex mix of heightened **arousal** and a **rewarding** neurochemical flood.



The illusion or myth of stress relief

Negative reinforcement loop in the brain: nicotine causes the stress of withdrawal, and then temporarily relieves it, tricking the brain into believing the substance is the solution. The satisfaction of ending withdrawal discomfort is mistakenly perceived as managing external stressors.



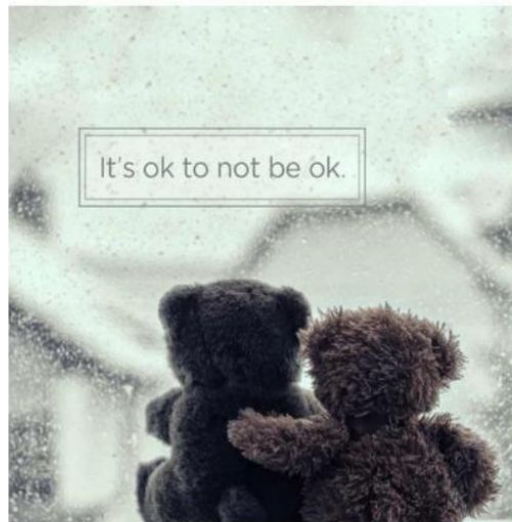
Understanding Tobacco Triggers: Teens' Emotional State

Trigger Events

- Stressed or overwhelmed
- Anxious, worried, or nervous
- Lonely or bored
- Sad
- Frustrated or upset
- Happy or excited

How to Help

- Take a break
- Care for yourself
- Reward yourself
- Reach out to others for support



Quitting is tough, and you will probably have some bad days. It's okay to struggle, just keep going.



Understanding Tobacco Triggers: Teens' Daily Routine

Trigger Events

- Texting or playing on your phone
- Going to the school bathroom
- Seeing e-cigarette ads
- Studying or doing homework
- Walking or driving

How to Help

- Throw out vapes, chargers, pods
- Find a replacement behavior
- Change daily routine
- Stay busy!



**Avoid reminders of vaping
by changing your routine.
Small changes - like taking
a different route to school
- can help.**



Understanding Tobacco Triggers: Teens' Social Life

Trigger Events

- Seeing others use (in person, in media)
- Smelling e-cigarette aerosol
- Going to a party
- Studying with friends
- Being offered an e-cigarette

How to Help

- Avoid places/situations where others vape
- Ask others not to vape around you
- Find other ways to connect and have fun
- Lean on supportive people



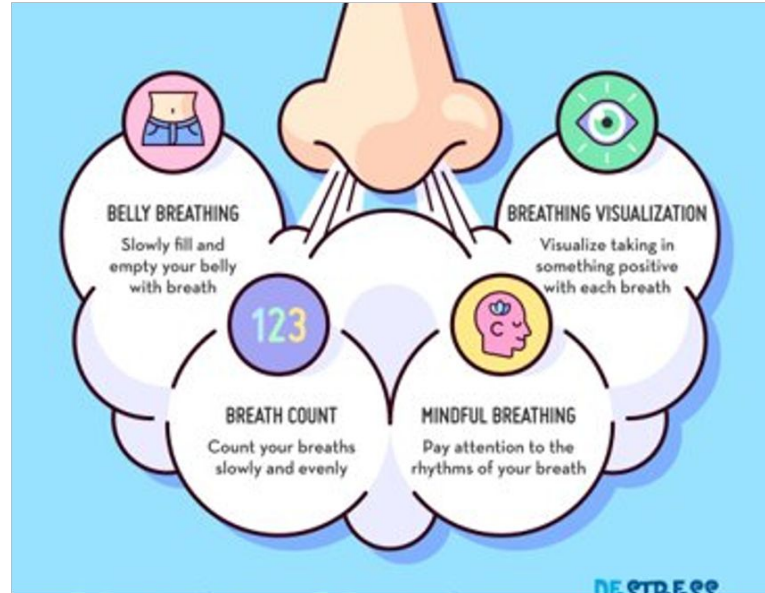
Nicotine addiction can make you feel like you can't go a minute without vaping. Quitting can help you feel more in control of your life.



Behavioral intervention: What do you like about vaping?

Behavior Modification Strategies

- Oral fixation, hand to mouth motion
 - Stress ball, fidgets
- Deep breathing
 - 4, 7, 8 breathing technique
- Nicotine = dopamine release
 - Jolly Ranchers! Popsicles, flavored water



Alternative Coping Strategies

Pick out realistic options:

- Like vaping - short, easily accessible, fast acting, does not draw attention, effective
- Example: Chewing gum - gives your mouth something to do, you must focus on breathing, taste can be like vape flavor, candy stimulates dopamine release



Exercise

Physical activity, especially intense exercise like HIIT, boosts dopamine, improving mood and energy



Eating

Enjoyable foods trigger dopamine release, making us feel pleasure and satisfaction



Listening to Music

Music activates the brain's reward system, lifting mood and motivation



Completing a Task

Achieving goals releases dopamine, creating a rewarding feeling and motivating further action

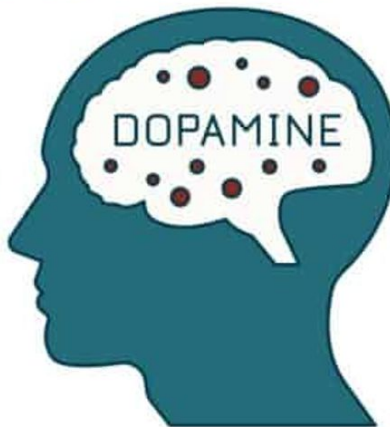


Spending Time with Loved Ones

Positive social interactions increase dopamine, enhancing happiness and emotional well-being



ACTIVITIES THAT RELEASE DOPAMINE



Having a non-judgemental conversation

Unwelcome advice elicits resistance

Knowledge is weakly correlated with behavior change

Everyone leaves feeling frustrated!

- Purge yourself of:
 - You should
 - You must
 - You have to
 - If you don't, _____ will happen



Application of Motivational Interviewing spirit and principles

Collaboration ~~vs. one-upping, authoritarian~~

Evocation ~~vs. imparting or inserting knowledge~~

Autonomy-supporting ~~vs. controlling~~

Empathy ~~vs. dismissive, disrespectful~~



Markers of a successful encounter

Rate yourself on:

- **Talk time:** youth > 50% is the goal
- **Collaboration:** did you assume the role of expert or did you allow the youth to substantially influence the conversation
- **Empathy:** Would the youth say you understand their perspective? Did they leave feeling heard?
- **Change talk:** Did they express desire, ability, reason, or need to change the behavior?
- **Evocation:** Did you provide the reasons for change or did they?



Application of the Ask-Advise-Connect framework

ORIGINAL INVESTIGATION

HEALTH CARE REFORM

Ask-Advise-Connect

A New Approach to Smoking Treatment Delivery in Health Care Settings

Jennifer Irvin Vidrine, PhD; Sanjay Shete, PhD; Yumei Cao, MS; Anthony Greisinger, PhD; Penny Harmonson, BS; Barry Sharp, MS; Lyndsay Miles, MA; Susan M. Zbikowski, PhD; David W. Wetter, PhD



Youth Tobacco Cessation: How to ACT (Ask-Counsel-Treat) in 2-3 Minutes

This tip sheet provides 3 easy steps that every pediatric health clinician should follow to address youth tobacco use at every clinical encounter. The steps are designed to allow for a meaningful intervention with minimal workflow disruption. For a full, detailed strategy for addressing youth tobacco cessation, please visit www.aap.org/youthcessation.

ASK: Screen for tobacco use with every youth age 11+ at every clinical encounter.

"Do you use any tobacco or vaping products, like cigarettes, e-cigarettes, or dip?"

TIPS:

- Use specific examples of products commonly used in your community
- Incorporate question into existing screeners
- If possible, screen confidentially, without a parent or guardian present

No

Reinforce behavior and screen again at next visit.

Yes

COUNSEL: Counsel all patients who use tobacco about quitting, regardless of amount used.

"Nicotine can harm your brain development."

"Quitting will protect your health, save money, and increase your independence."

"Quitting is hard, but I believe you can do it. I'm here to help."

"Are you interested in quitting today?"

TIPS:

- Use a strengths-based perspective and non-judgmental language
- Use personal examples of the benefits of quitting (eg, better athletic performance)

No

Revisit at next visit.*

*For inpatient settings, also connect with youth's PCP for follow-up.

Yes

TREAT: Link youth to appropriate behavioral supports; consider prescribing cessation medication when indicated.

"There are programs that can help you quit. Would you rather get support by text, online, or phone?"

"This program will help you make a quit plan and stick with it. It will also help you deal with cravings and triggers."

"I'll follow up with you in a few weeks to see how it's going."

TIPS:

Choose a program that meets youth's needs and link them while they're in your office. Options include:

- Text: Text "QUIT" to 47848
- Online: www.teen.smokefree.gov
- Phone: 1-800-QUIT-NOW

For a full list of programs, visit www.aap.org/help2quit

Assess whether NRT may be appropriate for your patient:

For full details on prescribing NRT to youth, including contraindications and dosing guidelines, visit www.AAP.org/NRT

Follow up with youth after their quit date to assess progress and offer additional support. Anyone on the patient care team can handle this follow-up conversation; follow your typical office workflow.



Getting started is the hardest part!

Seek permission and set the agenda.

- *I hear you had a conversation with your teacher. Share with me your understanding of why we are meeting today.*
- *Would it be okay if we talk a little about the conversation with your teacher?*
- *I'd like to spend some time talking about vaping. Is that alright with you? What would you like to add to our agenda today?*



Ask-Advise-Connect (follow-up)

- Ask about nicotine/tobacco/vaping
- *Do you use any tobacco or vaping products, like cigarettes, e-cigarettes, or nicotine pouches?*
 - Useful follow-up questions include (consider using if student reports not using nicotine or tobacco):
 - *Do your friends or family use tobacco or vape?*
 - *Have you ever tried a tobacco or nicotine product? Which one(s)?*
 - *How many times have you used [product]?*
- If report use, consider assessing how often they use the product
 - *In a typical week, how many days do you vape/smoke/use pouches?*



Ask-Advise-Connect (follow-up)

- **Advise individual to quit and encourage them to set a quit date within the next 14 days**
- *Quitting all tobacco and nicotine is the best thing you can do for your health. I care about you and strongly advise that you quit.*
- Other sample supporting statements
 - *Quitting will protect your health, save you money, and increase your independence.*
 - *It sounds like you're using vaping to deal with stress. May I offer suggestions about way to cope with stress?*



Ask-Advise-Connect (follow-up)

- Connect youth directly to resources, particularly if interested in quitting (warm hand off)
- *Quitting is hard, so I'm going to connect you to some help.*
- *Take out your phone and text "QUIT" to 47848. A counselor will follow-up with you to make a quit plan, and help you deal with cravings and triggers.*
- *I'll follow-up with you in about 2 weeks to see how you're doing.*



Ask-Advise-Connect (follow-up)

- Follow-up within 2 weeks to see how the youth is doing
- *I know you decided that your quit date would be last Monday. How's it going so far? What has been challenging? Where have you found success?*
- *Have you been using the handbook we reviewed? Do you think it might help to add some additional support from a text-to-quit program?*
- *Quitting isn't easy, but it's possible. Let's talk about what led you to vape last week so we can figure out how to prevent it next time. Lapses are learning opportunities!*



Resources

Pediatrician/school nurse (particularly when medication may be needed)

My Life My Quit: The My Life, My Quit™ program is the free and confidential service for teens who want help quitting all forms of tobacco including vape. By enrolling, teens receive one on one coaching sessions with a tobacco treatment specialist trained in adolescent cognitive development. Available for ages 13-17.

This is Quitting: This is Quitting is a free mobile program from the Truth Initiative designed to help young people quit vaping. A text messaging program incorporates messages from other young people who have attempted to, or successfully quit e-cigarettes. Participants also receive evidence-based tips and strategies to quit and stay quit. Tailored based on age, between 13 and 24 years old. **Youth:** Text “DITCHVAPE” to 88709

Smokefree Teen: Cessation support from the National Institutes of Health. Ages 13-17. teen.smokefree.gov or Teens can text QUIT to 47848. quitSTART app also available.



Resources from medical providers

Pediatric providers can offer prescriptions for nicotine replacement therapy and letters for school



School Note

Date: _____

This note is for: _____

Student Name: _____

ABSENT:
☐ Was absent ☐ Will be absent

Dates: _____

Because: _____

* * * * *

LATE/PICKED-UP EARLY:
☐ Will Be Late to School ☐ Picked-up Early

Time: _____

On: _____

By: _____

Because: _____

* * * * *

Please feel free to contact me if needed.

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____



Patient Name: _____ Date: _____

Address: _____

R_x

MD: _____

Signature: _____



Resources for schools

INDEPTH: An Alternative to Suspension or Citation

The American Lung Association's Intervention for Nicotine Dependence: Education, Prevention, Tobacco and Health helps schools and communities address the teen vaping problem in a supportive way.



WATCH EXPERT PEDIATRICIANS DISCUSS TEEN VAPING.

Check out the links below to see pediatricians talk about teen vaping and give advice to parents and caregivers. The videos were produced by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in partnership with the American Academy of Pediatrics.

→ **Pediatricians' Overview of E-Cigarette Use, or Vaping**

www.youtube.com/watch?v=nSy3jQdTpcc

→ **How to Identify Signs of Youth Vaping and Nicotine Addiction**

www.youtube.com/watch?v=DdH0yhNJtkU

→ **Resources Available to Address E-Cigarette Use in Youth**

www.youtube.com/watch?v=jZML6b1t4Mw

Online Quitting Resources for Teens

Help youth quit at Smokefree Teen. The website features **Quit Vaping** pages that help teens understand nicotine addiction, build a custom quit plan, and prepare for their quit day.

Quit Vaping also helps teens deal with cravings after quitting, find support from friends and family, and learn how vaping is related to mental health. Teens can connect with a trained counselor by visiting teen.smokefree.gov/quit-vaping.



Case Discussion

Alex is a 15-year-old who has always been a good student. One day, a coach sees Alex hit a vape before practice. School policy requires confiscation of the device and a referral to the assistant principal.

The assistant principal has had some training in how to have productive conversations about health behaviors, including vaping!



Case Discussion

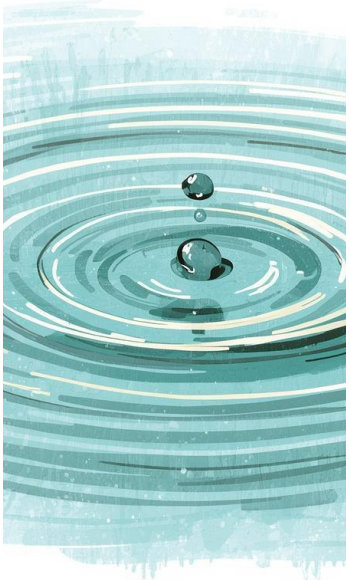
- *How might they start the conversation?*
- *What might they try to avoid? Specific phrases?*

Alex mentions that when they feel upset, they vape to calm down.

- *How might the assistant principal respond to this?*



Today's Ripple



- Nicotine addiction is difficult to break because of the interplay of chemicals on the body
- We can help teens identify their biggest triggers and let them decide how to replace nicotine in the moment to break the cycle of dependence
- Taking a collaborative, non-judgemental approach is effective in helping young people connect with resources
- Ask-Advise-Connect (follow-up) is an evidence-based method to connect young people to cessation resources



Feedback Requested



What's Next

ECHO SERIES

CONNECTING BRAIN HEALTH, SYSTEMS, AND PRACTICE

Supporting the Whole Child

Join us September 24th at 12 PM CST!

