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| English 2010 |
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| **Benson Chiu & Ka Lai Chan** |
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| **Instructor: Brandon Alva** |
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**You Smoke, He Smokes!**

According to the American Heart Association, there are an estimated 46 million adult men and women that are smokers today in the United States. These people are at high risk and have the knowledge that the act of smoking cigarettes may cause different types of cancers, heart disease as well as high blood pressure. Smokers choose to take the risk for smoking and that is their choice. People absolutely have the right to do anything as long as they alone bear the risk and consequences. One of the most hot topic people was discussing about was should we have smoking ban in public areas, and till now half of all states in the United States have implemented comprehensive laws banning smoking in bars, restaurants and private-sector work sites.

However, it seems that not many people concern about the problem of smoking around our kids. It seems like a common sense that it is not a good behavior to smoke around the children but this problem does exist. “50 to 67 percent of children less than five years of age live in homes with at least one adult smoker and 28 percent of high schoolers are exposed to secondhand smoke in their own homes” (Siegel). An estimated 700 million children, or almost half of the world's children, breathe air polluted by tobacco smoke, particularly at home, according to World Health Organization (WHO). Many people neglect that while they are smoking; their kids are smoking too—passive smoke.

One thing we must know is that the harmful effects of passive smoke are much worse than the actual act of smoking. “A child spending one hour in a smoky room with several smokers, or in a closed car with one smoker, inhales as many harmful chemicals as he would smoking ten or more cigarettes”(Schmitt).

Second-hand smoke is harmful for everyone, but it is especially dangerous for babies and children. In United States, “More than 10 million children are still being put in danger to exposure of cigarette smoke in their homes every day”(“Health Effects”), despite there are so many studies showing how dangerous it is to their health.

Babies and children are especially vulnerable to second-hand smoke basically because their immune systems are less developed and also they have faster breathing rate. They breathe in more air relative to their body weight, which means they absorb more smoke. “Tobacco smoke contains over 4,000 different chemicals. At least 50 are known carcinogens (cause cancer in humans) and many are poisonous” (West). The chemicals from the tobacco smoke after being inhaled and then exhaled are even more noxious and injurious. Also, children usually have less power at home and might not be able to complain about they do not like to be around smoke. They are less able to leave smoky places by themselves since most of them are still dependent to their parents.

According to Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), children who are exposed to second-hand smoke are at higher risk for many serious health problems. When compared to other kids, children who regularly breathe second-hand smoke have more risk of dying from sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). They also have more cough, wheeze and ear infections but less lung capacity. They are more at risk of developing cancer later in life. A research, published in the British Medical Journal, showed that “children whom live with smokers are twice as likely to develop lung cancer as a child whom does not live with a smoker“(Wheldon). Furthermore, smoking around children can also affect the way they taste or smell things because smoking or being around smoke destroys or minimizes the sensory organs and taste buds, in accordance with Steven Schroeder, director of the Smoking Cessation Leadership Center at the University of California at San Francisco. Unborn children are exposed to the cigarette smoke through the mother smoking and the effects are just as harmful. In addition, second-hand smoke can affect children’s ability to understand and reason. Studies have shown that these children generally have lower test scores in math, reading and logic (“Second Hand Smoking”). Because of these serious health problems which are caused by passive smoke, children definitely deserve special protection against second-hand smoke.

Besides the harmful consequences on the health of the children, people smoking around kids also bring them some negative impacts in their behaviors. New research states that they may have more behavior problems than other kids too. One imperative outcome is they have more chance of taking up smoking themselves.

Children are not mature enough as they are still young. They are in the stage of learning. They learn the knowledge mainly from school, and at the same time, they learn how to be a good person, which is a much more important thing for their whole life, fundamentally from their parents. In other words, parents are the role models of children. Kids are basically little learning machines. Whatever the content is in front of them, they’re going to pick it up. So whatever their parents do, the kids usually follow them and do the same thing. As a result, children tend to smoke because they see their parents smoke. “Those whose parents smoked were more than two times as likely to begin smoking cigarettes on a daily basis between the ages of 13 and 21 than were children whose parents didn't use tobacco”, according to a new study that looked at family influences on smoking habits (Chavez). So, parental behavior about smoking greatly affects their kids.

Another reason for they are more likely to smoke is because cigarettes are more reachable to them since they can easily find them at home. “Some parents even ask their children to get a pack of cigarettes from the car or having them light a cigarette for the parent”, according to Karl Hill, director of the University of Washington's Seattle Social Development Project and an associate research professor of social work.

An interesting study was published in the September issue of Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine which included 120 children, ages 2 to 6. An adult researcher led a standardized play activity in which each child, acting as a Barbie or Ken doll, shopped for a visiting friend. A store stocked with 133 miniature items gave the children choices — including meat, fruit, vegetables, snacks, nonalcoholic drinks, cigarettes, beer and wine. The children could “buy” anything they wanted by filling a small grocery cart and taking it to a small checkout counter.

The interesting result is twenty-eight percent of the children bought cigarettes, and 61 percent bought alcohol. The children whose parents smoked were almost four times more likely to buy cigarettes. The children whose parents drank at least monthly were three times more likely to buy alcohol. “A 4-year-old girl chose Barbie-sized tobacco in the pretend store and said: “I need this for my man. A man needs cigarettes.” A 6-year-old boy offered the doll cigarettes and said: “Honey, have some smokes. Do you like smokes? I like smokes””(“Parents’ smoking”). This study shows us parents significantly influence the behaviors and thinking of children with no doubt. “You smoke, he smokes” , which means if parents smoke, the kids might follow them and smoke as well; even the kids control their behavior very well, they are still smoking—second-hand smoke.

As a good parent, we should behave well at any time especially in front of our children. "It really is a matter of 'do as I do' not 'do as I say' when it comes to smoking.” said Karl Hill. (Schwarz). Even the parents who choose to smoke, they still have to do their best as a good model to their kids and not doing things which are harmful to them of course. “If parents don’t want their kids to be smoking they shouldn’t be setting the example,” said Dr. Joseph Difranza of the University of Massachusetts Medical School. In other words, parents really should not smoke in front of, or around their children as this is not a good thing the kids should learn. “It’s a very humbling experience to be a parent and see your children mimic your behaviors,” said the study co-author Madeline Dalton of Dartmouth Medical School (“Parents’ smoking”).

In fact, it is really easy to protect our kids from the harmful second-hand smoke by just changing a bit in the smoking habit. For instance, going out to smoke but not smoking at home so that children can live in a smokeless home; not smoking in car when the kids are sitting inside; or the best way is to abstain from smoking, of course. It is not easy to quit smoking especially at the very beginning. However, “When there is a will, there will be a way”, even if it is difficult. Moreover, there are lots of organizations aim at helping those who want to quit smoking, such as American Lung Association (Hotline: 1-800-548-8252), Nicotine Anonymous (Hotline: 1-877-879-6422) and so on. They provide professional information and guides to ease patients’ addiction to cigarettes.

An article is about smoking around the children, from *South China Morning Post*. The editor tells her experience about seeing a kid was with an adult who were smoking in a car, and the poor kid had some part of his shirt pulled up around his face to avoid the toxic smoke an adult was blowing in his face, the editor asks a question for the reader to think about: “Is this a child abuse?” (Kohn). In this paper, I am not going to discuss this interesting question, but I just want to raise the awareness of people, in particular the parents, to care more about their children and avoid smoking around them. We should think about those harmful impacts on their health from the second-hand smoke as well as understanding that parental smoking is the biggest contributor to children initiating smoking. Remember, “You smoke, he smokes”.

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