

# Integrating Smokefree teaching and learning into other curriculum areas



## Columba College

In 2014, as part of Columba College's Year 8 Health programme "Making Healthy Choices", students looked at smoking and its effects on smokers, as well as those living or working close to them.

Concurrently, in English, the students focussed on oral presentations, starting with looking at the structure of a speech, and then developing the content. The students used smokefree for the theme for their speeches. The three-minute speeches were delivered in class and were teacher and peer-assessed according to set criteria relating to content, delivery and preparation.

Columba College has shared two speeches from 2014.

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### The Winning Speech

I kill 5,000 New Zealanders every year. On average I cause someone to lose 14 years of quality life! I have an enormous amount of negatives and a bunch of horrible ingredients. What am I?

I contain a lethal mix of 4,000 chemicals and 200 have been identified as poisonous. The crazy thing is, you use a fair amount of these on a regular basis. Floor Cleaner, toilet cleaner, vinegar, candle wax, paint, nail polish remover, rat poison, tar and batteries are only a few of my key ingredients. Now you are all probably asking yourself 'Why would anyone use me when they know I'm bad?' .... The answer is Nicotine. Nicotine is the most addictive drug known to man and is one of my most crucial ingredients. Many young people experiment with me and that is what keeps them hooked. Once you pick me up, it is nearly impossible to put me down. What am I?

Raise your hand if you would like to have your mouth looking like this. Great, none of you because if you use me, your mouth and your lungs are definitely more likely to look like this. If you are put off by this then imagine what your friends are going to think if you have wrinkly skin, yellow fingers, stained lips, and a mouth looking like that. If you pick me up you are more than 5 times more likely to get a stroke, become blind, be diagnosed with lung, mouth, lip, tongue or cheek cancer, get chronic bronchitis and heart diseases. What am I?

People who are near me, are affected by me as well, they breathe in my harmful air and this can have bad consequences. This is also known as second hand smoke

and it is the leading environmental cause of death in New Zealand and kills 350 people each year. Children are the most vulnerable to this because 1 in 2 New Zealand adults think I help them in one way or another and that is highly likely to be their parent or parents. If you use me while your pregnant then the toxins you inhale can suffocate and kill your baby or cause major complications. Every day 1 person that does not use me dies from exposure to me. What am I?

A pack containing me and 19 of my other friends, costs between \$15- \$25. One pack is equivalent to a bag of potatoes, a bag of carrots, a bag of peas, a bunch of bananas, 2 loaves of bread, 1L of milk, a vine of tomatoes and 6 chicken drumsticks. If you use half a pack a day and quit you could save \$40 a week, \$80 a fortnight and \$160 a month. What am I?

Children that have a parent that uses me are 3 times more likely to be addicted to me themselves or be exposed to me. Rather than wasting your money on me you may as well just drink straight toilet cleaner. If you use me, and my friends, everyday for 10 years then you would spend over \$65,000.00 on me. So have you guessed what I am?

Yes, a cigarette. Just remember 1 in 2 New Zealanders use me and I kill 5,000 New Zealanders each year. Will you be my next victim?

*By Meg Sycamore. Y8 Columba College. Dunedin.*

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## Talia's Story

24th April 2005. The day my mother told me she loved me, was the very same day her heart stopped beating. I find it completely ironic that Mum died on Mothers' Day and I had felt a weird sense of relief as she took her last breath. She had appeared so calm about everything, as if she knew what was coming. Her last breath being a sigh of relief. A sign her lungs had finally given up the fight. I bet she is looking down on me right now, muttering to me. Telling me not to put the daffodils anywhere near her grave. Mother couldn't bear the flowers that family and friends had placed around her hospital room, she had ended up sneezing every second breath while rubbing her red, bloodshot eyes. Her last days were the worst, I couldn't bear to look at her wrinkled, aged face with bags under her eyes and what were left of her teeth were stained in the worst way possible.

Kneeling in front of mother's headstone, I placed the daffodils carefully down and whispered to Mum. Telling her I loved her, and I missed her. Although, I feel I didn't know her very well. Half the time she had a cigarette between her teeth and was puffing the sickly stench around the house. It annoyed me that someone had brought a pack of cigarettes and placed them on her grave. Smoking is the reason she is gone, the reason I now have to live with lung cancer as a result of second hand smoking. She had been smoking since her early teens, and hadn't stopped, even when she was pregnant with me. My brother passed away due to heart disease when he was only seven years old. Mother had said, 'Some children go to heaven earlier than others,' which angered me, because it was her fault he had died, yet she still wouldn't stop smoking. And now it's too late, because she has let smoking take her life too. I don't understand why people smoke, it's like giving a murderer a gun and saying 'Shoot me'.

Another thing I also find strange, is that people are willing to risk their lives and the lives of others for 3 minutes of inhaling thousands of chemicals wrapped up in a stick of paper. "Talia, we should probably head back now, dear." A hand reached out to me and I looked up to see Megan, one of my nurses, smiling at me. I took her hand and she helped me to my feet, leading me back to the car. "Are you alright, dear? Remember, breathe in, and out..." Megan lifted my oxygen tank and placed it on the back seat of the car. I was really fed up with people reminding me how to breathe.

I'm worried that soon they'll be advising me on how to walk. Some people would say lung cancer ruined my life, but the truth is, smoking ruined my life. I'm fifteen and I've probably visited the hospital twice as many times as my grandfather who has heart disease. At fifteen I wouldn't have expected my life to be quite like this. Living in hospitals, regretting mistakes that weren't even my own. Stupid mistakes, like smoking. Why are they are still trying to save me? I do not know, but it seems pointless, as I have more of a chance of dying in the next few minutes than I do of living to my sixteenth birthday.

Soon I am back in my hospital bed. Megan switches on my oxygen tank and adjusts the tubes in my nose, leaving me alone in the room. I notice a stack of books that somebody has left on my bedside table. Scanning through the books, one in particular catches my eye. Reaching over and taking the book, I start trying to make sense of the jumbled words and pictures. The book is about tobacco use, second-hand smoking and smoke-related deaths. I actually learn a lot in the next few minutes:

Every year smoking kills over 5–8 million people.

Every month, near to 550, 000 dead.

Daily, over 1,200.

And every eight seconds someone dies from tobacco use or disease.

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...Talia was right. She never did live to her 16th Birthday, and died due to lung disease on the 25th of April. Smoking took at least 70 years from her life. But if it hadn't been for her mother's actions, life would've been different for Talia. Your actions do affect others. And smoking does affect lives.

*By Michaela Sutherland. Y8 Columba College. Dunedin.*

# Corinna College

Corinna School, in Porirua, sees the years 7 & 8 smokefree/auahi kore teaching resource as an effective way of equipping students with the ability to sift information, analyse issues and make informed decisions about being smokefree/auahi kore.

Caro Begg a teacher at the school says that the resource is helping to build student resilience, which is key to empowering students to make good choices.

Caro found the inquiry-based learning activities lend themselves to hot seating and this is a great way to get students talking about the questions raised in the stories. "The stories have challenged their thinking and I hope this will transfer into other areas of their lives where they have to make difficult choices."

One of the stories is about Old Mitch, who asks a boy called Ngākau to buy his smokes, although Ngākau doesn't want to do this. Caro's students raised questions about whether Ngākau and other whānau members should have helped Old Mitch give up smoking.

"It was interesting that the students used the word 'bystander.' We try to give students the message that if you are not part of the solution, you are part of the problem. The students have obviously made a connection between the messages we're trying to give them and this particular learning situation."

Students at Corinna also had great fun working out much money Old Mitch was spending on smokes and how much he could save by quitting. Caro says using the resource to contextualise the maths was a real opportunity. "Maths is about real life and this resource made it real to them."

The students talked about peer pressure and also the influence of older people, like Old Mitch in the story. "A lot of our kids have an extended family, where everybody in the community is an auntie or uncle, and these relationships will affect some of the decisions students make. These decisions are not simple and they're complicated by feelings of love, responsibility and duty."

Caro stresses her goal isn't to preach to the students or their families about not smoking. She says the learning intention was to work out the story's message and develop students' literacy, as well as the skills they need to become informed citizens.

For more information and support:

[smokefree.org.nz](http://smokefree.org.nz)  
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