

Tobacco kills, Don't be Duped

Bob, I've got cancer.

Tobacco kills – don't be duped. It should not be advertised, glamorized or subsidized.

WORLD NO TOBACCO DAY  31 MAY

REDUCING THE GLAMORISATION OF TOBACCO IN MOVIES, ON TELEVISION AND IN MUSIC VIDEOS

Four Steps The Entertainment Industry Can Take to Reduce the Glamorisation of Tobacco

When tobacco is glamorised in movies, on TV and in music videos, it sends a powerful message to young people that tobacco use is both appropriate and desirable.

Following are four steps the entertainment industry can take to discourage teenage tobacco use:

1. **Avoid glamorising tobacco.** Refrain from portraying tobacco use as something that is exciting, cool or sexy and linking tobacco with adventure, fun and celebration.
2. **Creatively substitute other props.** Consider means other than tobacco-type clichés for portraying rebellion, celebration and relaxation.
3. **Portray the reality of tobacco use.** People become sick and die from using tobacco. Most smokers would like to quit but have a difficult time because of the highly addictive nature of nicotine. Environmental tobacco smoke impacts the health of non-smokers. The majority of people in the world do not smoke and prefer to live in a smoke-free environment.
4. **Work toward reducing overall tobacco use.** Avoid creating an image that smoking is a normal, daily activity. Refrain from having characters use tobacco in inappropriate situations such as around children, in medical care facilities and in non-smoking areas.

Three Other Actions That Will Make a Difference

Watch what you are watching. Inoculate yourself against the pro-tobacco messages you receive from entertainment productions. Recognise that movies and TV are for entertainment and that they rarely reflect reality. Tobacco use is not exciting or glamorous. Many stars have died from tobacco-related diseases.

Encourage others to watch what they are watching. As a young person, talk with your friends about tobacco use in the movies and on TV. As a family, watch movies or TV and discuss the difference between the portrayal and reality of tobacco use. As a teacher or youth group leader, consider teaching a unit on critical viewing skills.

Work to raise public awareness. Host local youth-based media events around the time of the Oscars or your local award ceremonies. Contact your local movie and TV critics and ask that they write articles on the issue. Copy and distribute this packet at health fairs, World No Tobacco Day, and other events that promote health and/or tobacco education. Be creative!

Why Is Tobacco Included in Movies and on TV?

There are several reasons why tobacco finds its way into movies and TV programmes.

It is a convenient prop. If you want to establish that a teen is rebellious put a cigarette in his or her hand.

It may depict reality.

It can reflect the personal attitudes and use of tobacco by writers, directors, actors and actresses.

It may result from direct or indirect influence by the tobacco industry.

It may be used as a marketing tool to reach specific audiences.

Do a Study

Many studies have been conducted to test the manner and frequency of tobacco usage in the movies and on popular television programs. An example of one such study comes out of California in the United States. It was conducted by Thumbs Up! Thumbs Down!, a project of the American Lung Association of Sacramento-Emigrant Trails. The study looked at all movies with a domestic box office income of more than \$5 million in the time frame from May 1994 through April 1995. It reviewed television shows over a six-week period in the spring of 1996. These are movies and programs that are screened all the world, not just the US, and have enormous appeal to teenagers everywhere. Following are the key findings:

- **Hollywood gets a Thumbs Up! and a Thumbs Down! in the amount of tobacco use.** Approximately 50% of the 133 movies reviewed had zero to 10 incidents of tobacco. The other half ranged from a moderate 11 - 20 incidents to a smoke-filled 100 plus incidents. Television fared better with only 15% of the 238 episodes watched containing tobacco. Overall, movies averaged 10 incidents per hour and television two.
- **Use varies considerably by studio and network.** Studios with low tobacco use included Walt Disney Pictures, Twentieth Century Fox and Hollywood Pictures. On the high side were Miramax, Castle Rock and Warner Brothers. On television, ABC had the lowest incidence while Fox was highest.
- **Leading actors are more likely to light up in the movies.** In the movies and television programmes which included tobacco use, one or more leading actors and actresses lit up 82% of the time in movies and 57% of the time on TV.
- **Cigarettes and cigars are the tobacco of choice.** In the movies where tobacco was used, 86% displayed cigarette use, 52% cigar use, 12% pipe use and 7% smokeless tobacco. On television episodes with tobacco use, 67% displayed cigarette use, 42% cigar use and 3% pipe use. There was no smokeless tobacco use displayed.

So What If Your Favourite Actor Lights Up on Screen?

The entertainment industry has a pervasive influence on our society. While movies and television may reflect our life styles, they also help define them. The power of the entertainment industry in influencing young people suggests that it also has a responsibility to monitor and reduce the potentially negative impact of its messages on this audience. *One area where it can play a particularly important role is in helping to discourage tobacco use.*

Basic Tobacco Facts

Tobacco kills 4 million people a year around the world. According to the World Health Organization, it is the single most preventable cause of death and disease in the world. In addition to the tremendous suffering it creates, tobacco use costs the United States alone close to \$100 billion annually in health care and days missed from work. Do you know what the costs are in your own country? It is a price we all help pay, whether we smoke or not.

Adults Don't Make the Decision to Start Smoking: Young People Do

Each day between 82,000 to 100,000 teenagers light their first cigarette. Tobacco use starts in early adolescence. Almost all first-time use occurs before graduation from high school. People who start smoking at an early age are more likely to develop severe levels of nicotine addiction and are more likely to die early of a tobacco-related disease than people who start later.

Why do young people start? A teenager is much more likely to light up if his or her parents, brothers or sisters smoke. Peer pressure is also a powerful influence. The most common offer of a first cigarette is from a friend. Certainly, the massive advertising campaign carried out by the tobacco industry plays a part. Billions go toward making the Marlboro Man and his counterparts attractive to children. Whether it is popularity, beauty, adventure, wealth or uniqueness, the tobacco industry and its legion of public relations firms have a multitude of ways suggesting it can be had for the price of a puff. Kids with low levels of self-esteem and a sense of alienation are especially vulnerable to the industry's relentless campaign.

The Role of the Entertainment Industry

What role does the entertainment industry play in this process? When tobacco is glamorised in movies, on TV and in music videos, it provides a powerful message that tobacco use is an appropriate and even desirable activity. Whether the glamorisation is intentional or not, it reinforces the multi-billion dollar advertising campaign carried out by the tobacco industry. In some ways, it may be even more effective. No warning label is required when actors and actresses light up. What the young person sees is someone he or she looks up to, living a life that he or she would like to live, and doing it while using tobacco.

There are three major ways tobacco use is glamorised:

It's fun. Cool, attractive and successful people light up and they use tobacco while they are doing exciting things.

It represents rebellion. Lighting up becomes a symbol for challenging a repressive system, whether that system is your parents or the government.

It's a way of relieving stress. As tension mounts, people light up.

Watch What You Are Watching

How do your country's movies and television programmes fare? It would make for an interesting project. Why don't you find out?

Whether you are sending a message to Hollywood or your local entertainment industry, discussing tobacco use with your family, or working on a class or group project, the following questions and methods utilised by the Thumbs Up! Thumbs Down! project should help in your efforts.

How much tobacco use is shown? The easiest way to determine the extent of tobacco use is to count incidents. While there are various ways of counting, the method used by Thumbs Up! Thumbs Down! is to consider each time tobacco is shown on the screen as an incident. For example, two people smoking at the same time on screen are considered two incidents. When a hand holding a cigarette moves off screen and then back on and when a camera refocuses on a person smoking are also considered separate incidents. More than 30 incidents in a movie and over 10 incidents on a television programme reflect relatively high use.

What type of tobacco is being used? The type of tobacco being used in movies and on TV can encourage or discourage certain trends in tobacco use. For example, the prominent use of cigars in recent movies and TV shows in the US has likely played an important role in the increasing incidence of cigar use in the US.

Who is using tobacco? Major characters who are played by popular actors and actresses carry out much of the tobacco use in movies and on TV. Many of these characters, actors and actresses serve as role models to young people. When these role models light up, it sends a powerful message that smoking is OK.

How is tobacco use being portrayed? The way tobacco use is portrayed is an important factor in encouraging or discouraging tobacco use. When the entertainment industry shows tobacco use as fun, suggests it's a way of rebelling and establishing independence, or shows it as a means of relaxing and dealing with stress, it sends a message that using tobacco is a highly desirable activity. When the entertainment industry suggests that tobacco use is unhealthy or addictive, portrays a character strenuously objecting to breathing second-hand smoke, or shows some of the more unattractive aspects of tobacco use such as smelly clothes and stained teeth, it sends the message that one should avoid tobacco use.

Advocacy Activity for Teens

Youth advocacy efforts are an important way to reduce the influence and amount of positive tobacco portrayal in movies and on television. Here are some suggestions:

1. Teens can write to the actors and actors to express their concern over how tobacco use is portrayed on screen. Simple form or hand-written statements or letters to actor/actress, production company, or anyone actively involved in decision making, will let them know that the amount of tobacco use does not go unnoticed and is undesirable. The youth may also send letters of recognition to those who convey an anti-tobacco message to encourage and congratulate their efforts.
2. Produce a slide with an anti-tobacco message that could be shown prior to movie trailers or previews. Contact your local theatre to find out if they will show it.
3. Send a petition to a particular actor, director, or producer signed by youth. This petition can express their concern regarding how tobacco is being portrayed.
4. Do a pre and post test at a movie theatre. Survey moviegoers about their impression of tobacco and cite some facts. After the movie, survey the same audience to see if their impression/reaction changed.
5. Get permission from a movie theatre and hand out a movie evaluation form for the audience to fill out. For example, the release of the Hollywood movie "The Insider" may be a good opportunity to do this.
6. Have youth create a list of movies that contain smoking scenes.
7. Encourage teens to write letter/article in school newspaper. Include a list of celebrities who have died from smoking related diseases. (See List of Celebrities Killed by Tobacco)

These are just a few of the ways to encourage critical thinking while deglamorizing tobacco use. The goal is to encourage the movie and television industry to stop portraying tobacco as being a desirable activity.

CELEBRITIES KILLED BY TOBACCO

The following is a list of prominent international celebrities who have died from smoking, their age, and the cause of death. Please help us put together a similar list for your own country or region (Courtesy of the Entertainment Industry Council's Tobacco in the Media Project and "Cigarette Hall of Fame," a report by the Roswell Park Memorial Institute).

Nat "King" Cole	45	Lung Cancer
Mary Wells	49	Throat Cancer
Steve McQueen	50	Lung Cancer (also worked with asbestos in shipyards)
Rod Serling	51	Heart Disease (4 packs a day)
Eddie Kendricks	52	Lung Cancer
Michael Landon	54	Pancreatic Cancer (4 packs a day)
Lee Remick	55	Lung & Kidney Cancer
Betty Grable	57	Lung Cancer
Edward R. Murrow	57	Lung Cancer
Humphrey Bogart	57	Throat and Oesophagus Cancer
James Franciscus	57	Emphysema
Dick Powell	59	Throat Cancer
Gary Cooper	60	Lung Cancer
Chet Huntley	62	Lung Cancer
Dick York	63	Emphysema
Sammy Davis, Jr.	64	Throat Cancer
Walt Disney	65	Lung Cancer
Yul Brynner	65	Lung Cancer
Tallulah Bankhead	65	Emphysema
Sarah Vaughan	66	Lung Cancer
Colleen Dewhurst	67	Lung Cancer
Harry Reasoner	68	Lung Cancer
Alan J. Lerner	68	Lung Cancer
Desi Arnaz	69	Lung Cancer
Nancy Walker	69	Lung Cancer
Buster Keaton	70	Emphysema
Neville Brand	71	Emphysema
Art Blakey	71	Lung Cancer
Ed Sullivan	72	Lung Cancer
Duke Ellington	72	Lung Cancer
John Wayne	72	Had Lung Cancer and survived bypass surgery,
Lucille Ball	77	Heart Disease (aortic aneurysm)
Denver Pyle	77	Lung Cancer
Lillian Hellman	79	Emphysema
Robert Mitchum	79	Emphysema
Arthur Godfrey	81	Lung Cancer
John Hust	81	Emphysema
Bette Davis	81	Stroke

Many of these stars also appeared in ads promoting cigarettes.

Many of the victims were sick for more than ten years before dying.

Freely adapted from "*Thumbs up! Thumbs Down! Advocacy Information Kit*".
American Lung Association of Sacramento-Emigrant Trails.