

Smoking is a drag.

There's nothing attractive or noble about yellow teeth, a nasty cough, cancer, smelly clothes and smoker's breath. And you can be sure that hacking up phlegm

is a turnoff. The younger you are when you start smoking, the more likely it is that you'll become a full-blown smoker and that you'll suffer from some sort of smoking-related illness, says the Centers for Disease Control.

You see, cigarettes (and other tobacco products) contain nicotine, and nicotine is addictive. Find a long-time smoker who is trying to quit and ask (very carefully) how cranky, tired, nervous and irritable they feel.

In fact, many ex-smokers still crave cigarettes for years and years after they've given them up.

Why is smoking so bad for you? For starters, it dampens your sense of smell and taste. It raises your blood pressure and makes you more susceptible to colds and bronchial infections. It can cause chronic bronchitis, ulcers, emphysema and heart disease, not to mention cancer of the mouth, larynx, lungs, esophagus, pancreas, cervix, uterus and bladder.

Also, smoking just isn't smart. Students who smoke are more likely to get lower grades than nonsmoking students, says the CDC.

Long story short, cigarettes just aren't cool, and they're known killers. Smoking accounts for about 420,000 deaths in the United States each year.

Ask yourself: Would you knowingly date a person who will eventually kill you? Then why smoke?

So, do your friends and fellow students a favor: exert a little positive peer pressure. The next time you see a classmate light up, have the courage to say you think smoking is a drag.

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School Datebooks

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What would you do with \$700?

- The Surgeon General says that the typical smoker shells out about \$700 annually for cigarettes. What could you do with that much money? Well, you could:
- * See at least one movie per week, every week of the year.
 - * Buy about 40 CDs or large pizzas.
 - * Put a pretty good dent in the price of a new computer.
 - * Go on an awesome spring break and still have spending money.
 - * Have about \$20,000 or so for college, if, years K-12, your parents had put \$700 a year in a savings account bearing 5% interest.

