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A 4-H/CRD Film Discussion Guide

THE WIZARD OF NO

We're surrounded from birth by people telling us what we should think, what we should believe, and how we should act. There comes a time when we must each decide what is best in the scheme of our lives. Many of our adult habits, good and bad, are developed as children. Lasting decisions about lifestyles are made in the pre-teen and teen years. The pressures to smoke, drink, or do drugs start at an early age - through peer practices, parental role models, and advertising.

Young viewers know what it's like to be pressured by conflicting messages from parents, peers, and advertising. Speaking directly to children with practical advice about self-esteem, tobacco, drugs, and alcohol, **THE WIZARD OF NO** encourages them to discover and use an amazing power within themselves - the power of No.



INTENDED AUDIENCE

School children of all ages.

SYNOPSIS

Billy Parker, age twelve, is giving in to peer pressures, and not feeling good about it. His friends smoke, so he tries, and ends up coughing and embarrassed. Because he can't say "no," his bicycle is appropriated for use by yet another friend. Clearly, Billy has a problem.

Displeased and angry with himself, he dejectedly heads for home. Enter the Wizard of No. With crystal clear honesty and common sense, the Wizard helps Billy discover an amazing power within himself, the power of self-assertiveness — the power of No.

Conjuring a familiar-looking examination room in the middle of the forest, the Wizard proceeds to give Billy a somewhat unorthodox examination. He uncovers the fact that Billy has a problem with his "no's" and that he is suffering from low self-esteem. Conjuring images from history and the advertising medium, the Wizard cleverly leads Billy to the conclusion that he must stand up for his beliefs by turning away negative influences with "No." All it takes is practice.

The Wizard helps Billy to clarify the differences between the helpful "no's" and the selfish "no's" that exist all around us. A fresh perspective allows us to see that many of the "no's" used to protect us are actually "yes'es" that show us the path to where we want to be.

Further evaluation of negative influence situations causes Billy to worry about what his friends will say - how they will view his refusal to participate in the things he feels are wrong for him. Using coaching techniques, the Wizard shows Billy how to say "No Thanks" and be firm about his decisions without creating new problems, hurting anyone's feelings, or blowing the issue out of proportion.

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When Billy's friends reappear, the Wizard vanishes, leaving Billy to successfully turn down the opportunity for a second cigarette. So well has he learned to use the power of "No," he is able to turn a potentially negative situation into a positive experience for everyone.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is the film about? What does it say about self-esteem, peer pressure, and the advertising medium?
2. Define what a friend means to you. Who are your friends? How do you tell?
3. Practice saying "No." Set up two-member teams to explore enticement/resistance situations.
4. Take a good look at advertising - television, radio, and print media - what messages are they using to sell their products?
5. What is peer pressure? How does it work (positive/negative) to influence behavior?

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

1. Ask the people who smoke when and why they started. What are their feelings about the smoking habit?
2. Discuss the effects of smoking, drinking, and drugs on the body and brain. Develop informed arguments for not using these substances.
3. How do you know when you've made the "right" decision?
4. How do parents, educators, and friends prepare kids for making decisions?
5. Collect cigarette advertisements and run a contest to come up with your own anti-smoking poster.

MTI Film and Video
Length: 18 minutes

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