

# Smoking or Health Complementary Health Promotion Program for Kindergartens

a Manual for kindergarten teachers

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To be used only as a study, teaching, prevention, health education and health protection tool as part of the Smoking or Health Complementary Program for Kindergartens. Compiled under the professional supervision of NIHD (previously OEFK, NEFI and NEVI) and SHHF.

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## **Recommendation**

*Today, besides alcohol, smoking is perhaps the greatest health risk which shortens life expectancy by at least a decade and causes significant excess mortality. In Hungary it is especially destructive, much more than in many other countries.*

*We have known for a long time that something should be done, but unfortunately this is quite difficult. It is difficult to change old customs and to help people quit smoking. What would be needed is prevention, it should be achieved that smoking does not become a habit, and if possible young people should not even experiment with it. Since in present day societies cigarettes are the symbol of adulthood and western living standards, the psychological pleasure of lighting up a cigarette is presented very vividly in films and television plays, but of course children can observe it also in their own environment, the behavior model of smoking is very suggestive, it has a strong effect on young people. Especially peer group influence is strong if in the group the "trendy", more mature, more adult-looking kids "already" smoke. Unfortunately against the tempting psychological influences offered by life any informatory word or warning amounts to little, therefore the chances for success for health promotion and tobacco control in schools also decrease.*

*This is the reason why the attention of professionals turns more and more to an even earlier period of life, to kindergarten age, when the intellect of young children opens up, when they observe the relations of the world in a new manner and become conscious of smoking but it does not concern them directly yet, it does not occur to them that they could also try it. At this age smoking behavior can be "dealt with", the risks involved can be told, especially if in conformity with their age the elements of fairy-tales and games are also used for this purpose.*

*The Reader holds in his/her hands an aid of this early preventive trial, and becomes part of a large experiment since this is the first opportunity in the country to try the new methods of anti-smoking education on a larger group of children. It is sure that many changes and refinements will have to be made in the methods and approaches, and it is also sure that life itself with its "bad examples" will still be stronger for many growing up kids (especially for boys for whom the peer group introduces and popularizes smoking to adolescence as an especially "manly" behavior) than the early educational influences, but it is also probable that the effects of the kindergarten will save many children from becoming addicted to this harmful passion.*

*Therefore we recommend this initiative to the Reader's attention and support.*

*dr. Béla Buda*

## *Introduction*

Hungary, as compared to any other country in the world, is unfortunately in the "top of the field" regarding the prevalence of addictions (smoking, alcohol, drugs) and this is especially true for smoking. As far as total tobacco consumption and per capita cigarette consumption is concerned, a very unfavorable tendency can be noticed which, even with immediate action, would change to a favorable direction only after a period of 5 to 10 years. It is absolutely necessary to develop programs on smoking prevention or smoking cessation that would help moving to the right direction. The most important aim is that these programs should find the right tone that can influence the people concerned.

What is needed primarily is not the counter-propaganda that bores people to death, keep frightening them and produce a negative effect that condemns the victims, but the search for methods aimed at achieving a change in behavior that allow free choice and comes from internal conviction.

By looking at the statistics on smoking one can observe that nearly 70% of smokers started smoking at the age of between thirteen and twenty five. The negative effect of peer groups play an important role in taking up smoking. From the beginning of the 1980's programs have been developed all over the world to counter the negative impact of peer groups. The question might be raised with reason: should not we start prevention earlier – in kindergarten age?

A child of kindergarten age is an active recipient of the world. Not a single child can avoid receiving the stimuli surrounding him. He discovers the world, asks, replies, observes, tests and continuously experiences. He gets the mastery of the various behavior patterns by imitation irrespective of the fact whether they represent positive or negative values. Thus he reproduces the models produced by others and by doing so he acquires new behavioral patterns. The reach of imitation is greater than it seems, because there is also the so called delayed imitation when the person is seemingly passive, later however follows the obtained model. Imitation is especially intensified by rewarding reinforcement.

Such models may appear not only in reality but also in image forms, therefore, it is worth to investigate what kind of identification models are offered to children by the heroes of television serials and by advertising. Against these direct and indirect negative effects counterpoles have to be provided. The subject and source of imitation is determined to a great extent by what children can see and learn at home and by the persons they meet most frequently and to whom they are bound emotionally. Since the common motif in every identification is the emotional relationship, therefore it is important that a small child should meet in his direct environment behavior models that reject smoking and/or that these models consider smoking as repulsive.

Based on the above we have the right to say that the formation of opinion and values on smoking is opportune already in kindergarten age.

Health promotion appears in the family and in the kindergarten both in direct and indirect forms. The basic behavioral models are imprinted, of course also the smoking-related ones. One of the most efficient form of prevention is that children get hold of information on the basis of which an attitude that disapproves smoking can develop. An essential condition of developing a healthy lifestyle is that the child should know those harmful effects which later he can take into consideration against the influences that encourage smoking.

The most important consideration in developing the Program was to produce, by taking the children's age-group characteristics into account, a kindergarten training material by means of which smoking-related information can be conveyed and behavior can be formed successfully. The Program at the same time is a "vehicle" between the children, the kindergarten teacher, the district nurse and the parents.

The program has been designed for the age-group characteristics of 5 to 6-year old children. When built into their own kindergarten teaching program, the continuous use of the program facilitates the intensification of knowledge. The program includes the topics of sensation, personality, healthy lifestyle and smoking. These topics are elaborated by the chapters of the tale (The Four Lives of Squirrel Cleansy) and by the individual series of tasks. The series of tasks are the collection of games and activities that can be specifically related to smoking. The utilization of the program requires the mutual co-operation of the kindergarten teacher, the children and the parents.

It is recommended that the kindergarten teacher should have at least one week preparation time prior to the start of the program. One of the tasks of the kindergarten teacher is to survey the knowledge of children before and after the program. This helps the kindergarten teacher to select from the daily offers in the Manual those games and exercises which he/she considers as the best suited for the group.

### **THE COMPLEMENTARY PROGRAM'S**

**OBJECTIVE:**      **To protect the health of kindergarten-age children.**

**TASKS:**

- **To survey personal knowledge on smoking**
- **To hand over topical information on the level corresponding to age-group characteristics**
- **To form a smoking attitude that facilitates the selection of healthy lifestyle.**
- **To make an effort to develop an active behavior against the compulsion of passive smoking.**

The child's knowledge can increase through the elaboration of the program's topics, the clarification of the concepts relating to them, and the exploration of the factors of cause and effect, and this can greatly and positively influence his/her behavior in the future.

For the child, owing to the newly obtained knowledge, not to get into a conflict that seems unworkable and insolvable for him/her, it is very important that the parents are also informed about the information given to the children, however, the aim is not to make parents quit smoking. An essential part of the preparation is the actual involvement of parents into the process; they should also know the details of the process and effectiveness is greatly increased if they also accept it. To this end it would be useful to organize a parent-teacher meeting, or the kindergarten teacher could use the opportunity during the visits to the family to familiarize parents with this subject. It would be useful to survey during these meetings whether the parents smoke or not, and if they do whether they smoke in the presence of the child.

It is important for the kindergarten teacher to treat this personal information confidentially. He/she should make an effort to pay the same attention to every child and should not, not even by chance, give prominence to or discriminate the children of parents who smoke.

## Thoughts regarding the tale

The tale is constructed the same way as the thinking of children and as the children get to know the world: this is why it is so convincing for them. The tale views the world the same way as the children. By telling the children the events of everyday life, their experiences are tied to words and are made more suitable for expressing them. This way they can be recalled easier, are more mobile and can be better incorporated into conversations and games. This way children are also thought to keep memories and to recall and utilize memory images.

While listening to the tale, children enter into a different consciousness level. This system concentrates their experience, embodies their knowledge and mirrors the outside world. Some of the parents think that children should get acquainted only with the sunny side of life. However, they should be told the problematic nature of the dark side too, so that they cannot be defeated by the difficulties, and from the tale they can experience in a diversified manner the methods of approaches and their consequences. In the tale, just as in real life, it is not the punishment or the fear from it will discourage people most effectively from the negative actions, but the conviction that it is not worth. The child identifying himself with the hero in his imagination endures the ordeals together with the hero and triumphs together with him. The tale simplifies every situation. The characters in the tale are not ambivalent, they are not good and bad at the same time. The personage of the hero attracts the listener, "he/she wants to resemble him" so he enters fully into the spirit of the hero's role. If this hero has good qualities, then the child wants to be good too.

Children today unfortunately grow up less and less in the safety of a large family or of a well integrated community. Therefore it is important today that the way we can overcome our loneliness and weakness is if we succeed in developing real interpersonal relationships. During the program the harmony of the child-parent relationship, the child's image of the parent is obviously influenced by the fact that the parent smokes. With this in mind was the tale written in such a way that not a character who is close to the children, like Squirrel Cleansy or the Man With The Huge Hat, smokes, but the thieves.

The necessary elements of a good tale are: the hero recovers from a deep despair, escapes from some great danger, and the most important is consolation which is accompanied by a sudden favorable turn in fortune.

After the fantastic or terrible adventures a turn in fortune occurs, during which everything changes for the better and with the punishment of the evil moral unity of the highest degree will be created ethically.

The backbone of the program is the tale titled "The Four Lives of Squirrel Cleansy". It contains several elements corresponding to those traits of thought and attitudes that are characteristic to the early phase of mental development.

The recurrence of the episodes, the repeated encounter with the verbal phrases is, just like in the games, a source of joy here too. The child finds pleasure in acquiring information and this is an essential condition in this age. He can get know the world in a symbolic form, can enter into the heroes' situation, can take on their characteristics and perform their actions. This way models that can be followed and those that can be rejected can evolve.

The tale presents behavioral models that makes it possible for the child to get in contact at his own knowledge level with the topic of smoking.

The tale "The Four Lives of Squirrel Cleansy" contains the concepts of the four topics that can be elaborated during the program such as sensation, personality, healthy lifestyle, smoking.

### **Recommendation for the elaboration of the tale**

- the daily elaboration of the tale makes it possible to introduce the various topics and to organize them into a unit
- projection of slides: harmonizing the turning points of the action with the slides
- the pictures belonging to the individual chapters of the tale should be located in a well visible place
- after the elaboration of the tale the children can color the photocopies made from the coloring pictures of the Manual
- during the elaboration of the topic on personality, behavioral models of the tale are to be enacted, discussed, clarified and recorded
- enacting and making a puppet show of the tale in order to experience it several times, understand it better and memorize it deeper.

In order to communicate the tale interestingly, it is necessary to know in detail its important turns. Telling the tale in a suggestive, exciting and clear manner is important. In order to utilize fully the interpersonal meaning contained in the tale, it is better to tell it than to read it. This way the kindergarten teacher can have a permanent contact with the children and can adapt herself to the changing situations.



With the proper placement of the children (for example they should not sit close to the projector rays) it will be possible to achieve that the tale will grab the children's attention and everything that would distract their attention will be eliminated.

### **Recommendation for the elaboration of the topics**

The cognitive processes of children are characterized by their incomplete experience and their unconnected imperfect knowledge of the world. 5-6-year old children already have realistic knowledge that is more or less corresponds to reality. They have a remarkable body of knowledge and they can mobilize it too. The child's knowledge is enriched by the world around him, in kindergarten-age orientation is controlled much more by the understanding of meanings saturated with emotions and fed by his/her position, experiences and observations. He/she can obtain the most amount of information by means of the "current experience" using individual sensory experience.

Smoking-related knowledge can also be widened more efficiently when the topics of sensation, personality, health education, and smoking take on a playful form corresponding to the age group characteristic of the child.

The adaptation of the topics allows the clarification of concepts that can be brought into connection with smoking and the exploration of the factors of cause and effect which may greatly influence future behavior. The child acquires knowledge such as unpleasant sensations, health damaging effects, "disturbance" of other people and taking up smoking. This is an inevitable part of prevention.

During the smoking-related games the child can live through situations and roles that he/she has not yet experienced earlier. This warrants that the playing session should be followed by a discussion session which should be treated as very important. The group members and the kindergarten teacher will make remarks not only about their own activity but also about the activity of their mates. Both for controlling and improving the efficiency of the program it would be useful to survey, at the start and at the end of the program, the knowledge, attitude and motivational background of the children on smoking which urges them to follow the behavior patterns of smokers. One of the most useful methods to assess the children's thinking and the emotional experience is the drawing, into which the child can exteriorize his/her anxieties and tensions.

The analysis of the children' free drawings on smoking makes it easier for the kindergarten teacher to prepare and to select, from the series of games, the tasks best suited to the knowledge of the group.

**The Manual has the following structure to help the elaboration of the topics**

NAME OF THE TOPIC

INTRODUCTION TO THE GIVEN TOPIC

CONCEPTS FOR THE GIVEN TOPIC

ACTIVITIES

- **Recommendations for organizing the activities**
- **Connections with smoking**
- **Required tools**

TALE

*Forms needed for coloring are on page 46.*