

Talking Points Why Secondhand Smoke (SHS) is So Bad for Workers

General Tips on Educating with “Elevator Speeches”

- 1) *Focus on dangers of Secondhand Smoke (SHS) **at work**:*
 - Health effects on **you**, your **friends**, and adult **family members** who **work in SHS**.
- 2) *Stay away from these talking points:*
 - Effects on children – Talking about children with policymakers is risky! They might pass a law that only covers restaurants, leaving workers in all other places unprotected (factories, bars, office buildings).
 - SHS in homes or cars – Yes, this is harmful, but research supports focusing on smoke-free workplaces and public places right now. Talking about smoking in homes and cars allows the opposition to develop slippery slope arguments (“what’s next?”) and rights arguments (“they want to tell us what we can do in our own homes.”) Keep your focus on protecting people at work!
 - Smoking – Smoke-free laws don’t take away anyone’s rights to smoke. Rather, smoke-free laws ask smokers to step outside to keep the air inside smoke-free for workers and the public. Smoke-free laws are *about the smoke, not the smoker*!
- 3) **Keep your message short and personalized: Use a 27-9-3 approach**
 - Write an elevator speech (see examples below)—no more than **27 words** that you can say in **9 seconds**, with no more than **3 main points**. Make one of your main points a **personal example** of how you, your friends or family are affected.
 - In case you have more time to present or the audience asks questions, have some facts ready that relate to your elevator speech.

Note: Help each other think of elevator speeches that make the points and are true for *you or adult family or friends*. Then make sure they follow the “**27-9-3**” rule.
- 4) **Practice your message. Get others to critique it so you can perfect your delivery! Have fun!**

Sample Elevator Speeches with Facts

Sample Elevator Speech (General information on SHS)

- When I inhale SHS, poisons get into my body immediately and can make me sick from heart disease and cancer. I don’t want to get sick from working in SHS.

FACTS

- People *used to think* SHS was just a nuisance, something that made your clothes smell. The US Surgeon General (the nation’s doctor) just reported that tobacco smoke is a deadly mix of more than 7,000 chemicals. 70 of them can cause cancer! Here are a few:
 - Formaldehyde (used to embalm bodies)
 - Arsenic (found in pesticides)

- Lead (banned from paint)
- Hydrogen cyanide (used to make chemical weapons)

All are dangerous chemicals, metals, or gases, some of which are routinely used to kill! Do we want the people we care about to inhale these toxins at work?

- According to the Surgeon General's 2006 report, there is **no risk-free level** of secondhand smoke.

Sample Elevator Speech (Cancer)

- **3000 non-smokers** die every year from lung cancer caused by SHS. I am afraid of getting lung cancer because people are allowed to smoke at the grocery where I work.
- As a young woman I am more likely to develop breast cancer from working in SHS. I don't want to face breast cancer just because I waited tables as a teenager.

FACTS

- Each breath of tobacco smoke damages the DNA in our cells. DNA damage can let the cell grow too fast and lead to cancer. It also changes the body's cancer fighting system so that a tumor can just keep growing. Breathing tobacco smoke today can start someone on a path toward cancer.
- Tobacco smoke doesn't just cause lung cancer. It also causes cancer of the stomach, pancreas, kidneys, cervix, bone marrow and blood.

Sample Elevator Speech (Heart attack and Stroke)

- Every time I go to work at that smoky gas station I'm priming my body for heart disease. It is not fair that I may get heart disease just for fixing people's cars.
- My mother already has high blood pressure and high cholesterol. I'm worried that she may have a heart attack or stroke from working in a smoky office.

FACTS

- **Almost immediately**, the poisons in tobacco smoke damage the lining of the blood vessels. As with cancer, the body is less able to repair this damage.
- The blood becomes sticky enough to form clots.
- Blood fat level is raised so that dangerous plaque clogs the arteries that deliver blood to the heart and brain.
- People who work in SHS are 25-30% more likely to have heart disease.
- People who already have heart trouble should never be in SHS as it can trigger a heart attack or stroke...or death.
- **Over 46,000** people a year die from heart disease caused by SHS exposure.

Sample Elevator Speech (Breathing Problems)

- I come home coughing at the end of each shift and I get every cold that comes around. I don't want to choose between my job and health problems.

- I have to use my asthma inhaler at work and sometimes go to the doctor. I'm scared I'll feel bad enough to go to the hospital!

FACTS

- Smoke strikes the whole respiratory system (from mouth & nose to the lungs).
- The poisons in tobacco smoke cause inflammation of the lining of the lungs.
- For people with asthma, smoke irritates and tightens the airways so that it's hard to breathe. SHS can cause a severe asthma attack!

Sample Elevator Speech (Reproductive Problems)

- I'm hoping to have children one day. I don't want to risk SHS interfering with my ability to have healthy children.

FACTS

- Chemicals in smoke interfere with the functioning of the tubes that eggs travel through to reach the womb. This can interfere with fertility or cause problems in pregnancy.
- Pregnant women exposed to smoke may have low birth weight babies or babies born too early.

Sample Elevator Speech (SHS affect us at work)

- I'm lucky to have my job; many people are out of work. But I shouldn't have to risk my health to earn a paycheck!
- I'm not the only one working in SHS. I work alongside young parents struggling to make ends meet. We are not second class citizens.
- A teenager in our family started smoking with his manager on breaks. Now he's hooked! Smoke-free workplaces could help avoid getting youth hooked on tobacco.

FACTS

- Working in a smoky place for 6-8 hours is the equivalent of smoking nearly a pack of cigarettes (16-20 cigarettes).
- Restaurant and bar workers have the greatest risk of developing lung cancer and heart disease compared to other occupations.
- Over half of the food preparation and service workers in the U.S. are not protected by smoke-free laws.
- Getting rid of smoking in indoor spaces is the only way to completely protect nonsmokers from exposure to secondhand smoke.
- Separate smoking sections do not protect us at work. The toxins in SHS permeate the building through open doors and the heating and AC systems.
- No fancy filters really work to get rid of the tiny particles and toxins either; they're in the air whether you see or smell them.

*For more information, contact the Kentucky Center for Smoke-free Policy
University of Kentucky College of Nursing, 859-323-4587 or www.kcsp.uky.edu.*

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