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SAFE Glen Cove Coalition: The Unexpected Harms of Vaping

A number of safety and mental health concerns have arisen due to the growing popularity of e-cigarettes. E-cigarettes heat liquids known as vape juices or e-liquids and transform them into an inhalable vapor containing nicotine and other hazardous compounds. It has been purported by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), that Vaping, which was originally marketed to quit smoking, has become a problematic behavior in itself. Vaping can be harmful to a person's physical and mental health. Self-control, mindfulness, and other interventions can help people resist the lure of vaping.

A 2023 report from "Action on Smoking and Health" found that roughly 12 percent of adults who had never smoked had tried vaping, with more than half saying they started "*just to give it a try.*" In Britain, 21 percent of children aged 11-17 reported having tried vaping, and the popularity of e-cigarettes among young people continues to rise. Despite the frequent use of e-cigarettes among former non-smokers, much of the available health advice still frames the issue as "vaping vs. smoking." E-cigarettes were initially marketed as an effective way to quit smoking. Nevertheless, their recent surge in popularity has given rise to a distinct vape culture that now seems far removed from the initial aim of helping smokers quit.

Given that a significant portion of new vapers have no prior history of smoking, it has been suggested we should stop assessing the harms of vaping in comparison to smoking and instead regard it as an independent behavior. Vaping poses several health harms. A recent report from Harvard University researchers indicated that the aerosol emitted by e-cigarettes that users inhale into their lungs contains substances that are harmful and potentially hazardous, including nicotine, ultrafine particles that can be inhaled deep into the lungs, flavorings such as diacetyl, a chemical linked to serious lung disease, volatile organic compounds, heavy metals such as nickel, tin, and lead, and other cancer-causing chemicals. Additionally, long-term use of e-cigarettes can significantly impair the body's blood vessels, increasing the risk for cardiovascular disease.

A CDC study found that despite non-nicotine vaping products being available, a 99 percent of e-cigarette products sold in the U.S. contained nicotine. The harmful effects of nicotine have been well studied, and it appears to several of those who are studying the trend that vaping is paving the way for a new wave of nicotine addiction. Considering the relatively recent surge in e-cigarette popularity, the long-term health implications of vaping are yet to be fully understood. One's own common sense tells us that repeatedly inhaling a complex concoction of chemical compounds into your lungs is likely to result in both immediate and prolonged health repercussions.

The pathways between inhaling a chemical cloud of harmful substances and the resulting harm to the lungs and cardiovascular system are clear and intuitive. Less obvious are the connections between vaping and mental health. A growing body of research highlights the negative effect that vaping can have on depression and suicidal ideation. These effects can be particularly harmful to young people. In a large-scale review of the available literature, adolescents who used electronic cigarettes reported much higher levels of depression and anxiety than non-vapers.

It is important to note that research into the relationship between vaping and mental health remains limited. There is not enough data available to make direct causal claims about the impact of e-cigarettes on a variety of mental health conditions. However it does raise enough questions for researchers to consider the relationship between vaping and a range of psychological factors, including self-control.

Self-control refers to the deliberate management of urges and desires that can obstruct the pursuit of more enduring objectives. It can be viewed as both a foundational mechanism and an inherent individual characteristic rooted in identifiable biological factors. Self-control is an ever-present aspect of human existence, as competing objectives, enticements, and impulses vie for our attention.

In recent decades “cultural zeitgeist” reflects a growing emphasis on the pursuit of instant gratification with a single click. There are various behavioral examples of this, such as addictions to social media, smartphones, online gaming, and gambling. In recent years, the number of people experiencing behavioral addictions has increased.

Vaping may be reintroducing the highly addictive substance nicotine into an environment dominated by one-click dopamine-focused stimuli, creating conditions that can make it progressively more difficult to cultivate self-control and resist the urge for immediate gratification. While many vapers use e-cigarettes as a means to cope with life’s stressors, in reality, they might possibly be undermining the ability to endure the everyday irritations, discomfort, and boredom that we all face. It raises the question, is a simple strategy for addressing vaping behaviors at an individual level, is the possible need to acknowledge that the pursuit of instant gratification is an ineffective strategy for sustaining a happy and healthy life.

An approach for cultivating this mindset is mindfulness, and many researchers have advocated for the role of meditation in tackling addiction. Meditation is undoubtedly beneficial. Simply noticing the fleeting desires and irritations that can lead someone to reach for their vape and accepting them as a normal part of life can serve as a valuable starting point for curbing the habit.

Of much significance is the need to reflect on the influence exerted by powerful corporate and governmental entities in shaping behaviors. Researchers are increasingly highlighting the potential unfairness of assigning blame and responsibility to individuals for health behaviors while they contend with environmental pressures that can compel them to act in specific ways.

Our environments are saturated with marketing pressures, enticing allurements, and temptations aimed at evoking sensations through mechanisms that are carefully designed to exploit our most basic instincts. Most troubling is the impact of all this marketing by big Tobacco in the purview of our youth.

As individuals, being mindful, prevention education and making health choices and cultivating self-control can play an important role safeguarding our well-being. At the societal level, grassroots efforts for increased regulation over entities seeking to profit from harmful products and promote interventions that are accessible and beneficial to all is most effective. There is a large body of research that tackling nicotine dependence with vaping with the same vigor as combustibles is a growing need.

According to SAFE, the best method of protecting is prevention education and encouraging a goal to “Live SAFE” and substance free and changing the societal norms regarding these products to help curb youth initiation and a life long nicotine addiction.

For information on how to quit smoking or vaping tobacco or nicotine, the NYS Smoker’ provides free and confidential services that include information, tools, quit coaching, and support in both English and Spanish. Services are available by calling 1-866-NY-QUITS (1-866-697-8487), texting (716) 309-4688, or visiting www.nysmokefree.com, for information, to chat online with a Quit Coach, or to sign up for [Learn2QuitNY](#), a six-week, step-by-step text messaging program to build the skills you need to quit any tobacco product. Individuals aged 13 to 24 can text "DropTheVape" to 88709 to receive age-appropriate quit assistance.

Please visit the American Lung Association on their Website at: www.americanlung.org. For help Quitting smoking/vaping or to help a loved one beat a Nicotine Addiction the American Lung Association is committed to helping educate, intervene, and prevent the use of tobacco and nicotine by the next generation. The Lung HelpLine, available via phone or online and is ready to assist teens between the ages of 13 -17 in quitting tobacco, including vaping. Call 800-LUNGUSA or chat online through their website at Lung.org.

SAFE, Inc. is the only alcohol and substance abuse prevention, intervention, and education agency in the City of Glen Cove. The Coalition is concerned about all combustible and electronic products with marijuana and tobacco. The Agency is employing environmental strategies to educate and update the community regarding the negative consequences in collaboration with Carol Meschkow, Manager- Tobacco Action Coalition of Long Island. To learn more about the SAFE Glen Cove Coalition please follow www.facebook.com/safeglencovecoalition or to learn more about electronic products visit the Vaping Facts and Myths Page of SAFE’s website to learn more about how vaping is detrimental to your health www.safeglencove.org.