

Picture: Looking and Responding

Give each child a copy of the **Picture: Niamh** and the **Activity Sheet: Note to Niamh**. Ask them to look closely at the picture. This is a very good opportunity to clarify the difference between facts and assumptions.

First, ask the children to tell you what they see in a strictly factual way first by using the words: *what I see is...* Then, invite the children to interpret the picture by asking:

- *What do you think is happening here?*

Instruct the children to answer using the words: *I think...* In this way, they own their personal interpretation of the picture. However, it's most likely that the children will draw the same conclusions.

Finally, tell the class that the girl's name is Niamh and that this is the first time anyone has ever offered her a cigarette. Ask them if they think this sort of scenario happens sometimes and allow a few children to share their opinions.

Ask the children to close their eyes for a minute and imagine how Niamh feels. Then, ask them to think about and answer these questions:

- *Why do you think the girl is offering the cigarettes to Niamh?*

- *What do you think is going on in Niamh's head?*

- *How do you think she feels?*

- *What do you think is happening in her body?*

- *What decision does she have to make?*

- *Are they easy decisions to make?*

Ask the children to go back to the picture of Niamh and write some text in the speech callouts and the thought bubble. Remind them to think about what has just

been discussed.

The following decision-making process can be explained to the children: Draw or display a set of traffic lights on the blackboard or IWB.

Ask the children to explain the rules about traffic lights and what actions drivers should take when each light is showing. Explain to them that, just like drivers, each of us can use the same steps when we are faced with a decision we have to make - we can stop, take some time to think, and then decide what we are going to do. You could use the following explanation:

- *It takes lots of practice to become a good decision-maker. As we get older we have to make more and more decisions. Some decisions are very easy to make (ask for some examples), while others require us to think. It's great if we can ask someone we trust for advice, but sometimes we have to make a choice on our own - that's when it's really helpful to have some steps to help us. Think of some times when it would be really useful to follow the traffic lights steps for making decisions.*

Now say that you can tell the children more about the bigger girls. They have been smoking for a few years and they are addicted to nicotine now. The children may know what this means. If not it could be explained as follows:

- *There is a drug in cigarettes called nicotine. When a person smokes their body gets used to having that drug. Then after a while their body feels it has to have that nicotine. Even if the person doesn't smoke anymore their body keeps on wanting the nicotine, so it is hard to stop. Making a choice to say no to smoking is much harder when you are addicted to nicotine.*

The children will possibly have comments on this and will want to talk about adults they know who have tried to give up smoking and failed. This helps to make the idea of addiction concrete for them. Tell the children that some adults, who started smoking when they were young, did not know that cigarettes were bad for their health.

List and Discuss

Explain to the children that not long ago people used to think smoking was great because they would see people in movies and on television smoking, a bit like when we see adverts for products nowadays. People who made cigarettes made a lot of money because so many people wanted to buy cigarettes to smoke.

Now we know a lot more about cigarettes and smoking and how bad it is for your health. Can you think of reasons why it would be good not to get addicted to nicotine? (Examples might include: smoking is expensive, it can give you bad breath, yellow or stained teeth, smelly clothes, and more coughs and colds than those who do not smoke.)

List the reasons the children give and ask:

- *Which of these is a short or immediate effect?*
- *Which is a long-term effect?*
- *Are there effects we don't see?*

Children may also know of longer-term effects of smoking through, for example, a family member with smoking-related health problems. Sensitivity needs to be shown if this issue emerges.

Activity Sheet: Note to Niamh

The children are asked to write a letter to Niamh telling her something about smoking and giving her some advice on how to handle the situation she is in now. They could be invited to read their notes aloud to the children and/or the notes could be displayed.

Reflection

Ask the children for feedback on whether they think the traffic lights is useful for making choices and when else they might use this kind of thinking in the future. Over the following weeks you could model the traffic lights approach in class, applying it to different situations.

This is Niamh...



A Note to Niamh



A large rectangular area with a yellow background, a red vertical margin line on the left, and horizontal blue dashed lines for writing. The entire area is framed by a thick teal border.