

Promoting health in adolescents – preventing the use of tobacco



Primary Prevention of Risk Behaviour 2009, Prague
“Primary Prevention: Options and Paths Forward”
Maria Nilsson, PhD, Umeå University, Sweden

The young person ...

... becomes a smoker as part of a social context
– not in a vacuum

Some factors are individual ...
while others belong to the social setting.

The social context forms attitudes, expectations and behaviour.



Talk two and two:

To support children to be smoke free

- Who are the most important actors?
- What are the most important environments?
 - 1) that are covered by legislation already
 - 2) that are not covered by legislation, but you think should be



What influences young peoples lifestyle?

- some examples

- Societal attitudes and norms
 - legislation, media etc
- Parents and siblings habits and attitudes
- Friends, boy- and girl friends habits and attitudes
- The local society and "significant adults"
- Relations and atmosphere in the close environment



Several problems are connected

Tobacco is often part of a wider picture with many problems

Some examples:

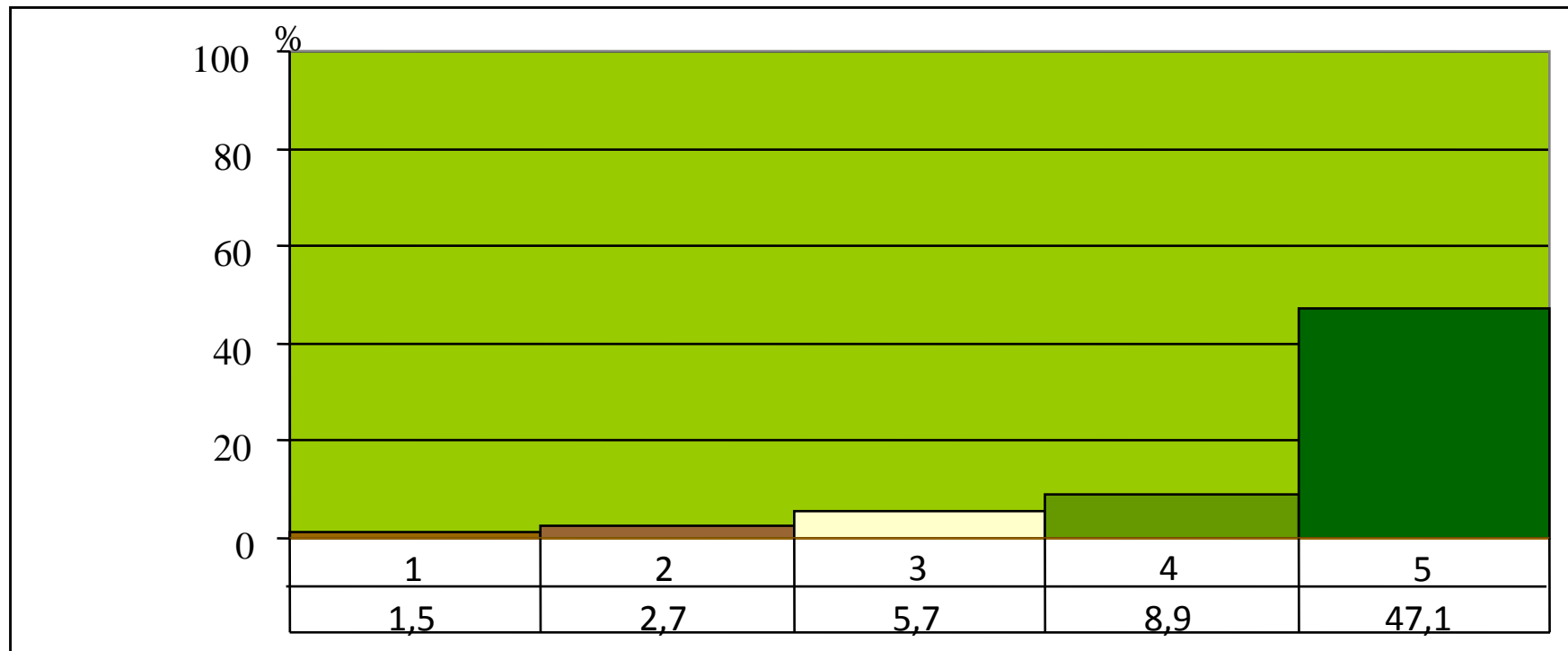
School failures, disharmony,
truancy, binge drinking, drug abuse,
sexual risk taking, norm breaking, criminality...





Parents own behaviours and attitudes to tobacco are vital

The families and childrens smoking habits



1
Nobody
smokes in the
family

The children
knows they are
not allowed to
smoke

2
Somebody
smokes in the
family

The children
knows they are
not allowed to
smoke

3
Nobody
smokes in the
family

The children do
not know if they
are allowed to
smoke

4
Somebody
smokes in the
family

The children do
not know if they
are allowed to
smoke

5
Somebody
smokes in the
family

The children
are allowed to
smoke

“I have grown up with mamma smoking, it has always been that way. It was like normal like I eat or mamma smokes. So that’s just the way it is, I don’t think so much about it ‘cause I’m so used to it. And that makes it okay for me, from her that I smoke, it’s like the way it is.

So if I would say ten things that I relate to mamma then smoking would be one of them, but that’s not all bad, it’s like you have a certain type of perfume. Smoking becomes part of you, something like Göran Persson (Sweden’s former Prime Minister) and politics. It’s about the same thing.

And it isn’t at all that way with papa. And even if I don’t think about it, it becomes like just a part of me too.”

(Girl 15 years)

The process of becoming a smoker

1. PREPARATION

The child's first contact with smoking; parents attitudes, teachers, role models celebrities, TV and other media

2. FIRST TIME

10-12 years of age. Smoking on the sly, more play than being serious

3. EXPERIMENTATION

Say's yes to cigarettes when being offered, smoke when out, at parties

4. REGULAR SMOKING

Buy cigarettes themselves. Like the taste ..." it tastes good"

5. ADDICTION

Smoke daily. Developed routines and habits. Nicotine dependent

“Yes, but when one starts the seventh grade, everything is new, you are the youngest in the school...and you are supposed to be older and things like that.

But you are so little you know, and you need something to hold in your hand. Yes, well it can't be explained. Because the seventh grade was still really terrible.

You're really a scared little scumbag that has to prove yourself to everybody all the time.”

(Girl, 15 years)

Tobacco free youth – how do we get there?

Work on the

- Societal level

e.g: active taxation policy and legislation,
do not expose tobacco products, tobacco free environments

- local- and individual level

e.g: monitor age limits, tobacco free school hours,
parental co operation, preventive programs



Societal normative actions

Family and school, separately and/or together

Family

Parent smoking
SES
Attachment to family
Sibling smoking
Parental attitudes
Acculturation
Family environment
Family structure
Relations

School engagement

Stress

Depression

Other risk behaviour

Attitudes to smoking

Self esteem

Attitudes to health
in general

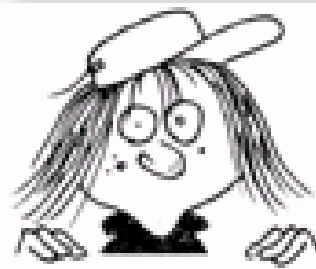
School

Peer smoking

Peer attitudes
and norms

School ethos

School policies and norms



Individual as agent

How can we make a difference, methods?

Work long term and co operate, make it part of everyday life

- Joint agreements (policies)

Work with attitudes

Example of “tools”:

- Dialogue exercises and values clarification
- Counselling techniques

Use evidence based programs

- Support for not starting and for quitting tobacco



What ...in a school policy..?

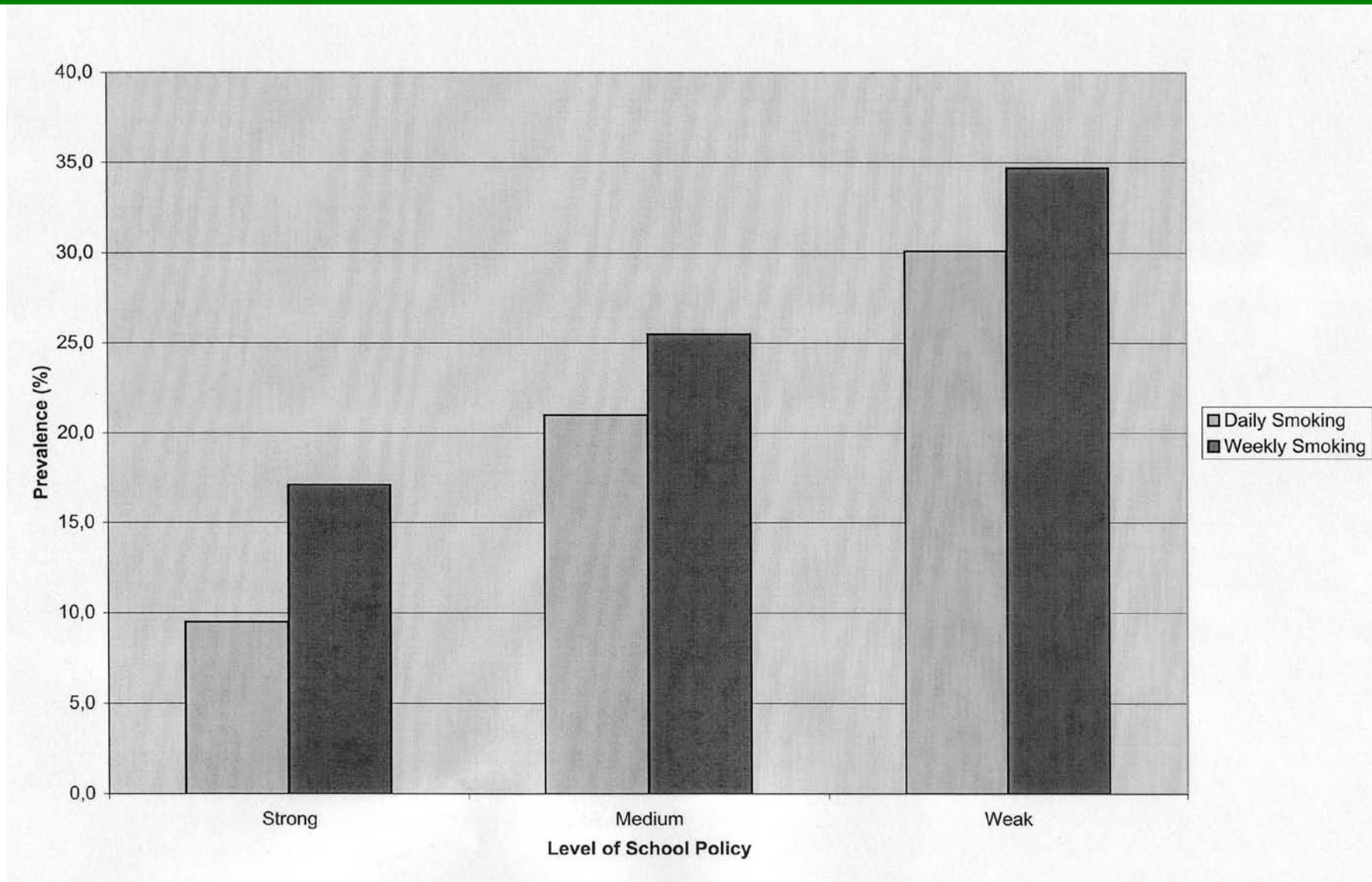
The vision of the school

Some examples:

- Rules against tobacco at school.
- Guidelines for co operation students and parents.
- Guidelines for co operation with the close society.
- Plan for teaching with a main thread through the school years.
- Plan for staff further training/education.
- Program for tobacco cessation for staff.
- Program for tobacco cessation for students
- Guidelines for follow up of the policy



Ex. on effects from school policy



Källa: Moore, Roberts, Tudor-Smith. Tobacco Control 2001;10:117-123

"School smoking policies and smoking prevalence among adolescents: multilevel analysis of cross-sectional data from Wales"

Smoke free school yards?

“There are some teachers that go by and look the other way, since they are tired of saying something. Then there are others that say ‘How are things going?’ And they just sit there beside you when you smoke.

Others don’t give a shit or act like they don’t see. Some how it feels crazy that they don’t even care. Then they can’t care about you anything else either, it feels like that.”

(Boy 15 years)

How can we make a difference, methods?

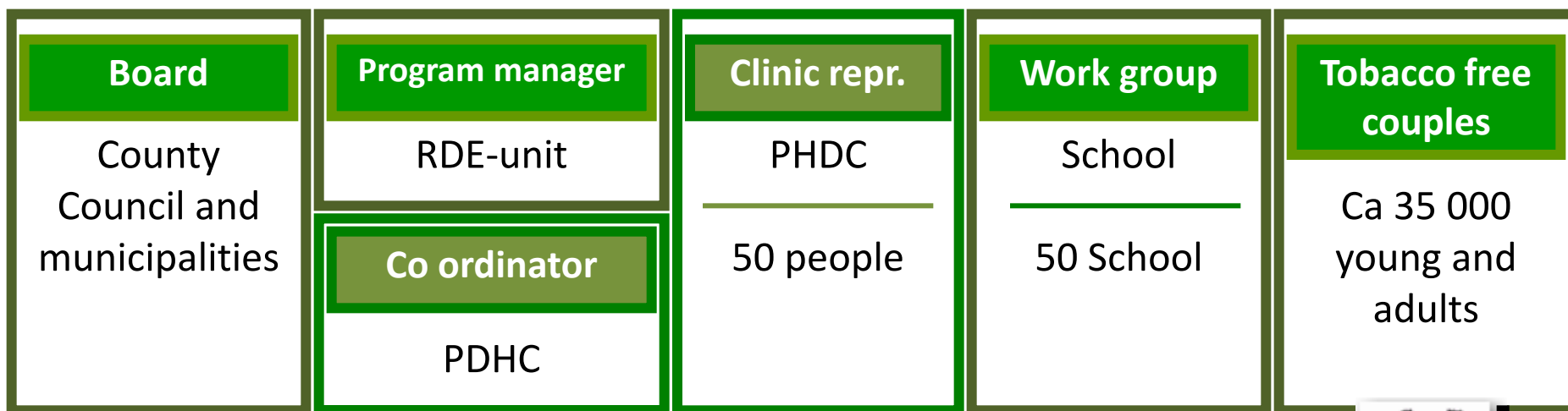
The example Tobacco Free Duo

- What is it?
- What is the relation between Tobacco Free Duo and tobacco use?



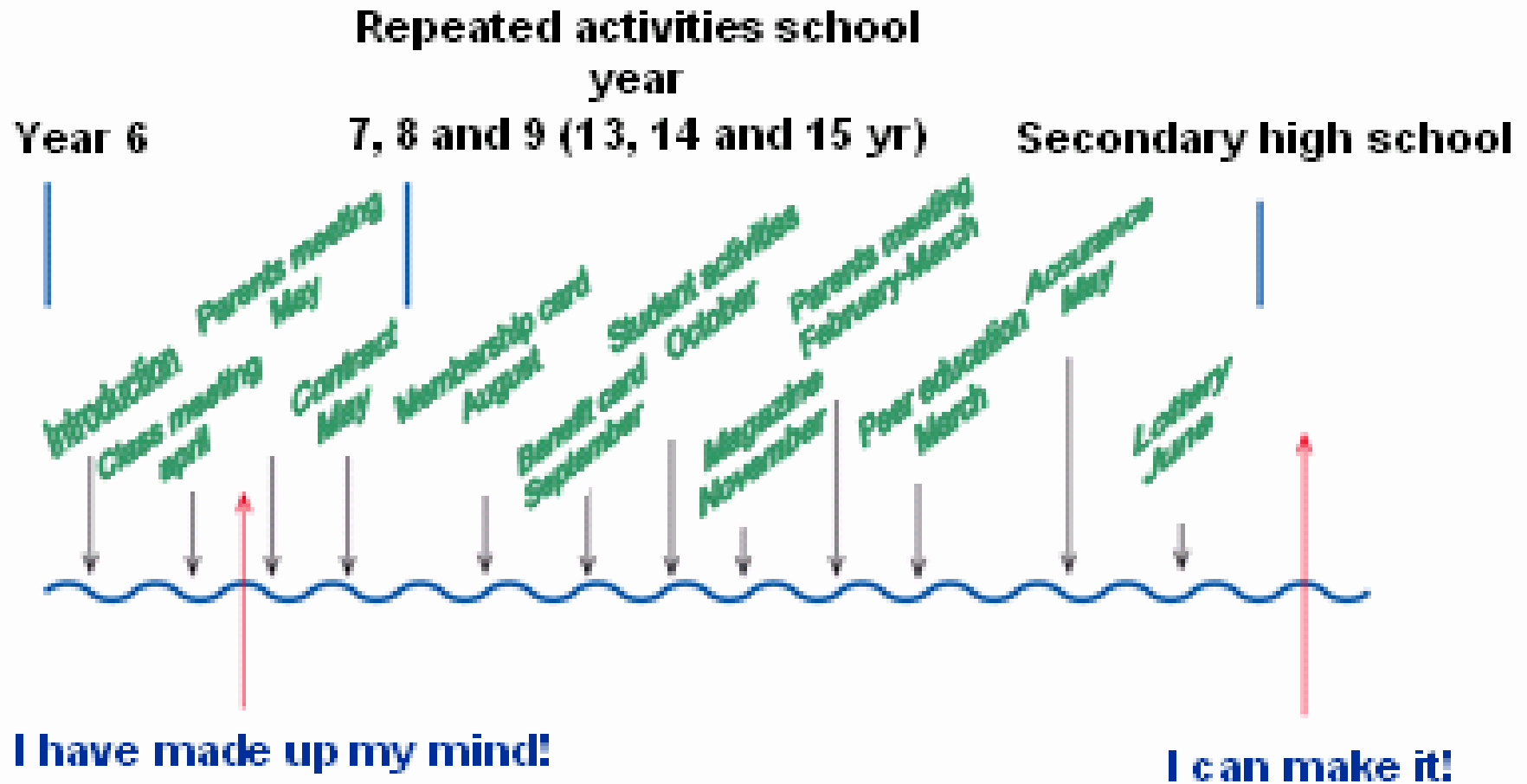
Tobacco Free Duo

Västerbotten County, north of Sweden



Tobacco Free Duo

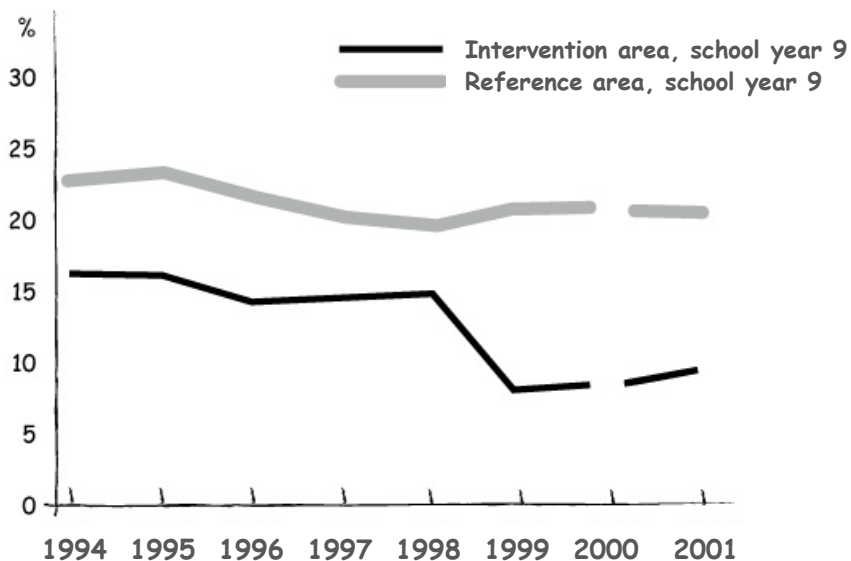
Prevention against tobacco – starting in grade 6 (age 12)



Evaluating Tobacco Free Duo - results

It is possible to decrease young peoples smoking

Both boys and girls smoking decreased during the seven Year long evaluation period, while no change was found In the reference population

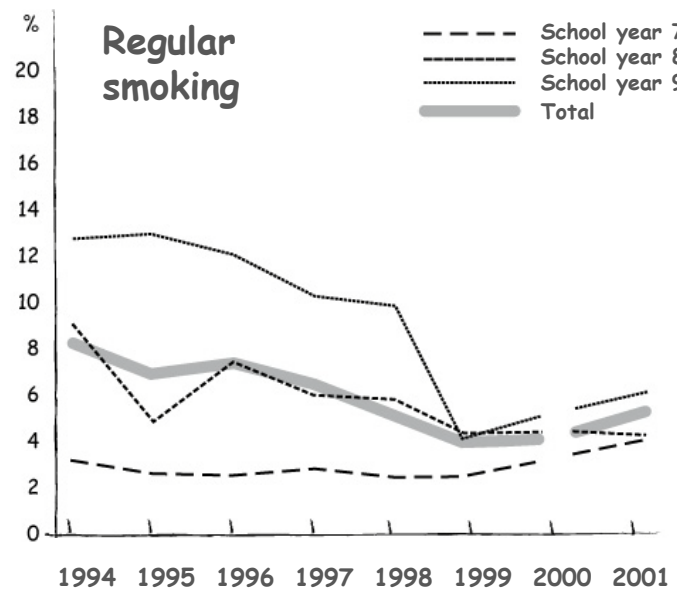
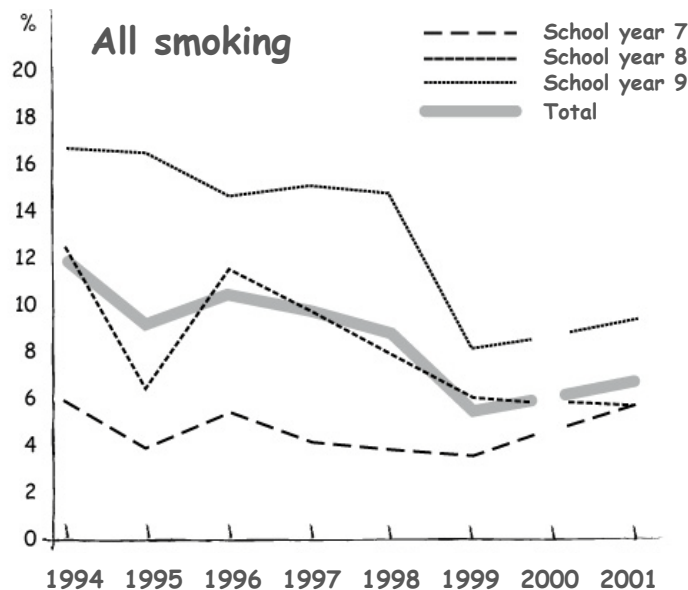


Source: "Promoting health in adolescents
- preventing the use of tobacco",
Maria Nilsson, Umeå University, Sweden, 2009

Results – Tobacco Free Duo

It is possible to decrease young peoples smoking

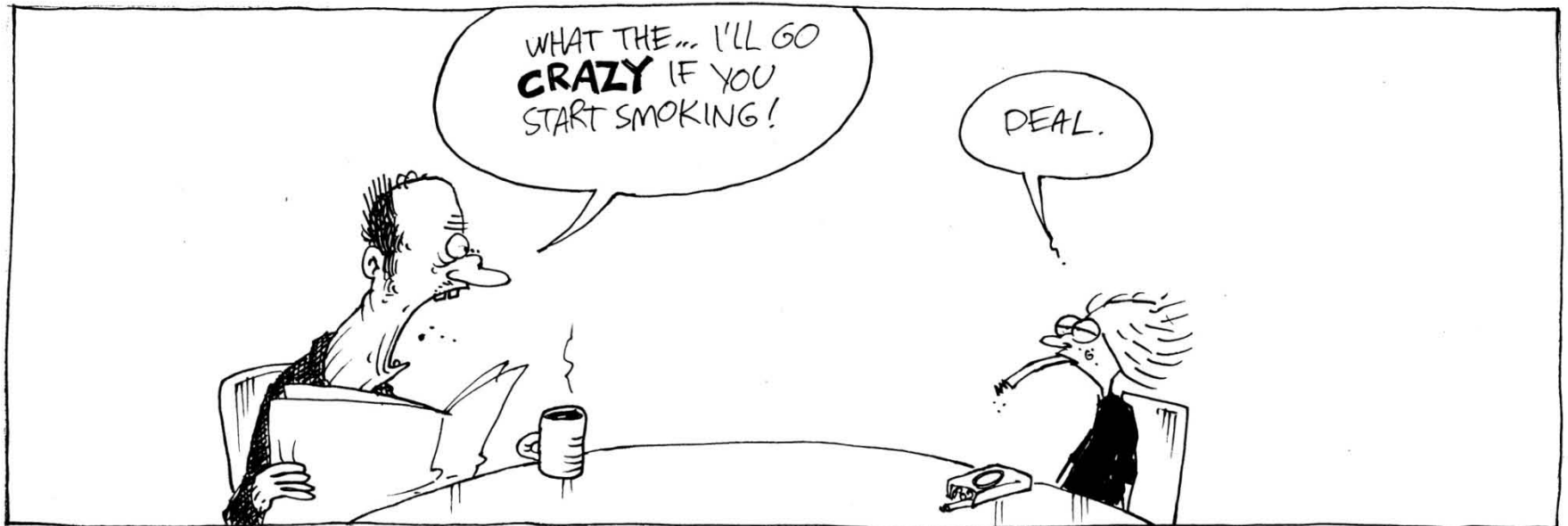
The change was statistically significant in school year 8 and 9,
In both boys and girls.



Results – Tobacco Free Duo

The intervention Tobacco Free Duo has proven to be sustainable within the municipalities through the years.

The program being long term has proven to be important as the bigger effects showed after some years of intervention.



Results – Tobacco Free Duo

A bonus effect was reported as a consequence from the program

One adult out of four supporting a young person in Tobacco Free Duo, was a tobacco user who quit tobacco to be able to participate.

Of those 7.0% were daily smokers and 6.2% daily snus users.



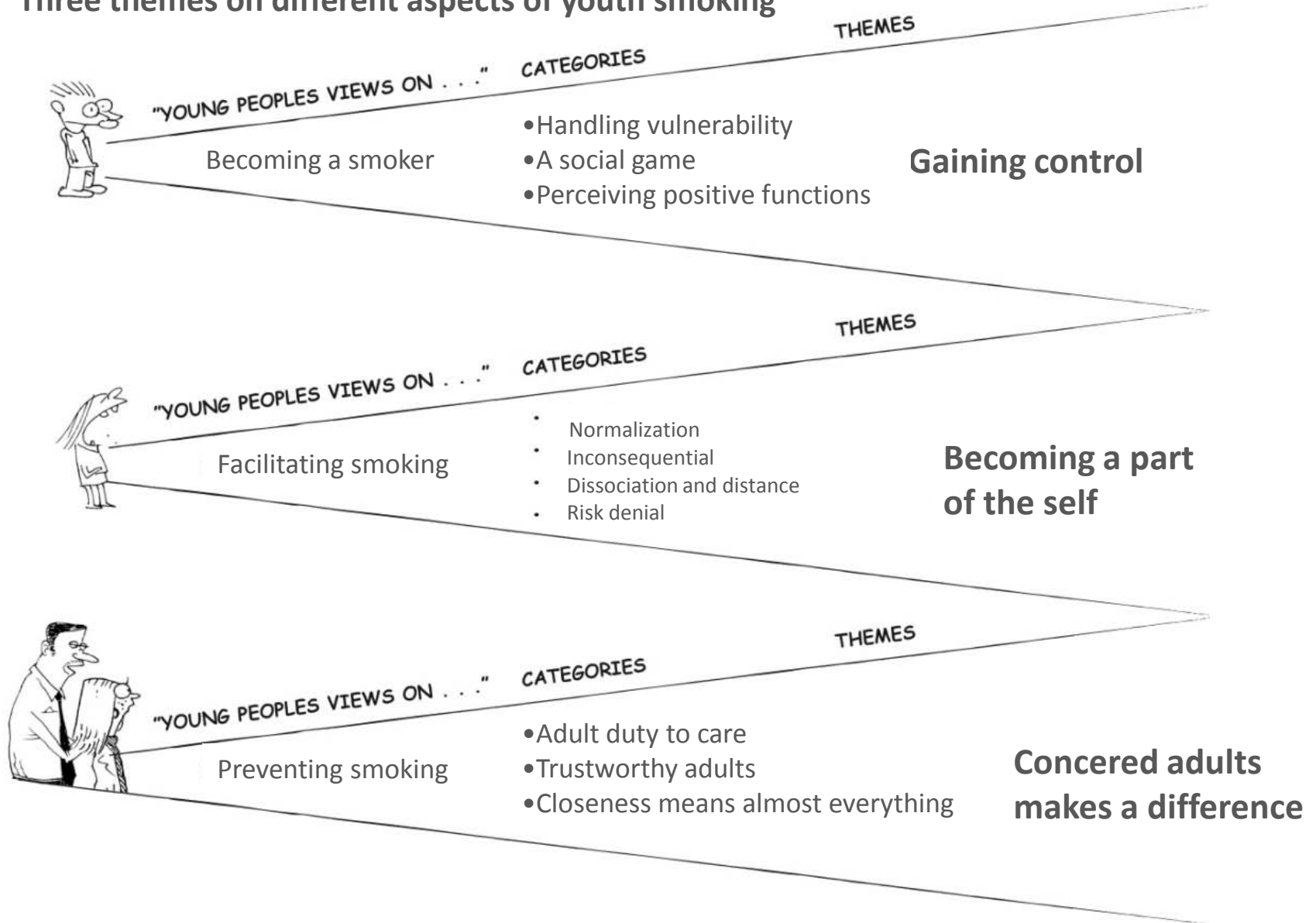
The young smokers views ...

(Results from a focus group study)

- Why did they start?
- What facilitated that they started?
- What could have prevented them starting?
- What were their expectation from adults?



Three themes on different aspects of youth smoking



The young smokers views ...

Why did they start?

1

Time of complex and contradictory emotions; unsure – absolutely sure, curious – independent / afraid – want to belong – adapt.

- Smoking a way to **handle vulnerability**; social and adult status, become more secure, identity – be someone, image – my trademark.
- Describe “early testers” – low self esteem, belong.
- **Social game**; imitate - practice before “going public” culture of trading, social putty, “smokers communion” feelings of belonging, a lot of time together.
- **Positive functions**; friendship, fag a loyal friend, “nico-kick” – relish, handle stress.



The young smokers views ...

What facilitated that they started?

2

- **Normalization**; started early, smoking or snus using parents. Early memories – internalisation/ identification, a natural part of the parent.
Access – parents cig – first cig, often main source, open/hidden permission, increased smoking when allowed, smoking together.
Everybody smokes – all important. Passive, resigned adults. Important adults should act – if not= acceptance/facilitator.
- **Inconsequent** adults; Smoking not allowed on the schoolyard – smoking adults, undermining rules & trust.
Parents smoking on the sly, mother and father different rules. Access at home “deny and supply”.
”INKONSEQUENT ROLE MODELS ARE REALLY DANGEROUS!”

The young smokers views ...

What facilitated that they started?

2

- **Dissociation and distance**; little time and energy – little feeling of togetherness, loose influence and power. Youth of today decide for themselves, don't listen – don't care. Parents should not scold, start conflicts, punish – obstinate smoking more.

Parents give up. Irritated on telephone calls, not at children's smoking.

Push away thoughts of health risks. Low knowledge. Logical "summersaults". Using myths – "live hard – die young".



The young smokers views ...

What could have prevented them starting? 3

Adults duty to care; "adults cant do nothing" – independence / "adults should do all they can" – security. Parents and teachers have a duty, a responsibility. Tiresome, but opposite worse – unimportant, forgotten, invisible.

Advice for parents – act on suspicion and don't be so gullible. All smoked during school hours/ many at the school yard. Aware of the prohibition but put the responsibility on the teachers. "Good teachers care and then you respect them." Many where sympathetic. Engaged adults prevents smoking.

Trustworthy adults; are reliable adults – "whole in a way" Tells about what they expects and give relevant information.

The young smokers views ...

What could have prevented them starting? 3

Trustworthy adults; Lives up to expectations, are consequent role models. Or you lose respect.

"Adults smoking on the sly sucks. It's pathetic!" Adults attitude when intervening is important. "Over angry" or distanced adults trigger obstinacy. "If I feel respected I pay back with respect".

Closeness; close relations is a reason for hiding smoking, smoke less or quit smoking. Grandparents are important. Don't want to cause concern, betray trust, be happy with – proud of.



Adults are important and expected to act

(results from a national study)

The young people are positive to parents intervening against children's smoking.

They prefer parents to intervene by

- trying to persuade their children not to smoke
- parents not smoking themselves
- not allowing their children to smoke at home.

And they have become more positive over time ...



Summary of results

- It is possible to decrease young peoples smoking
- Many tobacco using adults quit tobacco when being engaged in a long term intervention to prevent young peoples tobacco use
- Young people expect adults, especially parents but also other adults to act against their tobacco use
- Young people has become more positive towards parents intervening against their children's smoking
- They prefer if it's being done with a supporting attitude.



*“Then I get a call at home from the school
and hear that my son smokes...
Then I hang up the phone and go and lie down
and pretend that I’m dreaming.
Ugh! It must be damn difficult
having a child that smokes,
when all you want is what is best for them.”*

(Boy 15 years)

Arguments for tobacco prevention



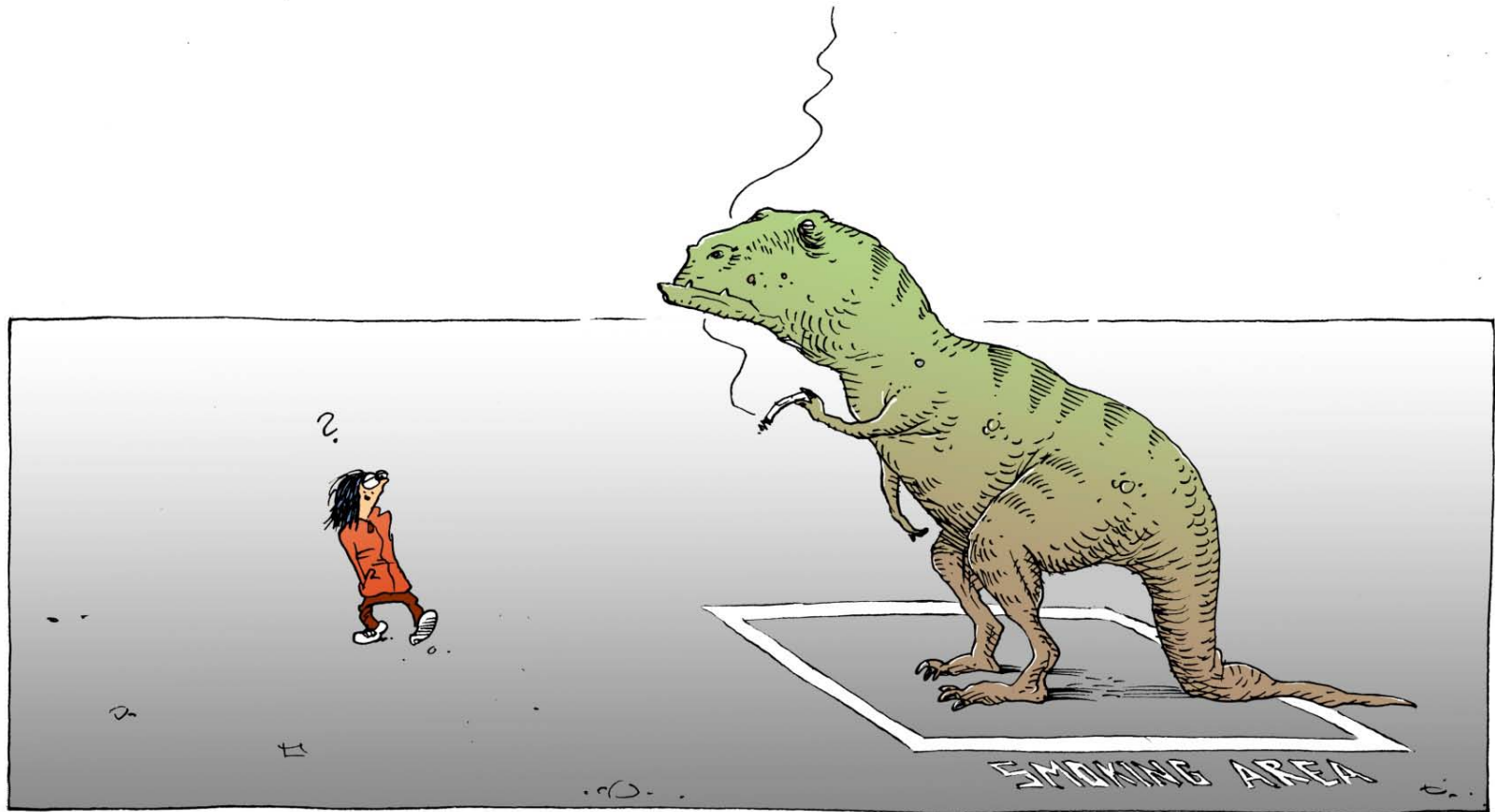
- Every year 100 000 young people become addicted to tobacco
- Every sixth second somebody dies from smoking
- Smoking harms the environment
- Smoking is related to other drug abuse
- One out of two smokers dies from their smoking
- Smokers loose 8 - 10 years of expected life years
- Smokers have 5 -10 more years of perceived ill health

and

- There are evidence based methods
- National & international treaties and laws give the assignment
- It is ethically right.



Thanks for your attention!



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