While growing up my parents always smoked. Each of my parents began smoking in their late teens, but both had their first cigarette by the time they were my age. That's how it's always been. Uncomfortably standing at the edge of the smoking area so I could stay in my parents' sight, yet remain out of the smoke cloud, not that the wind didn't blow it back into my face. The people around me have always smoked, and they've always told me how much they hate that they do. They all tell me the same thing, they started smoking when they were kids because they thought it made them cool, and now it's an unhealthy habit that's been slowly killing them and robbing them of thousands of dollars over the years.

I'm in the eighth grade, soon to enter high school, officially a teenager, and my classmates are buying and selling their first vapes. Vaping and smoking aren't exactly the same thing, but it's generally the same idea. Vaping costs a lot more than smoking, so you'd think that it would deter more people, but people will do anything for an image. The "cool kids," the ones who vape and smoke, think what they're doing to themselves is worth the image, but I've grown up with smokers. I know that after a few years down the line you realize that you've made a mistake, but have an addiction. They can say all they want about me for telling them to stop vaping, but I don't care about that or their image. I would say my parents are pretty cool people, but their smoking habits definitely aren't why. They don't smoke anymore, they've been vaping for 3 years now, which is still not great, but better.

There's a misconception that spread somehow a few years back; that vapes don't contain any nicotine, which most of them do. That's what really irked me. Up to that point I had thought that my peers just didn't care, but this was when I realized that many were simply unaware. They had been told by those selling them products that it was safe. They had been lied to. And despite

my efforts, several friends who I bickered with over the contents of the vapes they considered buying, now vape regularly.

Take it from a teenager, that what we need aren't ads on how vapes and cigarettes cause cancer, or can lead to worse habits. We don't need ex-smokers to tell us how smoking ruined their lives. What teenagers need is confidence. Nearly every stupid thing teenagers do comes from a place of insecurity. Instead of showing us ads with odd puppets, demonstrating the downsides of vaping, show us how we're worth more than we know. Show teenagers that we don't have to conform to an image, make us feel like we belong. We need to attack the root of the problem. The people who vape and smoke don't care about their health; I need them to stop, because I do care; and I know what will happen to them if they don't, the regret, the money, the addiction, and so many years of wondering why they didn't know what they were worth.