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My family and friends vape regularly without worrying or questioning the effects that vaping has on them and do not understand that they can become addicted. It seemed like everyone around me was vaping - from my loved ones, strangers, to influential people - and I slowly began to accept the normalcy of vape products in my life. However, the more I learned, the more it started to eat away at me because I knew it wasn't okay. I understood the consequences.

In a recent study, 66% of youth think that vape products only contain flavoring while 13.7% admit to not knowing what is in vape products. Most youth are unaware of the health consequences that follow vaping and the ingredients that are included. Youth are vaping at home, school, and everywhere else they can. Vaping has become an essential part of youth culture and as a result, some have become addicted to vaping.

There is a need for more education around the health consequences caused by vaping and what ingredients are used in vape products. The lack of education is evident by the limited knowledge from parents, teachers, and youth ourselves.

Parents and teachers deal with a similar problem. So many products are released daily that it's difficult to keep updated on all the different designs. With companies creating different looks and flavors that are appealing to youth, it makes identifying vape products substantially harder for parents and teachers, both at home and in the classroom. Not to mention most vape products look nothing like a traditional cigarette because of their sleek, modern aesthetic.

Once, a classmate of mine used their JUUL in class. As our teacher walked around, helping students with their classwork, my peer pulled out their JUUL with no hesitation. As he used his JUUL in class, he wasn't concerned by the idea of getting caught. Other classmates saw nothing wrong with the situation; some were surprisingly entertained by our peer doing something that is prohibited on school grounds and against the law for underage youth. Our teacher never thought anything of it because the JUUL blended into our school supplies, with a profile that looks similar to a flash drive.

As for youth, they face a different obstacle compared to parents and teachers. Youth aren't provided with enough education programs or opportunities to learn about the harmfulness of vape products, which results in false assumptions about its safety based on marketing from vape companies.

Some of my peers vape for entertainment and pleasure or because they feel the pressure to fit in, but if we were informed we would have the power to say no. Recently, Chance Ammirata, an 18-year-old, faced a horrifying experience when his lung collapsed as a result of vaping for over a year. Before his lung collapsed, Ammirata was going through one JUUL pod every couple days. One JUUL pod is equivalent to about 20 cigarettes. Like many of his peers, Ammirata did not receive education on the negative health impacts of vaping because of the false assumption that vaping is safer than traditional cigarettes.

Although vaping is marketed towards youth as something not to be feared, it should be feared. There needs to be a conversation regarding the health consequences that follow vaping and the ingredients that are included. Not just any conversation. Youth, like myself, need to be included in the conversations regarding our health. As individuals begin to discuss vape products and its negative effects, education is necessary.