

How do rural chemicals work and affect us?

ATTITUDES TOWARD CHEMICAL USE

Objective: Use chemicals safely to reduce the negative impact on people.

Concept: The impact of chemicals on the environment can be a controversial topic. Many experts with very different viewpoints have valid evidence about their position. This would be a great time for speakers to give factual information about environmental factors. Speakers might include: a chemical sales representative, a local organic farmer, a chemistry instructor at a local school or university, and a farmer using chemicals. Many divergent attitudes towards chemical use exist due to individual backgrounds and knowledge of the issues. Understanding these attitudes will help students develop their own ideas and values.

Targeted Age: Adolescence

Materials: Character descriptions copied from below.

Adolescents often enjoy acting out or role playing scenes that depict characters. If given the opportunity they can expand on situation role-playing and make the activity fun for all to participate and watch. Listed below are people with different attitudes about chemical use. Their titles are intended to be comical as well as descriptive.

Copy the following character descriptions and distribute to each selected participant.

- ▶ **Mrs. R. U. Helpful** – Consumer advocate supporting a ban on all chemical use in foods sold at the grocery store
- ▶ **Mr. Industrial Magnate** – Large industry president supporting the reduction of production costs
- ▶ **Ms. Penny Pincher** – Consumer advocate seeking changes in food production to make grocery store prices cheaper
- ▶ **Mrs. Jane Q Public** – Public official concerned about the healthy future of our next generation
- ▶ **Dr. Randy Rainbow** – Ecologist with a local group working to eliminate all chemical use
- ▶ **Miss Daisy Sprayfreak** – Model interested in supporting chemical research that could make her look younger
- ▶ **Mr. Joe Farmer** – Farmer who has taken a pesticide applicator class and practices safe use of pesticides on his farm

After the students are assigned their characters, ask them to write an expanded description of the person they are to become. These may be comical as long as they stay in character and depict issues related to chemical use or misuse. Answering the following questions may help them think about their character.

- ▶ Why might this person have this specific attitude toward chemical use?
- ▶ How will this attitude to chemical use influence future generations?
- ▶ What might be the economical impact of this attitude if all people felt this way?
- ▶ What might be the impact on wildlife in the area if all people felt this way?
- ▶ What might be the personal impact of this implied chemical use?

Introduce each panel member to the group. Ask each participant to give their viewpoints on the use of chemicals in two minutes or less.

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ATTITUDES TOWARD CHEMICAL USE (CONTINUED)

Ask the panel a few leading questions such as:

- ▶ If we use chemicals in the same manner that we are currently, where will our civilization be in 10 years? 100 years?
- ▶ What is the biggest economic impact of farm chemical use?
- ▶ What role does industry play in the wise use of farm chemicals?
- ▶ How can the average consumer influence the use of farm chemicals?
- ▶ What role does the individual farmer play in the wise use of farm chemicals?

Open the discussion to the audience. As a facilitator, encourage dialogue from all panel members asking them to stay in character.

