

More Hints For Quitting Smoking

Dealing With Smoking Urges and Cravings

No matter what approach you select to quitting smoking, you can expect there will be times when you will have a desire to smoke. The key in dealing with these urges is to delay smoking. Some find it helpful to review the reasons they have for quitting whenever they feel the urge to smoke. Doing so helps to put the urge into a broader perspective.

Another useful approach is to think about how long you have been cigarette free, how far you have come, and why you don't want to start over. Remind yourself that resuming smoking will not solve the problem, but only create new ones. Try to step out of the situation and make yourself an observer of the self who has the urge to smoke. Acknowledge that you will have urges, but see yourself as a third party who can control the situation with the confidence that the urge will subside. Imagine yourself "riding the wave" that is your urge, rather than being wiped out by it.

After the urge subsides, think about how it arose and what you can do to avoid whatever triggered it. But at the same time, congratulate yourself on getting through the challenge. Think of how your health is improving because you quit and reconfirm that smoking is not an option.

You may derive great benefit from learning deep breathing techniques, during which you focus on breathing and relaxing. This not only provides a distraction from the urge, but it delays smoking and reduces the strength of the urge.

Simple exercises, such as walking, stretching, or squeezing a ball can distract and delay you, as well as relax you. Exercise can also result in the release hormones such as endorphins that will actually make you feel better. Simply doing anything that involves an action other than smoking can be very helpful.

Talking and/or going out with a friend, especially someone who is aware of your plan to quit can be an invaluable form of support. But anyone who engages you can help to distract you from the urge to light up. It often helps just to have a candid discussion of your feelings with others.

Make time for reading a cherished book, or seeing a movie or show you have been wanting to see. Volunteer to help some worthy group. Not only will it distract you from smoking, but it can get you involved in something that is rewarding to you and to your community.

Another approach that smokers have found helpful is to plan ahead by visualizing situations in which an urge to smoke will occur. Then they create a plan for what they will do to overcome the urge. Then when the urge does arise, they have a pre-existing plan to deal with it.

Avoid being around other smokers, especially when they are smoking. Put a "no-smoking" sign outside your front door. If you're in a group and someone starts to smoke, excuse yourself and don't return until the smokers are finished. Don't buy, carry or hold cigarettes, matches, lighters for others. Remove ashtrays, lighters and cigarettes from your environment and clean the air to make sure that no reminders of the tobacco habit remain.

Face a morning without smoking by planning a different wakeup routine. Take your attention off smoking by doing something else right away. Be sure no cigarettes are available. Develop an entire array of morning habits that do not involve smoking.

Over time, the urge to smoke will decrease, but in the interim, it is important to delay the fulfillment of any urge to smoke. If you can do that for even a few minutes, often the urge will go away, or at least become more manageable.

The Urge to Eat Can Increase Once You Stop Smoking and That Can Be Good

Many people experience an increased interest in eating once they have stopped smoking. One reason is that when you stop smoking your senses of taste and smell improve, making eating (at least eating good tasting things) more pleasurable. The best way to deal with such urges is to have available foods that are satisfying to you but do not contain many calories. For many people carrots or celery sticks satisfy the urge to eat while at the same time giving them something to do with their mouths.

Not everyone will be satisfied by vegetables however. For some people, fruit will be the food of choice. For others, it will be some kind of low calorie snack (fortunately, the grocery stores are filled with a wide variety of under 100 calorie snacks). Whatever you eat, do it slowly, because that will result in your eating less of whatever you have selected. If you do experience a tendency to substitute food for smoking, be sure to keep those healthy snacks within reach.

Dealing With Quitting Related Depression

Depression can have many causes, and if it is severe it should be treated by a professional. But periods of mild to moderate depression associated with quitting smoking are not unusual. During such periods, it is often useful to remind yourself of the long-term positive effects of a smoke free life. Often a review of those benefits will be enough to help the symptoms until they pass. Alternatively, using some of the distractive techniques already mentioned in connection with managing urges will often work.

Study after study has shown that physical activities offer a powerful way to deal with depression and all forms of addiction. Exercise offers the added bonus of an almost incalculable number of health benefits. And exercise will help you to keep your weight under control.

The two keys to using exercise effectively are to progress slowly in terms of the amount of exercise you do, and to select activities that you find enjoyable. Almost everyone can find some form of activity that they enjoy. Exercising with others can be very helpful in that it adds the joys and benefits of socializing (another proven depression fighter) to the benefits of exercise itself. Those who exercise with others often find it easier to maintain their exercise programs.

Feeling Tired or Unfocused

While in the long run your energy will increase once you have quit smoking, it is not unusual to feel tired when you first stop. Nicotine is a powerful stimulant and, if you smoke regularly, you come to expect and look forward to the stimulation that nicotine supplies. But the longer you stop using nicotine, the more your body will return to generating its own energy through the

natural hormones and neurological processes that stimulated you before you ever began smoking.

Some quitters report difficulty with concentrating when they first quit smoking. That is partly because they have developed a reliance on nicotine's effects, but also because they have learned to associate smoking with activities in which you concentrate, since they combined those two activities for so long. The reality is that smoking actually worsens your concentration by distracting you, as the act of smoking is a form of multi-tasking, which many studies have shown reduces your ability to focus on any one thing. Like feeling tired, the difficulty in focusing will diminish over time and be replaced by an ability to focus at a higher level than before you started smoking.

Negative Feelings and Other Symptoms Associated With Withdrawal May Increase Temporarily

You may feel a sense of increased irritability and/or heightened anxiety when you quit smoking. But such feelings will diminish over time. Change, even for the better, always places a certain amount of stress on the mind and body.

Constipation is a symptom that can occur during withdrawal and it is not unusual to experience mild intermittent dizziness (this is believed to occur because your supply of oxygen is increasing as a result of your stopping the smoking habit).

Insomnia is not unusual for a period of a few days, as is dreaming about smoking. Reading or taking a hot bath before going to bed can help to diminish the insomnia. Drinking decaffeinated tea or warm milk help many people relax for sleep. A cool room and regular sleeping hours are also helpful. If you can't sleep, it is often better to get up and do something that is not very mentally or physically stimulating until you feel tired again.

Slips and Relapses

Slips and relapses are common during the stop smoking process. The best method for dealing with them is to prevent them. But the most important things to recognize are that: a) such slips and relapses should not be used as an excuse to start smoking again, and, b) don't think you can have "just one" tobacco hit and you'll feel better.

When a lapse does occur, rather than feeling guilty, resolve to get back on track. Don't forget why you stopped smoking. Get control of the situation. Stopping before you finish the cigarette is an example of control. Resolve not to take even one more puff of this or another cigarette.

Be proud of quitting and recognize that one slip does not make you a failure or a smoker again. Learn from experience what caused the slip and think about how you'll catch it before it happens the next time.

Now Reward Yourself

Don't forget to reward yourself for quitting. You should reward yourself for success in your program. It's not easy to quit and you deserve a reward for your hard work and commitment. Here are some suggestions for rewards.

Create a money jar in which you regularly deposit the funds you would have otherwise used for tobacco. Have a plan for how you will treat yourself with the money you save – pay off a credit card, go out to dinner and a movie, or go on a trip. Do what is important to you, but something you will enjoy and/or take pride in. If you are eligible, qualify for an award from someone else (e.g., an employer or family member who will reward you for quitting your tobacco habit).

With all these tools at your disposal, and all the knowledge you now have about how to quit smoking successfully, now is the time to quit. Good luck!