

A Relaxing Cigarette? Don't Fool Yourself!

Tobacco contains a deadly mix of more than 60 known cancer-causing substances and thousands of toxic chemicals. Nicotine is a poison contained in tobacco products which causes physical and mood-altering effects in your brain that are temporarily pleasing. Because of this temporarily pleasurable sensation, your desire to use tobacco increases, leading to dependence and addiction. When you stop smoking, your body will experience nicotine withdrawal, which can leave you feeling jittery and anxious, making it difficult to quit. Lighting up a cigarette does not relieve stress – in fact, smoking only works to increase your sense of anxiety.

Recognize the Signs & Reduce Stress Before You Quit

We have many stressors in our lives. By identifying the sources of your outside stress before you attempt to quit smoking, you will stand a greater chance of success. Think about things that have been nagging you, such as repairs or clutter around the home or yard. Put your house in order and reduce outside sources of stress, and then begin to focus on putting yourself in order.

Dealing with stress as soon as you begin to feel it can be an effective strategy. By nipping stress in the bud before it gets out of hand, you'll be less likely to lose focus of your goal.

Signs of stress may include

anxiety, restlessness, sleeplessness, depression, headache, agitation, anger, and a feeling of being overwhelmed or unable to cope.

As soon as you begin to feel stressed, take steps to avoid or reduce those stressors.

RESOURCES

American Cancer Society:

www.cancer.org

American Lung Association:

www.lung.org

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

www.cdc.gov/tobacco

National Cancer Institute:

www.smokefree.gov

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8 Great Strategies to Quit Smoking & Stress Less

Stress releases a chemical in your brain called *epinephrine*, which makes it difficult to think clearly and ultimately stay focused on your goal of living tobacco-free. There are a wide range of strategies available that may help you stick with your decision to quit even when you start to feel overwhelmed by stress.

1. Embrace Optimism

Cut yourself some slack by not being too hard on yourself while you're trying to quit. Kicking the habit is difficult and most people have to try several times before finally giving up tobacco for good. Understand that quitting is tough and that you will experience stress. You may feel discouraged, have a short temper, or feel depressed. Try to keep a positive attitude and not be too critical of yourself or others. If you can convince yourself that you can do it, you will have a much greater chance of achieving your goal.



Don't Go It Alone: Get the Support You Need!

Every state in the U.S. has at least one telephone quit line. For a list of options in your area, call **800-QUIT-NOW (800-784-8669)**.

Individual or group counseling can help you to learn new techniques and prepare to quit smoking. Nicotine Anonymous groups are available in many locations. Talk to your doctor or health care provider for a list of options in your area.

2. Have Fun

Ease your stress by distracting yourself with fun activities. Go to a movie, watch a favorite television show, read a good book, or go for a run or bike ride. Try taking a long bath or visiting a health spa. Enjoy doing the things that you love and relieve your stress at the same time.



3. Get Active

Nicotine affects your mind by unnaturally improving your mood and giving you a false sense of well-being. When you quit, you may begin to feel depressed as your body's supply of nicotine is cut off. By becoming more active and getting 30 minutes of exercise five times per week, you can improve your overall mood. By exercising, you will boost your body's level of endorphins, which can help you to feel better.

4. Practice Relaxation

Meditation and deep-breathing techniques may help to calm you while you experience the stress of nicotine withdrawal. Find a method that works best for you and turn to that method when the stress of nicotine withdrawal begins to creep up.

5. Rest Easy

While you work to break your nicotine dependence, your body will undergo a stressful change from what it is accustomed to. You may feel more fatigued, tired, or sleepy. While going through nicotine withdrawal, it is perfectly normal to nap or go to bed earlier than you would normally. Sleep allows your body to detox while you work through your withdrawal symptoms.

6. Write It Down

When something is bothering you, sometimes it can be helpful to put it in writing. Find a quiet time and spend a few minutes writing about what's nagging you. This can help to ease the burden of stress associated with nicotine withdrawal. Don't worry about rereading or revising it – the idea is to sort it out on paper and put the source of stress in perspective, and hopefully find relief.

7. Turn to Family & Friends

Politely ask friends and family to not smoke around you. Ask them to smoke outside and not in your home or vehicle. Ask a close friend or trusted family member to be your "accountability partner." Let them know when you feel like you are most tempted to smoke and ask them for support. Another person can help you through the quitting process by identifying ways that you are sabotaging your own progress, and provide the encouragement you need to ignore your cravings and keep going.

8. Be Patient

There may be times when the challenge of quitting can feel impossible or overwhelming. Everyone experiences periods of doubt. It is important to keep reminding yourself that the effects of nicotine withdrawal will grow weaker with each day that you don't smoke. Every time that you resist the temptation to light up is a victory bringing you closer to your goal of a smoke-free life.



Kick the Habit for Good!

Quitting smoking can be stressful, but with some focus and determination, you can stomp out stress and take control of your life and your health. Don't hesitate to ask for help from family, friends, and doctors. Make the right decision to quit now and start living a healthier, happier life free of nicotine addiction.