

Tobacco Cessation

Quick Guide to Coping with Tobacco Cessation

Learning to deal with the thoughts, desires, and triggers for a cigarette without having one? That's what coping is all about! Coping is a key element in any successful quit attempt. In addition to using a smoking cessation medication, active coping is the best assurance of long-term success!

Listed are coping techniques for over twenty typical trigger situations you may face. The situations are placed in alphabetical order so that you can quickly access these suggestions. Determine where you are having difficulty, review the coping suggestions, and decide what approach is best for you. In most cases, this won't take more than three or four minutes! Remember...although there are many excellent suggestions here, these are not all the coping techniques that exist. Explore different coping strategies. Be creative!

General Suggestions

Preventing Urges

- Plan ahead. Know what you will do in any given situation before you encounter it. Practice that plan often.
- Avoid a tempting situation until you feel you can deal with it.
- Change the routines you associate with smoking as much as possible.
- Rethink your belief that smoking somehow makes life better or helps you deal with all your problems.
- Remind yourself often that you are happy being a nonsmoker and that life is much better without cigarettes.

Dealing with Urges

- Practice deep breathing. Every time an urge hits, take a slow deep breath, hold it in for three to five seconds and then slowly exhale.
- Talk about the urge. Call your support person or let people around you know you need to talk for a few minutes.
- Escape the situation. Leave until you feel comfortable coming back.
- Just accept the fact that you are thinking about cigarettes. It's natural that you will be thinking about smoking especially during the first few weeks of the quit. Don't make a big deal out of the thoughts. Say to yourself, "So what" and let the thought go.

Specific Situations

After Meals

- Get up from the table as soon as you are done eating.
- Brush your teeth after every meal.
- Take a short walk.

Alcohol and Socializing

- Explore alternative ways to socialize with friends for a few weeks.
- Decide not to go to bars the first few weeks after you quit.
- If you do decide to drink:
- Limit yourself to one or two drinks
- Change from what you usually drink
- Remind yourself that you can have fun without drinking. Millions of people do it all the time.

Boredom

- Always carry a book/newspaper/crossword puzzle with you.
- Plan ahead so that you will not have long periods of inactivity.
- Learn to enjoy doing nothing from time to time. You do not always have to be doing something important.

Breaks

- Take your break in a different place and with nonsmokers.
- Do a crossword or read a novel. Just don't spend time doing nothing.
- Realize that you don't need the excuse of having a cigarette to take a break.

Car

- Choose a slightly different route for routine trips.
- Remove the ashtray from the car.
- Listen to a talk radio station or books on tape to keep your mind occupied.

Coffee

- Drink a flavored coffee, a different brand from your usual, or tea.
- Visualize yourself sitting in calm, relaxing place (the beach or a forest for example) as you drink your coffee.
- If you always have your morning coffee at home, have it at a café or work.

Evenings

- Find projects to do while at home. Clean out the basement, start a hobby, etc.
- Keep yourself busy while watching TV. Do puzzles, make out the grocery list.

- Start an exercise program. If you can't do anything else, take a brisk walk for half an hour each night.

Hand/Mouth

- Use cinnamon sticks (the kind used for cider).
- Suck on sugar-free candy or chew sugar free gum.
- Use straws/swizzle sticks/toothpicks.
- Do not use fake cigarettes. They do nothing but maintain the visual/oral connection to real cigarettes.

Living with Another Smoker

- Negotiate with the other smoker about where and when he or she will smoke. Do not make demands.
- Have the other smoker keep his or her cigarettes where the quitter will not be able to find them.
- Give the smoker one ashtray and ask him or her to keep this ashtray clean and out of sight when not in use.
- Determine a reasonable length of time for these changes (three to four weeks).
- Surprise the smoker with a special dinner or gift after the first month of quitting as a thank you for his or her cooperation.

Morning Routine

- Change the order of your routine.
- Look in the mirror first thing every morning and say, "I'm proud to be a nonsmoker."
- Eat something for breakfast if that is not a normal part of your routine.

Negative Moods

- Rethink your belief that cigarettes calm or relax.
- Ask yourself how a cigarette will make a situation any better.
- Do deep breathing throughout the day.
- As you do the deep breathing, think calming thoughts..."I can get through this" or simply, "I am calm."
- Realize that smoking does not hurt anyone but the smokers. It is not a good way to get back at anyone or to punish someone you are angry with.

Other Smokers

- Avoid places where you know people are smoking for the first few weeks of a quit.
- Leave the scene from time to time if you have to be in a smoking environment.
- Politely explain to the other smoker that you are trying to quit and ask him or her not to smoke in front of you.
- Realize that smokers are not happier or having more fun just because they continue to smoke.

Parties/Socializing

- Develop and practice a plan to deal with the situation before you go out.
- In your mind, rehearse going to the function. See yourself having a good time, meeting people and enjoying the situation---all without having a cigarette.
- Practice saying, "No thank you, I don't smoke" just in case someone offers you a cigarette.

Stress

- Separate the cigarette from the situation. Realize that smoking never made a situation any better or helped you deal with it.
- Step back, take a deep breath, and say to yourself, "I can handle this." Then deal with the problem.
- Strategize about how to handle stressful situations with friends, relatives or trusted clergy.
- Realize that every problem has a solution that does not involve smoking.

Telephone

- Try standing instead of sitting
- If you don't already have one, get a portable phone or a cell phone
- Limit the time you spend on the phone for a few weeks (use email)

Thoughts about Smoking

- Just because you think about something does not mean you have to do it. Remember, if everyone did everything they ever thought about we'd all be in jail now!!
- Don't focus on a thought about smoking. Distract yourself: Say, "I am in control" and move on.
- Remind yourself of the benefits of quitting.
- Think of the reasons you quit. Focus on that.
- Say the word "stop" or picture a stop sign.
- Accept the thoughts. It is only natural that a recent quitter would be thinking of cigarettes. Say to yourself "So what" and find something else to do.
- See yourself in your mind's eye as a successful nonsmoker. Practice seeing yourself in all kinds of situations dealing effectively without smoking.

Weight Gain

- Do not diet. Attempting two major behavior changes at the same time usually leads to failure at both. Wait at least two or three months before tackling any weight loss program.
- Remember, the average weight gain, as a direct result of quitting smoking is only 5 to 7 pounds.
- Drink six to eight glasses of water a day.

- Begin a modest exercise program. If you can do nothing else, take a brisk half hour walk every day.
- Remember, smoking does not turn your body into a fat burning machine. If that were true, every smoker would be thin.

Work

- Rearrange your office or workspace as much as you can.
- Change your work routine as much as possible.
- Listen to music, talk radio, or motivational tapes.
- Have a support person at work.

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