

Helping someone quit smoking



Is there someone in your life who wants to quit smoking? If so, now is a good time to help him or her. Many people choose to quit smoking in the summer. Longer days provide a wonderful opportunity to get out and exercise and there is an abundance of fresh, healthy foods to choose from instead of smoking.

By supporting your friend or family member, you can increase their chances of success.^{1,2} Here are some tips that can help you:

Talk it out

It's important that you both share your honest feelings about smoking and how it affects you both.

Find out why your friend or family member wants to quit smoking and how they feel about it. Are they being forced to quit and feel angry and resentful? If so, you should avoid nagging or lecturing to them. It might be useful to step back and listen more than you talk.

Is quitting their decision? Are they serious and ready to quit? If the answer is yes, they will need all the support and encouragement you can give... right now.

Understand addiction to cigarettes

Physical addiction: don't underestimate the power of nicotine addiction. Giving up nicotine can cause many different types of withdrawal symptoms, such as headaches, hunger, or dizziness.

Psychological addiction: Smokers use cigarettes in stressful situations, to concentrate, to get a lift, to relieve boredom, to relax, as a reward or as a break. When they quit, they will need to find other ways to meet these needs.

Social addiction: Recent ex-smokers may find it difficult to feel at ease in social settings such as parties, having coffee, going to bars and restaurants, etc.

How to help someone quit smoking

Listen, rather than provide advice.

When your friend or loved one is ready to quit, help set a quit date that is soon enough so that they won't talk themselves out of quitting, but far enough away to allow time to plan.

Help your friend or loved one see withdrawal symptoms as "recovery" symptoms – signs of the body healing itself.

Be ready to suggest that the nicotine patch, gum, or inhaler can help lessen physical withdrawal, and find out where to get these quit aids.

Respect your friend's need to be left alone, but be available when they need to talk. Be extra-sensitive to their moods. Give them space.

Be aware of your friend's triggers for smoking, such as talking on the phone, being at a bar or club, drinking a morning cup of coffee, after a meal, etc.

Help a recent ex-smoker feel confident

When someone quits smoking, they need to feel confident they can succeed. You can increase their confidence by asking them to reflect on other positive changes or decisions they have made in their life. It is important to encourage them to think about the strategies they used in these difficult situations and help them to focus on quitting as a series of small goals and successes over time.



Why some ex-smokers start smoking again³

As they become used to living smoke-free, they forget the reasons why they quit in the first place.

They lack a step-by-step overall plan for quitting that includes specific goals and personalized strategies to deal with all of their triggers to smoke.

They focus on the negative, such as how much they miss smoking rather than on the positive, such as how much healthier they feel.

They place themselves in situations where they are tempted to smoke.

Some final words of advice

Remember that nagging and threats can do more harm than good. Your friend or family member needs support, not blame.

If you are a smoker, don't smoke around your friends or loved ones – not even one cigarette.

Don't offer a cigarette to someone trying to quit: remember, just one may set them back.

Don't take your friend or loved one to a place where they used to smoke.

Make sure your friend or family member has a quit plan. Help them think ahead about possible tricky situations and plan how to cope if those situations occur.

For more on quitting, see the fact sheets: **Quit Tips for the Summer** and **Relapse Prevention: Staying Stopped**.

¹ Park EW, Tudiver F, Schultz JK, Campbell T. Does enhancing partner support and interaction improve smoking cessation? A meta-analysis. *Annals of Family Medicine*. 2004;2:170-174. Accessed February 22, 2008 from <http://www.annfammed.org/cgi/content/full/2/2/170>

² May S, West R, Hajek P, McEwen A, McRobbie H. Randomized controlled trial of a social support ('buddy') intervention for smoking cessation. *Patient Educ Couns*. 2006;64(1-3):235-41. Accessed February 26, 2008 from http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/16616450?ordinalpos=5&itool=EntrezSystem2.PEntrez.Pubmed.Pubmed_ResultsPanel.Pubmed_RVDocSum

³ Canadian Cancer Society. *One Step at a Time: For Smokers Who Want to Quit*. Accessed March 3, 2008 from: <http://www.smokershelpline.ca/custom/selfhelp.htm>

To learn more about how to get up, go out and be SummerActive, visit www.summeractive.ca – you could win great prizes!

