



One Smoke-Free Day at a Time

Behavior Modification Techniques

The urge to light up a cigarette is going to be with you for a while after you have given up smoking. Small urges may crop up for the rest of your life, so you're going to have to learn to deal with them. Just as you learned how to smoke, you have to learn how not to smoke.

Getting Through the Short Run

Don't look too far ahead when you're in the beginning stages of quitting. Break the day into segments and concentrate on getting through a few hours at a time without smoking. When you get through one stretch successfully, go on to the next, and then the next. Let your first victories be small ones. They'll add up to the big one.

Getting Through the Urges

By this time, you should know exactly what situations trigger your desire for smoking—a cup of coffee, an alcoholic drink, a ringing telephone, the end of a meal. Sometimes you can avoid the situation entirely, but often you'll have to change your own behavior. If coffee or alcohol means cigarettes, avoid them at least temporarily. Drink fruit juice or water instead. Stay away from bars. Take a walk during your coffee break.

Just about all smokers enjoy a cigarette at the end of a meal. This can be a critical point. Instead of lighting up, leave the table as soon as you're finished. You might clear the dishes, brush your teeth or walk around the block. Keep your mind off cigarettes and take up new post-meal activities.

These are just a few examples of how to change your routine. Try to avoid the situations in which you routinely smoked.

When You're Out

More and more restrictive legislation is being enacted to keep buildings free of cigarette smoke. Many cities limit or totally ban smoking in public offices, stores, elevators and theaters. These places make it easier for you because you have no choice to smoke. If you're in an area where you have an option, such as a restaurant, always make sure you sit in a nonsmoking section. No matter where you are, and as much as you can, try to avoid people who are smoking.

Filling the Void

There's going to be some emptiness in your life once cigarettes are gone. To keep your hands busy, try holding a pencil or rolling a toothpick through your fingers. For oral gratification, chew a toothpick or keep a supply of celery, carrots or sugarless gum nearby. Occupy your free time with activities that don't allow you to hold a cigarette—exercise, housework, handiwork, hobbies, gardening or washing the car. Keep your mind and hands busy and don't dwell on the fact that you're not smoking.

Breathe deeply to help you relax or imagine yourself away from temptation. When stress closes in, pretend you're relaxing on the beach, in the woods or in the mountains. Learn to switch the signals that trigger your urges.

These are just a few of the things you can do to carry you from day to day. Try and develop your own methods that will carry you over the humps and detour you around the cravings.



Imagine yourself away from temptation when stress makes you want to reach for a cigarette.

