HELPING SOMEONE QUIT SMOKING

SMART STEPS
...to help make it easier
Kudos on wanting to help someone in your life quit smoking. Friends, family, colleagues and significant others can play a crucial role in helping someone quit - because people who feel supported are much more likely to quit smoking for the long haul.

This booklet provides useful information on:

• Why quitting is hard
• What you can do to make it easier
• Strategies to deal with cravings
• Navigating risky situations
• De-stressing 101
• Staying positive when your quitter slips
• Effective quitting tools and services
Understanding why quitting is hard

Smoking is not just a habit but a powerful addiction. After someone inhales from a cigarette, the nicotine reaches their brain in less than five heartbeats and provides a temporary feeling of pleasure. This is faster than having nicotine injected into their veins.

When someone quits, the body is deprived of nicotine, and the quitter can experience uncomfortable withdrawal symptoms and cravings. Plus, smoking is an integral part of a smoker’s daily routine, and common feelings, activities and situations can trigger the urge to smoke.

Many smokers come to believe they can’t handle everyday situations or stress without smoking, but your support can really make a difference. And the more you understand about quitting, the more you can help.
Making it easier for your quitter

The evidence shows that taking a supportive approach to helping someone quit is more effective than a hard line approach that includes nagging or judging. It will only stress them out, and could push them right back to smoking. Slips and relapses happen, and smokers rarely quit on their first try. Here are some tips for making it easier for your quitter.

Be SUPPORTIVE

Offering support means being there for them without an agenda. Quitting is different for everyone, so don’t assume you know what they are going through or what they should do to quit. Ask them what they need from you and be available to listen or help deal with cravings.

TIP: Avoid lecturing, nagging or shaming. If they feel judged by you, it will only make them feel worse and they won’t come to you for help when they really need it.

“I know you are having a tough time right now. Is there anything I can do to make things a bit easier for you?”
Be ENCOURAGING
Try to keep them focussed on the positive aspects of quitting, like the money they’ll be saving and their improved health. Being positive and boosting their confidence can motivate them to stay on track. Be their cheerleader!

TIP: Remind them of how well they are doing and praise them often. Be specific with your praises, and use positive words.

Be PATIENT
Supporting someone in their quit can be very frustrating at times. Withdrawal can be difficult and the person quitting can experience mood swings and irritability for a number of weeks. Plus there may be slips along the way. Try to be patient. And don’t give up on them or let them lose confidence in their ability to quit. Your unconditional support is important!

TIP: Be prepared for bad moods and don’t take it personally. Irritability and crankiness are common symptoms of nicotine withdrawal. Bear with them, it will pass.

“I’m so proud that you have made it through one week of being smoke-free! I can already see more colour in your face.”

“My friend was so understanding, even when I was grumpy! She never gave up on me.”
Karen Z. Richmond, BC
CELEBRATE SUCCESS

Celebrating small successes along the way helps to keep people motivated. Quitting smoking is a BIG DEAL! Have some fun together and participate in non-smoking activities.

Here are some celebratory ideas:

• Buy some flowers – to celebrate their improved sense of smell
• Plan a trip together – a day getaway or a weekend
• Buy some tickets to a concert, show or sports event
• Offer to make dinner – to celebrate their improved sense of taste
• Join a new activity you can do together, like yoga or rowing

TIP: Help your quitter celebrate by planning a few fun activities to reward milestones along the way – like the first day, first week and first month. These are important hurdles and should be acknowledged!

“I know this is hard on you, but I’m so proud that you are sticking it out. I want to help you celebrate your success by doing something fun.”
Help them manage withdrawal

Physical withdrawal from nicotine usually only lasts a few days to a week, but the symptoms can be uncomfortable. The body has to adjust to being without nicotine and the cravings can be very strong during this time. Many people slip up in the first week after quitting, so it helps to be prepared and know what to expect so you can help them get through this period.

**Common withdrawal symptoms:**

- Feeling depressed or sad
- Trouble sleeping
- Feeling cranky, frustrated or angry
- Feeling anxious, nervous or restless
- Difficultly concentrating
- Increased appetite
- Coughing and dry mouth
- Headaches and feeling dizzy
- Upset stomach and constipation

**TIP:** The good news is that using nicotine replacement products like the patch and gum can greatly reduce the intensity of withdrawal and double your quitter’s chances of quitting for good.
Help them cope with cravings

Smoking is more than a physical addiction to nicotine. People who smoke develop powerful psychological and emotional attachments to cigarettes – and associate smoking with certain situations, people, places and feelings. Without thinking, daily habits, routines and activities can trigger the urge to smoke. While physical withdrawal is only temporary, your quitter can experience cravings to smoke for months after they quit. So it’s important to help them make a plan for how to handle cravings.

Quick distractions when the urges hit:

• Take deep breaths
• Snap a rubber band on your wrist
• Eat some carrots, nuts, or celery
• Squeeze a stress ball
• Go for a walk or a run
• Play a game on your cell
• Brush your teeth
• Chew a toothpick, cinnamon stick or gum
• Drink a cold glass of water

TIP: Cravings typically last about five minutes, so help your quitter ride it out by finding ways to distract them until the craving passes.

“Hey, I know you’re having a craving right now, but let’s go for a quick five minute walk & it’ll pass.”
Navigate risky situations

**Alcohol** – Alcohol is associated with smoking, and for many, it’s a strong trigger to smoke. Alcohol can weaken a quitter’s ability to say no, break down inhibitions and is the primary reason that many quitters slip-up. For best results, suggest they avoid alcohol or help them set a limit and stick to it.

**TIP:** Drinking through a straw can break up the routine and slow down the amount you drink. Or have glasses of water in between drinks, or try spritzers to limit the amount.

**Parties and social situations** – These can be difficult times for quitters, and can be stressful and filled with the urge to smoke. Suggest your quitter prepare by picking a ‘quit buddy’ who will provide support and keep them from smoking if the urge arises.

**Other smokers** – Being around other smokers in social situations or at work can be very difficult. Suggest your quitter avoid people who are smoking, and if people are smoking outside, stay inside.

**TIP:** Suggest they keep hands and mouth busy by chewing gum, playing with a toothpick, or holding a glass of water.
De-Stress 101

Many people use smoking as a way to deal with stressful situations in their lives. When a smoker experiences stress after quitting, it can trigger a strong craving for a cigarette. While stress is a natural part of life, and can never be avoided entirely, you can help them break this cycle by finding healthier ways to deal with stress. Since stress is a major cause of slip-ups, if you notice they are stressed, here are some suggestions to help:

**Common stress relievers:**

- Practice deep breathing exercises
- Go for a walk
- Take a nap
- Talk it out with a friend
- Listen to music
- Try yoga or a spin class
- Go to a comedy club or watch a funny TV show
- Do a crossword puzzle
- Take a bath or long hot shower
- Read a book
- Eat a healthy diet including fresh veggies and fruit
Be alert to depression

For some, smoking is a form of self-medication to help deal with feelings of loneliness, sadness and depression. When someone quits, they are removing a major crutch for coping through the day, and it’s not uncommon to experience feelings of sadness or depression. In most cases, this should pass within a few weeks.

Check in with your quitter and ask how they are feeling. Sometimes just talking with a friend can help, but if the feelings of sadness, anxiety or depression continue, have them talk to their doctor. This is especially important if they have suffered depression in the past.

TIP: People who are being treated for depression and want to quit should talk to their doctor, as they may need an adjustment of their medications.

“You seem more down than usual so I just wanted to check how you are doing? Can I do anything to help or maybe just come over and talk?”
Stay positive if your quitter “slips”

Slips and relapses happen, and smokers rarely quit on their first try. In order to get back on track, they need to feel supported and encouraged. If your quitter has a slip or starts smoking again, don’t be too hard on them. They will likely feel guilty enough, so remind them that a slip is part of the quit process and is just one bump in the road.

**If they slip:**

- Ask them what they think “triggered” the craving that led to the slip
- Help them learn from the experience by developing a plan to do something different next time
- Remind them of their reasons for quitting in the first place
- Suggest extra support from QuitNow.ca or the use of nicotine replacement aids like nicotine patches and gum to help reduce the cravings

**TIP:** Help your quitter heed the warning signs - that inner voice just before a slip telling them it’s ok to have “just one”. Help them stop those thoughts in their tracks and do something different, like drink some water or brush their teeth.
**FACT:** Every quit attempt is a step in the right direction. The more times they try, the more likely they will succeed. Criticism, on the other hand, is counterproductive: it just makes your quitter fearful of being judged and less likely to try again.

“No problem. This is just a little setback. I know you can do this. I’m still here to help you along the way.”
Effective quitting tools and services

Let them know where they can find help and support to quit.

Refer them to QuitNow for FREE support

- **Phone support:** 1.877.455.2233 to get FREE 24/7 support from trained Quit Coaches to help plan a quit, deal with cravings and stay on track

- **Online support:** an online personalized program to help smokers quit, including a community forum of people supporting each other throughout their quit
  Go to www.quitnow.ca

- **Text support:** Text QUITNOW to 654321 for motivational tips customized to a person’s quit date. The service is available to all BC residents

- **Monthly Tobacco-Free Tuesdays Contest:** Quit smoking for 24 hours for the chance to win prizes! Visit quitnow.ca/contest

- **Facebook support:** facebook.com/QuitNowBC has an active community of quitters sharing and helping each other quit

- **Local Help Directory:** a listing of other supports like pharmacists in the communities across BC who are trained to help smokers quit. Search for Local Help Directory at www.quitnow.ca
FREE supplies of nicotine replacement therapy and subsidized quit smoking medications

The BC government offers a 3-month supply of nicotine replacement therapy (gum, patch, inhaler or lozenge) or quit smoking prescription through Pharmacare to those who qualify. Visit your local pharmacy to order. For subsidized prescriptions call 1.800.663.7100 for more information about eligibility.

Most smokers want to quit. The challenge is actually doing it. Your support can make all the difference!

FACT: Your support, combined with support from QuitNow or other proven quit methods, can double a smoker’s chances of successfully quitting.
Sign the pledge

MUTUAL AGREEMENT
Sign a pledge and make a commitment to help someone you know with quitting.

Quitters Pledge
I, __________________________, pledge to stop smoking on ___________.
If I need help, support and/or encouragement, I know that I can talk to my buddy,
______________________________, at any time.

Buddy’s Pledge
I, __________________________, pledge to support ____________________________, in his/her efforts to stop smoking.
Support Can Make All the Difference!

quitnowca