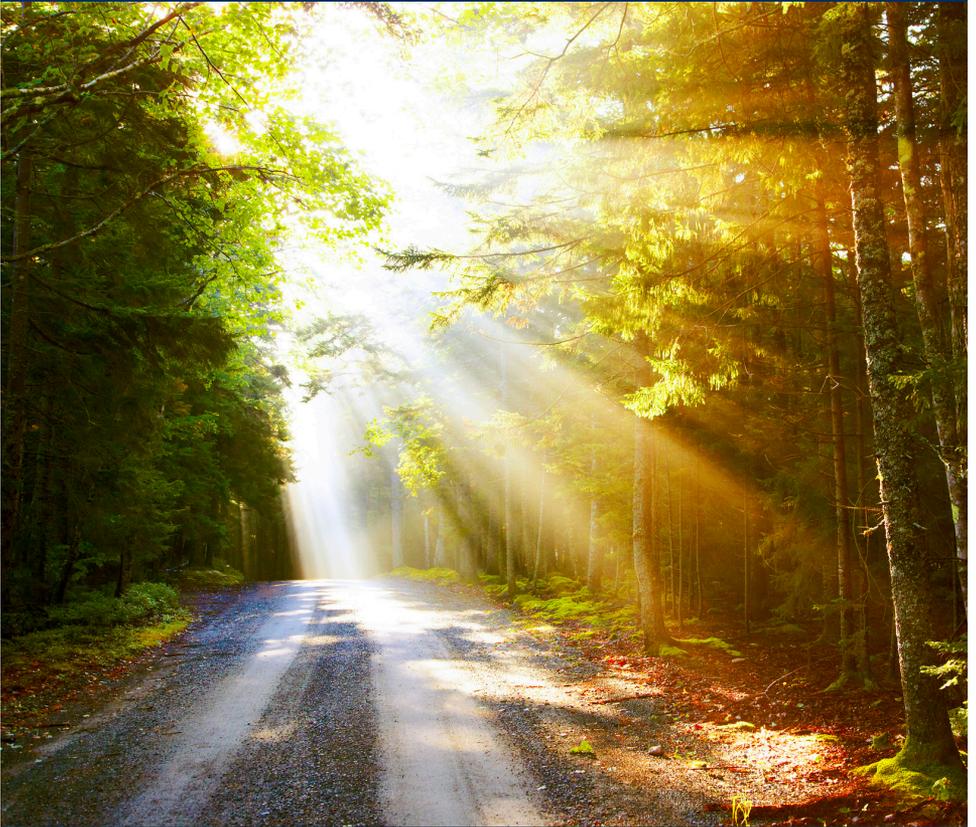




LEARN TO LIVE
Tobacco Free



COPING WITH NICOTINE WITHDRAWAL



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Congratulations! By recently quitting or making the decision to take steps toward quitting you have made one of the best decision for your health and well-being. However, getting through the first few weeks after you stop using tobacco can be challenging. Many people experience nicotine withdrawal symptoms which can feel very uncomfortable. Cravings for nicotine, headaches, irritability, and feeling down are all very common symptoms. At first, these symptoms can feel very strong, but over time, they will get less intense and you should experience them less frequently.

There are many strategies that can be used to manage feelings of withdrawal. One strategy is to remind yourself the reasons you chose to quit. These reasons, like family, health, or spirituality, can be powerful motivators and can help carry you through the most difficult times of withdrawal. When quitting tobacco, two other tools we recommend are The 4-D's and the other is **HALT** (explained below).

HALT

Taking care of ourselves and recognizing certain signs can help prevent a slip or a relapse. One tool that can be very helpful is HALT (Hungry/Angry/Lonely/Tired). This is a simple way to check in with yourself and make sure your needs are being met. Am I Hungry? Am I Angry? Am I Lonely? Am I Tired? When these needs are not met it's easy to slip into old behaviors, like smoking.

AM I HUNGRY?

- Do I feel “something is missing?” When we get that feeling of emptiness, we often are not able to decide whether we want food or tobacco – all we know is that we want “something.”
- Tobacco users can miss a meal because they often don't want to take the time to eat — instead they just “smoke a meal.” If you have become a nonsmoker, you can't afford to miss a meal — it is guaranteed to leave you feeling hungry.” Although your body is calling for food, your addiction is calling for nicotine.
- In the confusion, you may relapse into thinking that **ONLY** tobacco will fill in that “empty space.” Fill your stomach so the emptiness will diminish. You're too vulnerable to relapse if you don't practice wellness by eating sensibly and regularly.

AM I ANGRY?

- Do I feel that my anger is a valid excuse to use tobacco? Please remember that we can still be worthwhile people when we are feeling angry — we don't want to punish ourselves with nicotine. We don't need to “push” down those angry feelings with a cigarette! Anger is a valid emotion. Anger is not a valid excuse for using tobacco!
- Feeling angry is all right. What we **DO** with those angry feelings may not be all right for you and others.



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- Usually, we need to get in touch with the angry feelings and admit to them — this self-awareness will begin to diminish the angry feelings and reduce the anxiety of the unknown. Ask yourself: “What am I afraid of?” Call someone for help if the anger might lead you back to using tobacco!

AM I LONELY?

- Feeling lonely can be overwhelming enough to send us back to tobacco. Again, we need to tell ourselves that feeling lonely is all right, but what we DO with that lonely feeling may not be all right for us and for others.
- Being alone will not be as lonely if we can appreciate the person we are with — we need to like ourselves. And realize we are worthwhile even if we are alone.
- Isolation or loneliness is not an excuse to go back to smoking, there are other choices: find a new hobby, call a support person, become a volunteer, or get counseling or professional help. It takes strength to ask for help.

AM I TIRED?

- All of us feel more vulnerable when we are tired. We begin the relapse process thinking that the only way we will be re-energized is to “stoke our fires with a cigarette.”
- If you aren’t sleeping well take a few minutes to do a relaxation technique. People who are truly relaxed or centered have little need for tobacco! Please get your rest and sleep - you are certainly worth it!

COPING WITH WITHDRAWAL SYMPTOMS USING THE 4-D’S

When you’re trying to quit smoking, the urge to reach for tobacco will come and go. A craving usually only lasts a few minutes, but it can be strong, especially when you first quit. It’s important to be ready with coping techniques to get through the tough moments. Check out the 4 D’s which are easy-to-remember strategies that can help you cope with urges.

Deep Breaths

Breathe in and breathe out slowly, as if you were smoking a cigarette. When you do deep breathing, inhale deeply, hold it for a couple seconds, and then release it slowly. Deep breathing will help you relax and make the craving dissipate.

Drink Water

Drink lots of water all day long, especially during a craving. Drinking water helps flush the toxins out of your system, and it will help keep your hands and mouth busy. Some ex-smokers prefer to drink through a straw, which also helps with the hand-to-mouth motion similar to smoking.



Distract

Distract yourself by getting up and making yourself busy. Go for a brisk walk. Go out and meet with a friend. If you choose to stay indoors, go into a different room. Grab a carrot stick and munch on it elsewhere. Put on some music. Open a book or browse through a magazine. Call a friend. Many smokers have said that when they get an urge to smoke and make the effort to change their surrounding environment, they get distracted and actually forget they wanted to smoke.

Delay

Most smokers falsely assume that each craving lasts a long time, maybe 45 minutes or so. Time yourself to learn the truth. Cravings come and go quickly. The average craving only lasts about five to ten minutes. No matter how strong the craving is, convince yourself that you can wait ten minutes. To help those ten minutes go by, practice the other D's.

If you slip and smoke... Once quit, you might use tobacco (a slip) but that does not mean you are going to return to using tobacco all the time. However, a slip is a warning sign that you may need to revisit your quit plan and examine what triggered your need for tobacco. It's important to be prepared for potential triggers, as slips can lead to a return to your old patterns and behaviors of tobacco use.

- What has caused you to slip or relapse?
- How would you do things differently in the future?
- What plans can you make to help you through future slips?

You can prevent a slip from becoming a relapse by recommitting to your quit plan. Make sure you are using your nicotine replacement therapy as recommended and reach out to your support people.

TIPS FOR AVOIDING RELAPSE

The most important moment before relapse isn't the final decision to use tobacco. It's when you expose yourself to triggers you haven't prepared for. For example, a trigger could be going to a party where people are using tobacco or walking through the tobacco section at the store. Before encountering your triggers, you still have most of the control, not your craving, to decide how to deal with them.

If you're feeling the urge to use tobacco, try to wait it out. If you distract yourself for even 10 minutes, it's likely your craving will lessen in intensity or even go away. It might not totally disappear, but over time it will become easier to resist the urge to use tobacco.

Focus on replacing your past tobacco use with new positive activities. If you used to go home after work and smoke/chew, you'll need to make a new plan to occupy yourself. Going home and staring at a wall will eventually lead to staring at a wall and smoking/chewing.



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Don't try to do this alone. Sharing your goals for abstinence with a friend makes all the difference. They can hold you accountable when you're making questionable decisions ("I'm just going to the bar to hang out, I won't smoke/chew!") and they can offer a kind ear when you're struggling.

Remind yourself that cravings will pass. Have you ever had an experience when you're sick where you can't remember what it feels like to not be sick? The same thing happens with cravings. Give it time, and believe it or not, the feeling will go away and you'll realize you are able to get past your cravings.

You may have to make sacrifices beyond giving up tobacco. If you previously smoked/chewed during specific activities (for example: watching a game, going to concerts, or spending time with friends), you may need to make changes. This might mean not watching the game or watching it someplace else, or making new friends who are tobacco-free. This can be really hard, but making sacrifices can help you remain tobacco free.

Have a plan for when things get bad. People get fired, hearts get broken, and sometimes people leave us forever. By preparing for when things get bad, you will have developed a plan to get through these major life challenges — without the use of tobacco — before they happen.

Don't become complacent with your abstinence. If you someday consider having "just a puff or chew," don't make the decision lightly. If you've struggled with addiction in the past, you are much more likely to develop an addiction again.

If you do relapse, don't give up. On average, smokers try to quit anywhere from 6 to 30 times before they succeed. By developing a plan and sticking with it you can successfully quit. and stay quit.

A lot of people find it helpful to keep track of how long they've been tobacco-free, but don't confuse this count with the true goal of leading a good life. If you're at day 100 of abstinence, that's great. However, if you make a mistake and end up back at day 0, know that you are not starting over (you gained knowledge, experience, and confidence) to quit again.

Come up with new rituals. How do you celebrate holidays, promotions, or any other happy occasion? If your answer includes any sort of tobacco, you'll want to get creative and figure out something new. Go wild with a hobby for the day, treat yourself to a nice dinner, or take a weekend trip. Make sure it's something you can get excited about to celebrate your freedom from tobacco!



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