



HOW TO:

HELP A SMOKER STOP SMOKING

If you are worried about a smoker in your life, this information is for YOU! The kind of support you give can either help or hold back his or her willingness and ability to quit. Being there for someone is great-- knowing what to do and what to avoid can make you an effective helper!



First: Understand the addiction.

Nicotine is the addictive drug in tobacco products. For some users, this addiction is so powerful it can seem almost impossible to quit. Passing even a few hours without nicotine can be painfully difficult and can make it very hard for a smoker to cope with routine situations and to behave normally. Nicotine offers many benefits; it can help smokers do these things:

- Concentrate and pay attention.
- Deal with painful or unpleasant situations.
- Reduce anxiety and depression.
- Stay alert.
- Reduce discomfort in social situations.
- Deal with stressful situations.
- Relax and unwind.
- Cope with boredom.
- Avoid unpleasant withdrawal symptoms.
- Increase their enjoyment of pleasant experiences.

Second: Understand the process

Breaking nicotine addiction does not happen in one step. Instead, it is a five stage process. Some people may try to quit several times, or may shift back and forth between the stages before they are finally successful at quitting for good. You have a role in each of the five stages:

Stage 1	Smoker is not thinking about quitting	You can support and care for your friend whether they smoke or not
Stage 2	Smoker is thinking about quitting but not yet ready to quit	You can offer information about where to get help, but let the smoker decide when to quit
Stage 3	Smoker is getting ready to quit	You can offer to give up something too, as a sign of support
Stage 4	Smoker is quitting	You can treat your friend like a hero for trying
Stage 5	Smoker has quit	You can show them that you admire their determination

Quitting tobacco takes more than breaking the physical addiction. It also requires making lifestyle changes, and altering daily routines. Smokers should try to be aware of their smoking patterns. Encourage your friend to develop a plan for how to live without cigarettes by finding out what makes them want to smoke, and planning ahead for those situations.

- Continued on Other Side -

**Third:** Understand how you can help

What you do to help a friend quit should be tailored to what he or she needs. You must remember to be sensitive, understanding and forgiving, because your role is to support your friend, not to force them to quit. Quitting tobacco may be the most difficult thing that person ever goes through.

Do:

- Ask what would be most helpful for you to do.
- Listen to your friend: respect what they are saying and feeling.
- Tell them that you care about their health.
- Encourage them to exercise as a tool for quitting, and offer to join them in exercising.
- Tell them that you know they are strong enough to quit.
- Offer to give something up yourself.
- Help research methods of quitting, such as stop smoking classes or medications.
- Let him or her know that you think they're wonderful whether they are able to quit or not.
- Be sympathetic to the physical and emotional symptoms of withdrawal.
- Encourage them to talk about slips and relapses, and tell them that they haven't failed, but are going through a normal part of quitting when they slip.
- Remind them of the reasons that they want to quit.
- Share the phone number for the **New York State Smokers' Quitline** to provide your friend with professional help and support (1-866-NY-QUITS or 1-866-697-8487).

Don't:

- Lecture or preach about the harmful effects of smoking.
- Tell a smoker that it's easy to quit.
- Give ultimatums (*If you don't quit this time, we're through*).
- Make smokers feel guilty or blame smokers for their inability to quit.
- Make fun of a smoker.
- Smoke around your friend.
- Offer cigarettes to anyone trying to quit.
- Encourage your friend smoke again.
- Nag or complain.

Ask yourself if you are being a source of positive support, or if you are causing more stress when you try to help the person you care about to quit smoking. If you're not sure about how to help your friend, call the New York State Smokers' Quitline at 1-866 697-8487 to speak to a live counselor for suggestions.