



How to Help Someone Quit Smoking

When someone takes the big step of deciding to quit smoking, his or her family, friends and co-workers can make an enormous difference by giving their help and support. Quitting is different for each smoker and everyone experiences its challenges differently. Here's how you can help someone on their journey and show that you care.

How To Begin

- Tell your friend that you know he or she can quit smoking for good, even if he or she has tried to quit before.
- Enrolling in a Freedom From Smoking course or calling the American Lung Association's Lung HelpLine at 1-800-LUNGUSA, can help you and your loved one make a plan to quit smoking and stay quit. That type of plan includes how to set a quit date, building social support, learning how to relax and control weight, planning how to deal with urges to smoke, and quit smoking medications – such as nicotine gum, skin patches, nasal spray, oral inhalers, and non-nicotine medications – that help relieve physical symptoms when trying to quit.
- For the first few days after the smoker quits, be ready to help. He or she may just want to talk, or your friend may want extra help when a tough situation arises, such as a party, or a crisis at home or work.
- Offer to call or visit to check on them. Ask how your friend is feeling, not just whether or not they are still off cigarettes.
- No nagging, scolding or preaching—that just doesn't work. Instead, let your friend know how much you admire them for trying to quit.
- Give lots of praise and offer rewards for getting through a day, a week or a month without smoking. Rewards can be simple—flowers, a lunch treat, or even doing a chore for your friend around the house or office.

- Give rewards right away. For example, let your friend watch his or her favorite TV show while you do the dishes. Giving rewards right away works better than promising rewards for the future.
- Remind your friend to do some deep breathing if they feel tense. Breathing in and out slowly brings more air into the lungs, which will help your friend relax.
- Do things together; go to a movie or take a walk. Stay away from places where other people may be smoking.

Being There for the Long Run

Quitting smoking is a journey, not a single event. You can help someone throughout that journey until they are able to quit for good.

The first seven to 10 days are the toughest, and your friend may need the most help during this time. Most smokers who return to smoking do so within the first three months, so try to keep in close touch for at least that long.

"Slips" (having a puff or smoking one or two cigarettes) are common. If your friend has slipped, remind them of all the good reasons to stay quit. Praise all your friend's nonsmoking efforts and remind them that a "slip" does not mean they're a smoker again. If they keep trying and don't give up, they will be able to quit for good.

If Your Friend Starts Smoking Again

Forget about blame or guilt. Your friend is still learning how to quit - they are not failing. Remind your friend about how well he or she did during the time without cigarettes. Each time someone tries to quit is a step forward. Help figure out what led to the relapse and plan for what they'll do differently next time. The best thing to say to your friend is, "Good try! I still care about you and will help you until you quit smoking for good."

Try to feel good about all your efforts to help. You can prepare together for the next time your friend tries to quit smoking.

Meeting Challenges along the Way

Many people hit bumps on their journey to quitting smoking. Dealing with these obstacles is an important part of helping someone quit for good.

- **Gaining Weight**
Some smokers gain weight when they stop smoking, but the average is only seven to 10 pounds. Even with this weight gain, they will be much better off health-wise than they would be if they continued to smoke. Balancing the right amount and variety of foods with physical activity is the best way to control weight during the quitting process. Some things you can do to help:
 - Offer low-fat snacks such as carrots, fresh fruit, plain popcorn or sugarless gum.
 - Do active things together where smoking doesn't fit in. Swimming, jogging or brisk walking are great choices.

- **Handling Urges to Smoke**
People who succeed in quitting are often the ones who plan how to cope with smoking urges. Encourage your friend by helping him or her think up some simple things to do when an urge to smoke arises. Your friend might:
 - Call you when he or she feels the urge to smoke. Remind your friend that the urge will pass in just three to five minutes, whether they smoke a cigarette or not!
 - Leave the situation that makes your friend want to smoke. For example, being at a party where alcohol is served may make your friend want a cigarette. When the urge arises, they could walk around the block or better yet, stay away from parties and alcohol for the first few weeks.
- **Withdrawal Symptoms**
Many smokers have withdrawal symptoms during the first few weeks after they quit. Some common ones are:
 - Difficulty sleeping
 - Trouble concentrating
 - Feeling anxious or restless

Your friend also may be grouchy, irritable, nervous or pushy. Tell your friend you know that these symptoms are real, but that they will not last. They will go away as their body rids itself of nicotine. A week or two may seem like a long time when you're not feeling well, but it will get better.

- **Outlasting Your Friend's Addiction**

Your friend is trying to break an addiction to cigarettes that may have started in his or her teens. Be prepared for some unfriendly or even nasty behavior; your friend is going through a tough time. Even if they're acting badly, tell them you still care and do what you can to help. Remember, you're doing a wonderful thing by helping a friend. The tough times won't last long, but the benefits of quitting last forever.

Encourage your friend to talk about how he or she is feeling and listen to what they say. Give your undivided attention. Laugh at jokes, and praise as often as you can.

Ask your friend to tell you when he or she is doing okay. That way you can feel good about their progress.

Keep us Posted on Progress!

Let us know when your friend has quit smoking. We would love to share your story with others that are interested in helping their loved ones quit smoking and you could be their inspiration. Send the American Lung Association an email at Info@Lung.org or post a photo with your loved one and tag us with #BeTheFirst.