

How can I help a friend, colleague, or family member quit smoking?

If someone you are close to expresses a desire to quit smoking, they have just made a very important decision that will dramatically improve their health and wellness. Understand that smoking is one of the most difficult habits to break. Relapse is very common. However, with your help, your friend, colleague, or family member can ultimately quit successfully.

How should I begin?

First, it is important to understand that every person is different and therefore their path to success will likely be different. So, it is probably best to begin by asking them, “How can I be most helpful to you?” This will prevent the person from becoming defensive and will help them understand that you care and are willing to help. It may be a good idea to encourage a specific quit date.

Also, it helps to be familiar with their habits, personality, etc. when helping them quit. So, if this is the case, you’re ahead of the game!

What are some important things to keep in mind?

Quitting is more than just an exercise in willpower. In fact, the most difficult period is the first 7-10 days after quitting. So, patience is key. Here are some helpful suggestions:

- Use positive language – remind them you are there for support and that you are confident they will be successful. Give them praise.
- Check in with them – be sure to call, text, email, and Facebook your friend and ask how they are feeling. Most smokers relapse within the first three months, so it is important to stay in touch. The conversation does not always need to be about their smoking behaviors.

Talk about current events, movies, music, etc.

- Do something fun – take a walk, go to your favorite restaurant, try a new activity.
- Have them call you when they feel the urge to smoke – this will help distract them and temporarily curb their craving.
- Discourage them from visiting places where others are smoking and drinking – a party where people are drinking alcohol may be enough to trigger a craving. Being around others that smoke may do the same.

What if they relapse?

Do not place blame or guilt. Try not to nag. Instead, remind them what an important decision quitting is. Each time they quit, it is a step forward in the right direction. Help them determine what caused the relapse and map out a plan to avoid that pitfall the next time.

Are there helpful resources that I can share with them?

You can find other helpful tips and resources at:
www.tobaccofree.ucr.edu

