



Stress Management and Quitting Smoking

Stress

- Everyone's threshold for stress is different. There is no single right way to cope with it.
- Stress can affect our ability to think clearly and positively. It can also impact diet, sleep, memory, self-control and motivation.
- Sometimes people need help to become aware of their personal stressors and help to become aware of how they cope.

Stress is often identified as a reason people smoke and is a reason for relapse.

For some people who smoke, they use smoking as a way to deal with stress. When you're quitting smoking you may need to develop new strategies to manage stressful situations.

Preventing Stress

Consider these basic strategies to prevent or avoid stress in your daily life:

- **Just say no** – Don't get overwhelmed. Prioritize your activities and learn to say no to things that are not a high priority.
- **Stop procrastinating** – take action – Putting things off can be stressful. Instead, take action.
- **Get help when you need it** – Sometimes it's best to ask others for help to lighten your load. By not asking, you may be needlessly stressed by not delegating.



Coping Strategies

Sometimes it's not possible to avoid excessive stress. That's when you need a strategy. Some strategies offer you temporary relief while others help you determine the cause of stress.

Using Coping Strategies

To cope effectively, you need to recognize stress and how it affects you. Examine the causes of your stress, including your thoughts, how you feel about it and how you respond.

- Learning coping techniques to manage stress increases self-confidence and improves resiliency. These will help you handle future challenges and adapt more easily.

- Planning ahead can help you when difficulties arise.
- Identify a few strategies to use to deal with stressful situations.
- Evaluate each attempt to manage stress to determine if the coping strategy used was helpful and decide if that strategy is effective moving forward.

Cognitive and Mental Coping Skills

Cognitive and mental coping skills involve using your thoughts constructively to counteract negative effects of stress. This can be achieved through:

- Problem solving
- Re-visit a response to identify strengths
- Positive self-talk
- Meditation

Personal and Social Coping Skills

Personal and social coping skills involve making sure we don't get caught up in our work and routines without taking time to make happiness a priority:

- Take a break
- Explore spirituality
- Develop hobbies and personal interests
- Enjoy nature
- Volunteer
- Take a vacation or small getaway

Physical and Behavioural Coping Skills

Physical and behavioural skills involve taking care of yourself and staying as healthy as possible

- Physical activity
- Yoga
- Stretching

Being in stressful situations may trigger you to desire to smoke. Have a plan and use coping strategies to help alleviate the craving. The plan might include NRT medications, physical activity, mindfulness, distracting yourself from urges to use, changing daily routines, and planning to do something specific when you have the urge to use tobacco

- Eating a healthy diet
- Getting appropriate sleep
- Doing relaxation exercises
- Deep breathing

Why is physical activity an excellent strategy to cope with the stress of quitting tobacco?

- Physical activity alleviates symptoms of withdrawal including lack of focus and attention.
- Helps to reset our reward system by boosting the dopamine (feel good chemical your brain produces).

- Lowers anxiety, tension and stress levels.
- Exercise can fend off cravings for 50 minutes and double or triple the interval to the next cigarette.

Make sure your coping strategy is positive – alcohol and drugs are examples of coping strategies that have dangerous side effects.

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