

# My Coping Menu

## What is Coping?

When you quit smoking, the urges, desires and triggers for a cigarette don't just magically disappear. Instead, you have to learn to deal with all the situations where you used to smoke without having a cigarette.

But, dealing does not mean that you have to completely stop living your life and join a monastery! It does mean that you must work at changing how you do many of the routines that prompt you to smoke. It also means changing how you think in those tempting situations. That's coping!

**Coping is the key to successfully living a life without cigarettes.**

Think about this: you have unconsciously connected smoking with many behaviors and feeling that you experience every day of your life. Just doing that behavior or experiencing that feeling automatically triggers a desire for a cigarette. Unless you do something to prevent those urges from occurring and learn to deal with the urges that do occur you may be tempted back to smoking.

Coping breaks all those connections and allows you to live a life free of cigarettes.

These following techniques are all simple and doable. But they are powerful. Research and practical experience has proven time and again that these techniques help to eliminate urges as well as give you the tools to deal with urges that manage to slip through.

## How to use the Coping Menu.

Throughout the next few pages you will find literally hundreds of suggestions on how to deal with situations that trigger most smokers to smoke.

Think about the situations where you have been especially tempted to smoke in the past. Then refer to the coping suggestions for that situation. Decide on the best coping choice for you. This technique will be your "weapon of choice" the next time you encounter that situation.

Even though there are plenty of excellent coping suggestions here, these are by no means all the techniques that exist. So, if you have an idea that's not listed here don't be afraid to use it. Be creative!

Finally remember that no matter how many excellent ideas you come up with you must actually **put them into practice**. Work at this for at least four to five weeks and you'll quickly learn to deal with any tempting situation that may come along!

# Coping Menu

## General Suggestions

### Preventing Urges

There are many things you can do before you get into a tempting situation to eliminate the urge to smoke.

- ***Plan ahead.*** Know what you will do in any given situation before you encounter it. Practice that plan often.
- Visualize yourself comfortably dealing with the situation without a cigarette.
- Avoid the situation until you feel you can deal with it.
- Change the routines you associate with smoking as much as possible.
- Rethink your belief that smoking somehow makes your life better or helps you deal with all your problems.
- Begin an exercise program. If you can't do anything else just walk as briskly as you can every day for half an hour.
- Keep yourself busy. Avoid boring situations where you may begin to think about smoking.
- Remind yourself often that you are happy being a nonsmoker and that life is much better without cigarettes.

### Coping in the moment

However, sometimes the urge manages to come through. You must be ready to cope with that urge *as it is happening*. The following suggestions will help you deal with that urge so you are not tempted back to cigarettes.

- Deep Breathing. Every time an urge hits take in a slow deep breath, hold it for three to five seconds and then exhale.
- Drink a glass of water.
- Talk about the urge. Call your support person or let people around you know you need to talk for a few minutes.
- Escape the situation. Leave until you feel comfortable going back.
- Picture a stop sign in your head or say the word loudly to yourself.
- Count to twenty!
- Say to yourself, "I am in control" or "I can get through this."
- Just accept the thought. It's natural that you will have thoughts about cigarettes once you quit. Don't make a big deal out of them. Say to yourself "So what" and let the thought go.

## **Specific Situations**

### **After Meals**

- Get up from the table as soon as you are done eating
- Brush your teeth after every meal
- Always sit in the nonsmoking section of a restaurant
- At home have dessert and coffee in a different place from dinner
- Take a short walk after each meal

### **Alcohol**

- Explore alternative ways to socialize with friends
  - Go to a movie
  - Work out together
  - Have a party without alcohol
- If you choose to drink
  - Change what you usually drink
  - Limit yourself to one or two drinks
  - Talk about the urges when they occur
  - Leave the bar periodically for fresh air (Do some deep breathing while outside).
- Decide not to go to a bar for at least the first few weeks of your quit
- Remind yourself that you can have fun without drinking. Millions of people do it all the time!

### **Boredom**

- Always carry a book/newspaper/crossword puzzle with you
- Plan ahead so that you will not have long periods of inactivity
- Learn to enjoy doing nothing from time to time. You do not always have to be doing something important
- Use idle time to make the grocery list, plan your schedule or write letters
- Start a new hobby or begin an exercise program to fill the time

### **Breaks**

- Take your break at a different time
- Change the place where you take your break
- Take a short walk instead of staying indoors
- Do a crossword puzzle or read a novel
- Realize that you don't need an excuse to take a break. You deserve it!

## **Car**

- Choose a slightly different route for routine trips
- Remove the ashtray from the car
- Listen to a talk radio station or books on tape to keep your mind occupied
- Use public transportation for the first few weeks after you quit
- Change the environment in the car. Clean the entire interior, get new seat covers, put up a no smoking sign, etc.

## **Coffee/Tea**

- Drink a flavored coffee or a different brand of tea
- Drink coffee/tea out of a glass, paper cup, or the good china you never use
- Change where you have your coffee breaks at work
- If you always have your morning coffee at home have it at a café or at work
- Drink tea instead of coffee or vice-versa

## **Evenings**

- Find projects to do while at home. Clean out the basement, refinish furniture, etc.
- Keep yourself occupied while watching TV. Do puzzles, make out the grocery list, read a magazine
- Visit family or friends instead of staying at home
- Begin a new hobby or volunteer at a worthwhile organization
- Start an exercise program. If you can't do anything else, take a brisk half hour walk each night

## **Hand/Mouth**

- Use cinnamon sticks (the kind used for cider)
- Suck on sugar free candy
- Use straws/ swizzle sticks/ tooth picks
- Chew strong, tangy, sugar free gum
- Eat carrots or celery sticks

## **How to Say NO**

- If someone offers you a cigarette, politely tell this person that you are quitting smoking. "Thank you but I am no longer a smoker."
- Practice in front of a mirror saying "No thank you, I do not smoke."
- If you are going to be socializing with friends or relatives who smoke, let them know ahead of time that you have quit smoking and that you would be grateful if they did not offer you any cigarettes.

- Think of yourself as a non-smoker. That way, if someone offers you a cigarette you be less likely to automatically accept it.

### **Living with another smoker**

- Negotiate with the other smoker about where and when he/she will smoke. Do not make demands
- Have the other smoker keep his/her cigarettes where you will not be able to find them
- Give the smoker one ashtray. They will keep this ashtray clean and out of your sight when not in use
- Determine a reasonable length of time for these changes
- Surprise the smoker with a special dinner or gift at the end of your first month of quitting as a thank you for their cooperation

### **Morning Routine**

- Change the order of your routine
- Jump into the shower as soon as you get up
- Eat something for breakfast if you normally do not
- If you listen to the radio turn on the TV or vice versa
- Look in the mirror first thing each morning and say, "I'm proud to be a nonsmoker!"

### **Negative Moods**

- Rethink you belief that cigarettes will calm or relax you
- Ask yourself how a cigarette will make the situation any better
- Do deep breathing throughout the day
- As you do the deep breathing, think calming thoughts. Say to yourself, "I can get through this" or simply "I am calm."
- Realize that smoking does not hurt anyone but yourself. Smoking is not a good way to "get back" at anyone or to punish someone you are angry with.

### **Other Smokers**

- Avoid places where you know people are smoking for a few weeks
- Leave the scene from time to time if you have to be in a smoking environment
- Politely explain to the person that you are trying to quit and ask them not to smoke around you
- Ask yourself what is still appealing about seeing other people smoke

- Realize that the smoker is not happier or having more fun than you are just because they are smoking

## **Parties/Socializing**

- Before you go develop and practice a plan to deal with situation
- Rehearse going to the function. Close your eyes and see yourself having a good time, meeting people, and enjoying the music all without a cigarette.
- Practice saying “No thank you, I don’t smoke” just in case someone offers you a cigarette
- Don’t drink alcohol or limit yourself to one or two drinks
- Have a support person with you at the party

## **Stress Management**

- Separate cigarettes from the situation. Realize that smoking never made a situation any better or helped you deal with it.
- Step back, take a deep breath, and say to yourself, “I can handle this.” Then deal with the problem.
- Strategize about how to handle stressful situations with friends, relatives or trusted clergy *before* encountering those situations.
- Realize that every problem has a solution *that does not involve smoking*.
- Begin an exercise program, take a formal stress management class or learn to meditate.

## **Telephone**

- Stand instead of sit
- Move the location of the phone if you still have a landline
- Hold the phone in the hand opposite of the one you usually use
- Limit your time on the phone (use email or texting instead)!

## **Thoughts about smoking**

- Just because you think about something does not mean you have to do it. Remember, if you did everything you ever thought about you would be in jail right now!! Or dead!
- Don’t focus on the thought. Distract yourself:
  - Say to yourself “I am in control” and let the thought go
  - Remind yourself of the benefits of quitting
  - Think of the reason you quit. Focus on that
  - Say the word stop or picture a stop sign
- Accept the thoughts. You naturally will be thinking about cigarettes for a while after you quit. Say to yourself, “So what” and move on

- See yourself in your mind's eye as a successful nonsmoker. Practice seeing yourself in all kinds of situations dealing effectively without smoking.

## **Weight Gain**

- **Do not diet.** Attempting two major behavior changes at the same time usually leads to failure at both. Wait at least two or three months after quitting before tackling any weight loss program.
- Remember, the average weight gain, as a direct result of quitting, is only five to seven pounds. Any weight gain over and above that is due to behavioral changes on the part of the quitter.
- Drink six to eight glasses of water a day.
- Begin a modest exercise program. If you can do nothing else, take a brisk half hour walk every day.
- Remember, **smoking does not turn your body into a fat burning machine.** If it did, every smoker would weigh about 100 lbs.!!

## **Work**

- Rearrange your office or work space if you can
- Put a "No Smoking" sign or motivation poster in your work area
- Change your work routine as much as possible
- Listen to music, talk radio, or tapes
- Have a support person at work

