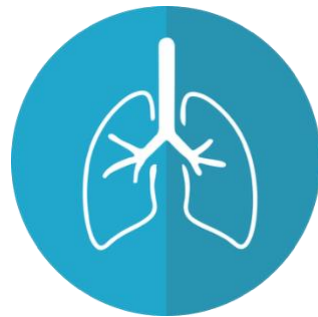





# **Breath of Change**

## **A Handbook to Be Smoke-Free**



**Empowerment, Support, and Science  
for a  
Smoke-Free Life**



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## Introduction

I want to welcome you to the beginning of your smoke-free journey. Whether you're just starting to think about quitting, know someone who should quit or you're already in the process, this guide is here to support, educate, and empower you. Created specifically for those wanting a "Breath of Change". It offers science-backed advice, practical tools, and emotional encouragement.

I believe this book will give you much needed insight into smoking or inhaling smoke. I am a Registered Respiratory Therapist, and I work in the healthcare field and unfortunately many of the people that give me job security are those that smoke or used to smoke. If you could see what I see daily, you will take this book seriously.

You will find out what you're inhaling. The negative effects of smoking, the benefits of quitting and techniques to help you overcome this addiction are included in this book.

You'll find personal strategies, professional resources, and a full view of the many forms nicotine takes—from cigarettes and vapes to pouches and marijuana. This isn't just about quitting, it's about rediscovering yourself, your health, gaining knowledge and your confidence.

## IDENTIFYING CIGARETTES AND OTHER ALTERNATIVE DEVICES (E-CIGS AND VAPES)

### WHAT'S IN A CIGARETTE?

- Nicotine – a highly addictive central nervous system stimulant. It triggers the release of adrenaline and dopamine.
- Tar - Gums up your lungs, sticks to the inside of your lungs causing air sacs to lose its elasticity.
- Carbon Monoxide - Starves your body of oxygen.
- Arsenic and Ammonia - Found in cleaning products and rat poison.
- Smoking = inhaling over 7,000 chemicals, many of which are toxic, addictive, or cancer-causing.
- An average cigarette is about 2mg of nicotine.

### WHAT'S A VAPES

E-cigarettes, vape pens, disposables, mods—you've seen them everywhere. Sleek, techy, customizable. For many adults, vaping started as a “better alternative” to smoking, or as a trendy way to manage stress and cravings.

And for some switching from cigarettes to vaping did feel like a win at first. No ash. No tar. No smell. No detection.

But the real question is: Is it helping you quit—or just reshaping the addiction?

### HOW E-CIGS WORK

Vapes heat a liquid (“e-juice”) that typically contains:

- Nicotine
- Propylene glycol or vegetable glycerin
- Flavorings
- Other chemicals (some known, some still being studied)

You inhale a vapor instead of smoke, which means less exposure to harmful combustion byproducts. That's the central promise of vaping as harm reduction. Vaping was marketed as a safer alternative to smoking, especially to young adults looking for a "cleaner" high. The research is quickly catching up with reality.

#### THE CASE FOR E-CIGS AS A QUIT TOOL

Some studies show that vaping may help smokers quit when other methods fail—if used strategically and temporarily.

But these benefits come are still being studied.

#### THE HIDDEN RISKS AND LONG GAME

**Long-term addiction:** Many vapers end up using nicotine more often than when they smoke because it's easy to vape mindlessly.

**Lung irritation:** Although safer than cigarettes, vaping isn't harmless. Some flavorings and chemicals have unknown long-term effects.

**Psychological dependency:** The hand-to-mouth ritual, the hit during stress—these keep the habit alive.

**Cost:** Over time, the price of pods, coils, juice, and devices adds up.

So... Is It Helping You Quit? Or Just Keeping You Hooked?

**This is the hard truth:** In my opinion vaping is only helpful if it's part of a plan to quit—not a lifestyle.

If you're still vaping daily a year after "quitting" smoking, you've just traded one dependency for another. And while vaping may be less harmful, it's not harmless—especially when it drags on indefinitely.

## NICOTINE POUCHES - WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Nicotine Pouches are pouches that contain nicotine, but no smoke or tobacco. They also can pose a risk of dependence. The pouches are placed in the mouth on the gum and could cause mouth cancer. The common pouches on the market are ZYN, VELOS and Lucy. These products do contain low levels of formaldehyde. The levels are lower than what's found in traditional cigarettes. The pouches also contain small amounts of ammonia, chromium and nickel. One ZYN 3 mg has the equivalence of ½ - 1 cigarette and the 6mg has the equivalence. 1-2 cigarettes.

These patches allow for a gradual reduction of nicotine.

See the following ZYN.com website for questions: <https://us.zyn.com/questions/>

## BREAKING THE HABIT—SMOKING MARIJUANA

Quitting marijuana isn't just about putting down the lighter—it's about reclaiming control, redefining your identity, and rediscovering what life feels like with full clarity. Whether you're quitting for your health, your family, your goals, or just because you're curious about what's on the other side, this chapter is here to walk with you through the process.

### KNOW YOUR "WHY"

The first—and maybe most important—step is understanding your motivation:

- Is it affecting your memory or focus?
- Do you feel dependent on it to relax?
- Are you worried about your job or legal consequences?

Write down your reasons and revisit them often. They'll anchor you when cravings or stress try to pull you back.

### AVOIDING TRIGGERS

- Stay clear of people, places, or routines that spark the urge.
- Quitting weed can feel like standing barefoot at the edge of a frozen lake. You know the plunge will jolt you—but on the other side is clarity, peace, and warmth.
  - To ease the transition, start trimming. If you usually smoke in the evening, try delaying by an hour. If you roll a full joint, cut it in half. Every reduction is a rehearsal for letting go. It's like loosening your grip on a crutch you no longer want to carry.
  - Know your triggers. Maybe it's the flick of a lighter, the scent of a certain room, or the ritual of winding down to a playlist. Identify them as the thing that's holding you down. Then defuse them—change your soundtrack, some music put you in the mood to get high, open a window and inhale fresh air, light a candle that smells like vanilla.

### FIND YOUR PEOPLE

You're more likely to succeed with support:

- Talk to someone you trust—no shame, just honesty.
- Join online communities or apps with others on the same path.
- Consider a counselor or addiction therapist who specializes in behavioral strategies.

## REPLACE, DON'T JUST REMOVE

If marijuana played a big role in your routine, find new rituals to fill the space:

- Morning walks instead of wake-and-bake.
- Journaling or art to process emotions.
- Herbal tea, mindfulness apps, or breathwork for stress relief.

## ADDRESS THE MENTAL SIDE

Cravings will hit—and they often have little to do with physical withdrawal. Instead:

- Practice recognizing urges without acting on them.
- Remind yourself: "This is temporary. I don't need it."
- Celebrate even the tiniest wins—every smoke-free day is progress.
- "Cravings come from stress, habit, and unresolved emotions."

"You don't have to see the whole staircase, just take the first step." — Martin Luther King Jr

Keisha used to call herself a "high-functioning stoner." She held down a job, made people laugh, and always had a witty comeback. But behind the quick wit was a growing fog—missed deadlines, constant fatigue, and this hollow feeling she couldn't explain.

At first, quitting felt like losing her best friend. The evening ritual, the escape from stress—it had been there through heartbreak, boredom, even joy. But Keisha knew it was keeping her small.

So, she made a plan. She lit one last joint on a quiet Sunday night and whispered goodbye like it was an ex she still cared for but no longer needed. The first week was rough: vivid dreams, irritability, and a yawning ache that wouldn't go away. But she journaled through it. She picked up running—slow at first, wheezy—but each mile felt like shedding old skin.

One day, she woke up and didn't crave it. The urge had become a whisper instead of a roar.

Now, Keisha looks forward to mornings. Her eyes are brighter, her humor sharper. She calls it “stepping back into herself.” And she doesn’t miss who she was—because she finally loves who she’s becoming with a *breath of Change*.

## THE HIDDEN HARM - THE NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF SMOKING

### WHY LIGHTING UP BURNS MORE THAN JUST YOUR MONEY

Let's break down what happens when you smoke—and why quitting is one of the best decisions you'll ever make.

### CIGARETTES — THE OLD KILLER STILL CLAIMS LIVES

For decades, cigarette smoking was glamorized in movies, music, and media. But behind the image lies a harsh reality:

- **Lung damage:** Cigarette smoke contains over 7,000 chemicals, 69 of which are known to cause cancer. Smoking inflames the lungs, leading to chronic bronchitis, COPD, lung cancer and increased vulnerability to infections like pneumonia.
- **Heart disease:** Nicotine and carbon monoxide in cigarettes narrow blood vessels, raise blood pressure, and damage the cardiovascular system, increasing risk of heart attacks and strokes.
- **Cancer risk:** Beyond lung cancer, smoking is linked to cancer of the throat, mouth, bladder, pancreas, and cervix.
- **Physical appearance:** Smoking prematurely ages the skin, causes yellow teeth, bad breath, and dull hair. It also reduces oxygen to your muscles, which can impact athletic performance.
- **Financial burden:** A pack-a-day habit can cost thousands of dollars a year. The true cost is not just financial but also the price of lost time, health, and opportunity.

### VAPING — THE TRENDY TRAP

- **Chemical exposure:** Vape liquids contain harmful substances like formaldehyde, diacetyl (linked to “popcorn lung”), heavy metals, and volatile organic compounds.
- **Nicotine addiction:** Many e-cigarettes, especially popular brands like JUUL, contain more nicotine than a pack of cigarettes. High doses can lead to quicker addiction and greater withdrawal symptoms.

- **Brain development:** For young adults, the brain continues to develop into the mid-20s. Nicotine disrupts this process, affecting memory, attention, and impulse control.
- **Social and psychological effects:** Vaping can become a compulsive habit—something you do in class, in bed, or during work breaks. It's easy to underestimate how much and how often you vape, reinforcing dependence.
- **False safety:** Just because there's no smoke doesn't mean it's safe. Vaping may cause lung injuries, some of which have led to hospitalizations and even death.

#### DIP AND POUCHES — HIDDEN BUT HARMFUL

Smokeless doesn't mean harmless. Products like chewing tobacco, dip, snus, and nicotine pouches are often promoted as discreet, but they carry serious risks:

- **Oral cancers:** These products can cause cancer of the mouth, tongue, cheek, gums, and esophagus. Signs often go unnoticed until advanced stages.
- **Gum disease and tooth loss:** The constant presence of tobacco or nicotine pouches can erode gums, cause lesions, and lead to infections.
- **Nicotine dependence:** Smokeless products can deliver more nicotine than cigarettes. Some users keep pouches in all day, reinforcing constant dependency.
- **Digestive issues:** Ingesting juices from dip or pouches can irritate the stomach and increase risks of ulcers and digestive tract cancers.

#### SHORT-TERM EFFECTS (YOU'LL NOTICE THESE FAST)

- Bad breath and a permanent ashtray smell
- Stained teeth and yellow fingertips

- Coughing fits and reduced lung power
- Skin breakouts and premature aging
- Lower energy and slower workout recovery

## LONG-TERM HEALTH RISKS

Smoking doesn't wait to cause damage—it just gets worse the longer you go.

- Lung cancer (over 80% of all cases caused by smoking)
- Heart disease & heart attacks
- Stroke (2x higher risk)
- COPD – Chronic breathing disorder that worsens with time, requiring some to require supplemental oxygen
- A smokers cough, with tan colored mucus
- Reduced immune system – Get sick more often

## MENTAL HEALTH AND BRAIN IMPACT

You might think smoking calms your nerves. Here's the truth:

- Nicotine creates anxiety – then promises to fix the anxiety it caused.
- Mood swings & irritability spike between smokes.
- Higher risk of depression and mental burnout.

## THE BIG PICTURE

Whether it's smoke, vapor, or a pouch, the result is the same: addiction, health deterioration, and reduced quality of life. Mature adults—especially those balancing school, work early careers, life and relationships—often underestimate how much nicotine is shaping their decisions and well-being.

Quitting isn't just about stopping a habit. It's about reclaiming control over your body, your brain, your finances, and your freedom.

Smoking isn't just a "bad habit." It's a full-on attack on your body, brain, looks, wallet, and future.

Addiction rewires your brain—it's not just a habit, it's a trap.

#### HOW SMOKING DESTROYS YOUR WALLET

Let's talk money:

- 1 pack/day = average \$10/day
- That's \$300/month
- \$3,650/year
- Over \$36,000 in 10 years!

That's a car, a degree, or a year abroad—literally *up in smoke*. Think of some ways you could use the money you'll be saving.

#### WHAT SMOKING STEALS FROM YOU

It's not just about disease. Smoking slowly strips away your life, bit by bit:

- Your energy
- Your looks
- Your focus
- Your time
- Your confidence
- Your freedom

You're not in control—nicotine is.

#### FINAL THOUGHT

"You don't have to be perfect to quit. You just have to be done letting cigarettes write your story."

## QUICK RECAP

### Top 5 Reasons to Quit Now

- You'll look and feel better
- You'll save money
- You'll breathe easier
- You'll reduce stress
- You'll take back control

## BENEFITS OF QUITTING: A SMOKE FREE LIFE

Quitting smoking offers significant health benefits over time. These physiological changes are vital for restoring health and demonstrate the resilience of the human body.

Within two weeks to three months of quitting:

- Blood circulation improves noticeably.
- Lung function begins to increase.
- Carbon monoxide levels in the blood drop to normal.

Within one to nine months:

- Decrease in coughing and shortness of breath is likely.
- Cilia in the lungs regain normal function.
- Improved ability to clear mucus and reduce infection risks.
- Overall respiratory health is promoted.
- Enhanced circulation leads to more efficient healing and optimal oxygen transport.

After one year:

- Excess risk of coronary heart disease is reduced 50%.
- Notable decrease in the risk of heart attacks.

By five years:

- Risk of certain cancers, such as mouth and throat cancer, declines.
- Stroke risk can decrease to that of a nonsmoker.

After ten years:

- Likelihood of developing lung cancer drops to half that of a smoker.

After fifteen years:

- Risk of coronary heart disease aligns with that of a never smoker.

These milestones show just how quickly the body begins to heal after quitting smoking. Each stage is a reminder that every smoke-free day brings real, lasting benefits for your health and well-being.”

See: [www.cdc.org](http://www.cdc.org)

## ASSESSING YOUR HABITS AND SETTING GOALS: KNOW YOURSELF

Assessing smoking habits involves understanding your habits. Key factors to consider include:

- The number of cigarettes smoked per day
- The duration of the smoking habit
- Triggers that prompt smoking
- The number of attempts to quit in the past
- The readiness to change behavior

Additionally, it's important to evaluate an individual's awareness of the health risks associated with smoking.

This assessment can help identify patterns and motivations behind smoking, which can be crucial for developing effective cessation programs tailored to the individual's needs. Understanding these habits is essential to get support that can lead to successful quitting and improved health outcomes.

Utilize a tool like the one below to assess your level of dependence. Understanding your dependence level will help you choose the appropriate way to quit.

### FAGERSTRÖM TEST FOR NICOTINE DEPENDENCE

To determine your addiction level. Find out in 2 minutes.

This short quiz helps measure how dependent you are on nicotine. The higher your score, the stronger your physical addiction.

### INSTRUCTIONS

Answer each question honestly. Add up the points to find your score and read your results.

1. How soon after you wake up do you smoke your first cigarette?
  - a. Within 5 minutes — 3 points
  - b. 6–30 minutes — 2 points

- c. 31–60 minutes — 1 point
  - d. After 60 minutes — 0 points
2. Do you find it difficult to refrain from smoking in places where it is forbidden (e.g., library, cinema, school)?
- a. Yes — 1 point
  - b. No — 0 points
3. Which cigarette would you hate most to give up?
- a. The first one in the morning — 1 point
  - b. Any other — 0 points
4. How many cigarettes per day do you smoke?
- a. 10 or fewer — 0 points
  - b. 11–20 — 1 point
  - c. 21–30 — 2 points
  - d. 31 or more — 3 points
5. Do you smoke more frequently during the first hours after waking than during the rest of the day?
- a. Yes — 1 point
  - b. No — 0 points
6. Do you smoke even if you are so ill that you are in bed most of the day?
- a. Yes — 1 point
  - b. No — 0 points

#### SCORING

Your Score: \_\_\_\_\_

#### SCORE INTERPRETATION

#### ***Table 1 – Score Interpretation***

Total Score	Level of Nicotine Dependence
0–2	Very low
3–4	Low
5	Medium
6–7	High
8–10	Very high

#### WHAT THIS MEANS

0–4: You may have a habit more than a strong physical addiction—**great time to quit!**

5–7: You've got some dependence—you may feel withdrawal, but success is very possible with support.

8–10: Your body is heavily dependent on nicotine—quitting may be tough, but doable.

You'll benefit most by starting now with help.

# **THE QUIT PLAN**

## **The Quit Your Way Approach**

### **It's not a Race – It's a Strategy**

## HOW TO QUIT

### NICOTINE REPLACEMENT THERAPY – EASING THE TRANSITION

Quitting nicotine cold turkey can feel overwhelming, especially if your body has grown dependent on it. That's where Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) can help. It is the #1 recommendation for cessation by FDA. It allows your body a safer, controlled dose of nicotine to reduce withdrawal symptoms while you break the behavioral and emotional habits.

### WHAT IS NICOTINE REPLACEMENT THERAPY (NRT)?

NRT is a medically approved way to help people quit tobacco and nicotine products by replacing them with cleaner sources of nicotine. Unlike cigarettes or dip, NRT products don't contain the tar, carcinogens, or toxic chemicals found in traditional tobacco.

Available options include:

- Nicotine patches
- Nicotine gum
- Nicotine lozenges
- Nicotine nasal spray
- Nicotine inhalers
- Chantix and Bupropion

These options are often available over the counter, though medication, sprays and inhalers may require a prescription.

### CHOOSING THE RIGHT NRT FOR YOU

Each product has pros and cons depending on your lifestyle, level of dependence, and personal preferences:

**Patches:** Steady nicotine delivery over 16–24 hours. Great for consistent baseline support. Cigarettes and vapes deliver quick hits of nicotine, which train your brain to crave the ritual—the pull, the buzz, the stress relief. But when you're using a patch, you break that cycle. You still get nicotine, but not the rush. This

gives your body time to adjust without sending your brain into withdrawal panic mode.

- One-a-day simplicity: Stick it on in the morning, forget about it.
  - No social pressure: No one even knows you're using it.
  - No triggers: No coffee But Do They Actually Work?
  - Yes—especially when you're ready.

Nicotine patches double your chances of quitting successfully compared to trying to quit cold turkey. They're backed by science, used by doctors, and recommended by public health experts. And when combined with other support (lozenges, quit-text programs, mindfulness, or therapy), your chances of quitting go up even more.

- One of the coolest things about patches? You're in control.
- You start at a dosage that matches how much nicotine you've been using—then taper down over time. No crash, No guilt, just slow, steady progress on your terms.

Here's How to use the patch:

- Step 1: Start with a 21mg patch (for heavy smokers/vapers).
- Step 2: Move to 14mg after a few weeks.
- Step 3: Finish on 7mg as your body adjusts to less nicotine.

So, Who's This For?

- You, if you've tried to quit and it didn't stick.
- You, if vaping became a daily thing and now, you're not sure how to stop.
- You, if you're smoking and want to protect your future health.
- You, if you're ready to move on—but want a little backup.

**Gum and Lozenges:** Ideal for breakthrough cravings and oral fixation. Help replace the ritual of smoking or dipping. These can be used with the patches.

- Nasal spray: Fast acting, best for intense cravings. May cause nose or throat irritation.
- Inhalers: Mimic the hand-to-mouth behavior of smoking, useful for people who miss the routine.

**It is recommended by the FDA to use this in conjunction with the patches for better results. Combining long-acting (patch) with short-acting (gum or lozenge) for stronger support.**

#### HOW TO USE NRT EFFECTIVELY

- Start before your quit date: Use the first dose the day before you stop using tobacco.
- Follow dosing guidelines: Match your level of nicotine dependence. Higher-dependence users may start with higher-dose patches or more frequent lozenges.
- Be consistent: Use NRT as directed, even if cravings seem to improve. Stopping too early increases relapse risk.
- Track progress: Keep a log of NRT use, cravings, and any side effects.

#### BENEFITS OF NRT

- Eases withdrawal: Reduces irritability, anxiety, fatigue, and cravings.
- Improves quit rates: Research shows NRT can double your chances of quitting successfully.
- Supports gradual transition: Allows your body to adjust slowly without harsh withdrawal shocks.

#### COMMON CONCERNS AND MYTHS

- “Aren't I just replacing one addiction with another?” Not exactly. NRT eliminates harmful chemicals while helping you taper off nicotine. The goal is short-term use, not lifetime dependence.

- “Is NRT safe?” Yes. NRT is considered safe for most adults, including those with heart conditions, though it’s always best to consult a healthcare provider.
- Will I overdose on nicotine if I use the patch and continue to smoke? No, you will not
- “What if I still slip up?” A lapse doesn’t mean failure. Keep using NRT and refocus your Quit Plan.

## PLANNING TO WEAN OFF NRT

Most NRT users start tapering down after 6–12 weeks:

- Reduce patch strength gradually.
- Use gum/lozenges less frequently.
- Set a timeline for stopping entirely.

Quitting nicotine is a process. NRT is just one tool—but a powerful one if used correctly.

In the next chapter, we’ll talk about setting your quit date and building a support system to stay on track.

## QUIT DATES AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS – BUILDING YOUR LAUNCH PLAN

Making the decision to quit is a powerful first step, but turning that decision into action requires structure, timing, and support. This chapter will help you choose a quit date, prepare for it effectively, and build the network you need to succeed.

Start by giving yourself a timeline. Circle a quit date on your calendar and treat it like a sacred appointment with your future self. Maybe it's two weeks from today. Maybe it's Monday, maybe your birthday, But when you **say it out loud**, you begin to reclaim control.

### WHY SET A QUIT DATE?

A quit date is a personal commitment—a line in the sand. It's a day when your plan becomes real and your effort becomes focused.

### BENEFITS OF CHOOSING A QUIT DATE

- Gives you time to mentally and physically prepare
- Helps build a sense of urgency and motivation
- Allows you to plan around triggers and stressful events
- Turns “someday” into a specific, achievable goal

**Pick a date within the next 1–2 weeks to keep momentum going. Avoid overly stressful periods (holidays) if possible.**

### PREPARING FOR YOUR QUIT DAY

Once you've selected a quit date, create a checklist to set yourself up for success:

- Inform your circle: Tell friends, roommates, partners, or coworkers about your plan. Ask them to support—not pressure—you.
- Clean your space: Remove all nicotine products, ashtrays, lighters, and vape chargers from your environment.

- Stock replacements: Have healthy snacks, water bottles, straws, cinnamon sticks, gum, and NRT on hand.
- Identify your cravings plan: Know how you'll handle the urge when it hits. Will you walk, chew gum, journal, call a friend?

Use the days leading up to your quit date to reduce your intake, reflect on your motivations, your WHYS and rehearse your coping strategies.

## BUILDING A SUPPORT NETWORK

You're more likely to quit—and stay quit—if you're not doing it alone. Your support system can include:

- **Friends and family:** Choose people who will encourage you and hold you accountable without judgment.
- **Quit buddies:** Partner with someone else who is quitting. Share wins and setbacks together.
- **Counseling and therapy:** Talking to a therapist—especially one trained in addiction—can help manage stress and prevent relapse.

## WEANING OFF NICOTINE – GRADUAL STRATEGIES FOR LASTING SUCCESS

Not everyone quits nicotine cold turkey—and that's okay. For many adults, gradually reducing nicotine intake, or "weaning," is a more manageable and sustainable approach. This chapter outlines how to taper your use effectively while minimizing withdrawal symptoms and setting yourself up for long-term freedom.

### WHAT IS WEANING?

Weaning means slowly cutting down on how much nicotine you use over time, rather than stopping abruptly. It can involve:

- Reducing the number of cigarettes, dips, or pouches per day
- Lowering the nicotine level in your vape juice
- Shortening vape sessions or spacing them out
- Switching to lower-dose nicotine replacement products

The goal is to train your brain and body to rely less on nicotine, making the final quit day easier to handle.

### BENEFITS OF WEANING

- Less intense withdrawal: Gradual reduction gives your body time to adjust
- Improved confidence: Small wins can build momentum
- Greater control: You stay in the driver's seat
- Flexibility: Can be tailored to your lifestyle and stress levels

For many, weaning also creates opportunities to untangle psychological habits before tackling physical cravings all at once.

### HOW TO BUILD A WEANING PLAN

- Track your current use: Know how much, when, and where you typically use nicotine.
- Set reduction goals: For example, cut down by 1 cigarette or vape session every 1–3 days.

- Use substitutions: Try sugar-free gum, cinnamon sticks, straws, water, or stress-relief techniques in place of one session per day.
- Celebrate milestones: Acknowledge each setback and stay motivated.
- Set a final quit date: Aim for complete cessation within 2–6 weeks.

Example: If you vape 20 times a day, reduce to 15 for 3 days, then 10 for the next 3, and continue decreasing until zero.

### COMBINING WEANING WITH NRT

Nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) can support a weaning plan by providing a steady, lower dose of nicotine to ease withdrawal. You might:

- Use a patch while tapering off smoking
- Supplement NRT gum or lozenges as needed
- Transition from vaping to NRT entirely before quitting

NRT helps reduce the "spikes and crashes" of nicotine delivery, making cravings more manageable.

### WATCH FOR WARNING SIGNS

Weaning works best when it's consistent. Watch out for:

- Backsliding: Increasing use again during stress
- Excuses: "I'll just have one more before I cut down again"
- Inconsistency: Skipping steps in your plan

If this happens, don't beat yourself up. Reassess, adjust your plan, and reach out for support.

### FINAL THOUGHT

Weaning isn't about dragging out the process—it's about giving yourself a smoother on-ramp to a nicotine-free life. Whether you take 2 weeks or 2 months to wean, every reduction is a step toward freedom. You're not just cutting back—you're taking control..

## THE 5 D'S OF SMOKING CESSATION - PRACTICAL TOOLS WHEN CRAVINGS COME

The "5 D's" of smoking cessation are a practical set of strategies designed to help individuals resist the urge to smoke by addressing cravings and triggers. These techniques serve as a toolkit to navigate the often-challenging journey of quitting smoking.

**Table 2 – Five Ds of Smoking Cessation**

Distract	Engage in activities that divert attention away from the craving. This could include physical activities, such as taking a walk or exercising, or mental distractions like reading, solving puzzles, or engaging in a hobby.
Drink Water	Staying hydrated can help manage cravings. Drinking water not only distracts but also aids in flushing out toxins and decreasing the intensity of withdrawal symptoms.
Deep Breathing	Practicing deep breathing exercises can reduce stress and calm the mind, providing relief from the psychological triggers that often lead to smoking. This technique encourages relaxation and can be done anywhere.
Discuss	Reach out to a friend, family member, or support group for encouragement and accountability. Talking about feelings and receiving support can reinforce the commitment to quit and provide a sense of solidarity.
Delay	When the urge to smoke strikes, wait it out for at least 10 minutes. This brief period can help the craving pass, reducing the immediate impulse to light up. It also provides time to engage in other distraction techniques.

By incorporating these strategies, individuals can effectively manage cravings and stay on track in their journey to quit smoking. Up next: understanding withdrawal symptoms and how to manage them with resilience and strategy.

## WITHDRAWAL AND MENTAL HEALTH – NAVIGATING THE EMOTIONAL JOURNEY

Nicotine withdrawal is both physical and emotional. When you quit, your body and brain must re-learn how to function without a steady dose of nicotine. This chapter helps you understand the symptoms of withdrawal, the impact on your mental health, and the strategies that can get you through it strong and steady.

### WHAT IS NICOTINE WITHDRAWAL?

Nicotine is highly addictive. When you stop using it, your body experiences a temporary imbalance as it adjusts. Common symptoms of withdrawal include:

- Irritability or frustration
- Anxiety or restlessness
- Difficulty concentrating
- Depressed mood
- Headaches or insomnia
- Increased appetite or cravings for sugar

These symptoms usually peak within the first 3–5 days and begin to subside within 2–4 weeks. Understanding that these effects are temporary can help you stay the course.

### HOW WITHDRAWAL AFFECTS MENTAL HEALTH

For many, quitting nicotine can unmask or intensify underlying mental health issues, including:

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Mood swings
- Stress sensitivity

Nicotine artificially boosts dopamine, the brain's "feel-good" chemical. Without it, your natural levels can temporarily drop, making emotional regulation more difficult. This is normal—and it gets better with time.

## MANAGING THE MENTAL SIDE OF QUITTING

Here's how to care for your mental health while navigating withdrawal:

- **Stay active:** Exercise boosts mood and reduces cravings
- **Practice mindfulness:** Meditation, deep breathing, or journaling can ground you during tough moments
- **Stick to a routine:** Structure your day to minimize idle time and temptation
- **Talk it out:** Speak to a therapist or support group regularly
- **Avoid triggers:** Stay away from people, places, or situations that make you want to use

## WHEN TO SEEK PROFESSIONAL HELP

It's important to distinguish between normal withdrawal moodiness and deeper mental health concerns. Seek help if you experience:

- Persistent or worsening depression
- Thoughts of self-harm or hopelessness
- Anxiety attacks that interfere with daily life
- Inability to function at work, school, or in relationships

You are not weak for needing support. Many people find that quitting smoking is a chance to heal both physically and emotionally.

In the days leading up, you might notice tension creeping in—tight shoulders, jaw clenched, thoughts racing. That's normal. Your brain is preparing for a shift, and your old routines will try to resist.

## RESOURCES:

Therapy apps (e.g., Better Help, Talkspace)

National Suicide & Crisis Lifeline: 988

## PROGRESS, NOT PERFECTION

There will be hard days, but each one you complete nicotine-free is progress. Track your mood and symptoms in a journal or app and celebrate small victories. You're retraining your brain to function without a chemical crutch—and that takes courage and time.

#### FINAL THOUGHT

Withdrawal is tough, but temporary. Mental health is part of the quit journey—not an obstacle, but a path to greater well-being. The next chapter will explore how to identify and overcome relapse, helping you stay quit for good.

## RELAPSE – RECOGNIZING IT, RECOVERING FROM IT, AND STAYING QUIT

Relapse is common in the quitting journey—and it doesn't mean you've failed. In fact, understanding relapse can make you stronger and more prepared. It's known that people quit many times before getting to permanent and total cessation. This chapter explores why relapse happens, how to bounce back from it, and the tools you need to stay quit for good.

### WHAT IS A RELAPSE?

A relapse is when you return to using nicotine after a period of abstinence. It's not the same as a slip (one-time use), but both are part of the same spectrum.

Common triggers for relapse include:

- Stressful events (exams, work pressure, relationship problems)
- Social situations involving other users
- Boredom or loneliness
- Overconfidence (“I can have just one”)
- Emotional lows (anxiety, depression, anger)

Recognizing these triggers can help you plan better defenses.

### REFRAMING RELAPSE

Relapse is not the end—it's information. It shows you what's still vulnerable, and where you need to focus support or strategy.

Try this mindset:

- “I've learned what doesn't work for me.”
- “This is part of the process—not a reason to give up.”
- “I'm still committed to quitting.”

Use the experience to revise your plan—not abandon it.

## IMMEDIATE RECOVERY STEPS

If you relapse:

- Acknowledge it without shame: Be honest about what happened.
- Identify the trigger: What led to the slip or relapse?
- Remove remaining nicotine products: Get rid of everything.
- Reach out: Call a Quitline, therapist, or support person.
- Reset your quit date: Don't wait for "the right moment"—choose a new one soon.

The faster you bounce back, the less likely the relapse becomes a full return to regular use.

## STRENGTHENING YOUR RELAPSE PREVENTION PLAN

- **Keep a craving journal:** Record what you feel and what helps you cope.
- **Develop a rescue list:** A list of things to do when cravings hit—walk, call a friend, chew gum, meditate.
- **Build your refusal skills:** Practice ways to say no in social settings.
- **Keep reminders visible:** Post your reasons for quitting and benefits you've noticed.
- **Reward progress:** Celebrate milestones with healthy treats or activities.

## LONG-TERM RESILIENCE

- Expect cravings to pop up months later—this is called "spontaneous recovery." Be ready.
- Don't romanticize nicotine—remind yourself of the downsides.

- Stay connected to support systems even after the toughest part is over.

Recovery is about resilience, not perfection.

#### TO SUM IT UP

Relapse doesn't erase your progress—it reveals your strength to try again. Each time you recommit, you build more insight, more resolve, and more distance from nicotine. Keep going. You're not back at square one—you're further than you've ever been.

## DIGITAL ALLIES: QUIT SMOKING APPS AND THEIR BENEFITS

Quitting smoking is a challenging but rewarding journey, and there are several apps designed to support individuals in this process. These apps offer a variety of features to help users stay motivated and track their progress. For example, "Smoke Free" provides daily motivational tips and allows users to monitor the amount of money saved and health benefits gained since quitting. "Quit Genius" offers personalized quit plans, cognitive behavioral therapy techniques, and access to a supportive community.

Meanwhile, "Kwit" gamifies the quitting process, turning it into an engaging game that rewards users as they achieve milestones. These apps, among others, can be valuable tools in helping individuals overcome cravings, track their progress, and stay committed to a smoke-free life.

### NEED BACKUP? YOU'RE NOT ALONE

Quitting isn't easy—but it's easier when you're supported. Whether you're looking for encouragement, structure, or someone to talk to, these tools and communities are designed with young adults in mind.

### DIGITAL SUPPORT AND APPS

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#### ***QUITSTART APP (BY SMOKEFREE.GOV)***

A free app - Helps track cravings, set goals, and stay motivated.

Download for iOS or Android

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#### ***THIS IS QUITTING (BY TRUTH INITIATIVE)***

A powerful text-message program made just for young adults quitting vaping. Free, anonymous, and non-judgmental.

Text DITCHVAPE to 88709

[thisisquitting.com](http://thisisquitting.com)

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#### ***MYLIFE MYQUIT***

A quit program for teens and young adults that offers free and confidential coaching via text, chat, or phone.

Text Start My Quit to 36072 or call 1-855-891-9989. [mylifemyquit.com](http://mylifemyquit.com)

## RECOMMENDED QUIT SMOKING APPS

- **QuitNow!** – Tracks progress, offers milestones, and motivational stats
- **Smoke Free** – Uses evidence-based methods and includes craving journaling
- **Kwit** – Gamifies the process and adds interactive tools
- **Reframe** – A supportive community and habit-tracking for marijuana use

## SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITIES

Reddit: [r/stopsmoking](https://www.reddit.com/r/stopsmoking)

Real stories, advice, and encouragement from people going through the same journey. Great for lurkers and active posters alike. [reddit.com/r/stopsmoking](https://www.reddit.com/r/stopsmoking)

BecomeAnEX (by Truth Initiative)

An online community built for people quitting smoking or vaping, with forums, journaling tools, and progress tracking. [becomeanex.org](http://becomeanex.org)

Mindfulness & Mental Health, Abide App

Headspace / Calm / Insight Timer

Meditation apps with free resources for managing cravings, anxiety, and stress—the emotional side of quitting.

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline Call or text 988 anytime help is a call or text away.

## QUITLINE'S AND PROFESSIONAL HELP

Free resources are available nationwide:

- 1-800-QUIT-NOW: Connects you to local quit coaches, customized plans, and free resources.
- SmokefreeTXT: Text-based encouragement and support from the National Cancer Institute.
- State-specific Quitline's Programs: Many states offer free nicotine patches, gum, or counseling.
- Local Health Department Resources – Many states offer their own Quitline's and programs

## BENEFITS OF USING A QUITLINE:

- Personalized support tailored to your goals, triggers, and preferences
- Access to trained professionals who understand the quitting process and how to manage obstacles
- Free or low-cost nicotine replacement therapy in many states
- Scheduled follow-up calls for accountability and motivation
- Confidential help available anytime—day or night

Don't hesitate to use professional help. Trained quit coaches know what you're going through and can guide you step by step.

## VISUALIZE SUCCESS

In the days leading up to your quit date, take time to visualize:

- What your first day nicotine-free will look like
- How you'll handle cravings
- What success means to you in 1 week, 1 month, and 6 months

Post affirmations or reminders where you'll see them daily. Remind yourself why these matters.

#### THERAPY AND SUPPORT GROUPS

- SMART Recovery – Cognitive-behavioral based, non-12-step support
- Nicotine Anonymous – 12-step program with meetings and sponsorship
- Talk space / BetterHelp – Online therapy platforms for mental health and addiction

#### FINAL THOUGHT

Quitting is more than just stopping. It's about becoming someone new—someone free from nicotine's grip. Your quit date is the launchpad. Your support system is your fuel. The next chapter will help you handle strategies to stay the course.

## YOUR JOURNEY DOESN'T END HERE – IT BEGINS

So here you are. You've made it to the final chapter — and that says a lot about you.

You've read about the dangers of smoking, how nicotine hooks the brain, and affect your organs and tissues in your body, and how quitting changes your life on every level. You've learned strategies, faced the fears, and seen the truth behind the smokescreen.

Now, it's time to turn knowledge into power.

## YOU ARE NOT JUST QUITTING SMOKING — YOU'RE RECLAIMING CONTROL

Quitting smoking isn't about giving something up. It's about getting something back:

- Your **freedom** from cravings.
- Your **health** — lungs, heart, and everything in between.
- Your **money**, time, energy, and peace of mind.
- Your **future**, unclouded.

Every cigarette not smoked is a win. Every urge resisted is strength. Every day you stay smoke-free is proof that you're moving in the right direction.

## WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED MATTERS

Whether you've quit already or you're still preparing, you've built tools that many people never take the time to build:

- Awareness of triggers and patterns.
- Mental strategies to ride out cravings.
- Ways to replace smoking with purpose.
- Confidence that you're stronger than addiction.

## RELAPSES HAPPEN — RESILIENCE MATTERS MORE

If you slip up, you're not broken. You're human.

Relapse isn't failure — it's feedback. Learn from it:

- What triggered you?
- What can you do differently next time?
- Who can support you when it gets hard?

Then re-commit. Keep going. You only fail if you stop trying.

## STAY CONNECTED

You don't have to do this alone:

- Join a quit-smoking support group.
- Check in with a doctor or quit coach.
- Follow content creators who inspire healthy habits.
- Tell a friend — let them walk with you.

Community is fuel. Let others lift you when you need it — and one day, you'll be the one lifting someone else.

## FINAL WORDS: YOU'RE STRONGER THAN YOU THINK

You're not the same person who lit their first cigarette.

You've matured. You've learned. You've faced uncomfortable truths and imagined a better life for yourself. That life is possible — and it's ***yours for the taking.***

This isn't just the end of a book — it's the **beginning of your smoke-free life.**

Let this be the chapter you never forget — the one where you said:

“I'm done letting nicotine run my life. I choose me.” It's time for a Breath of Change.

You've got this, and I believe in You!

## VISUALIZE SUCCESS

In the days leading up to your quit date, take time to visualize:

- What your first day nicotine-free will look like
- How you'll handle cravings
- What success means to you in 1 week, 1 month, and 6 months

Post affirmations or reminders where you'll see them daily. Remind yourself why these matters.

QUITTING ISN'T EASY—BUT IT IS WORTH IT.

Every cigarette/vape/pouch you don't smoke is a victory.

Your lungs, your skin, your heart, your brain—they're all counting on you.

## APPENDIX AND RESOURCES

**Table 3 – Printable: Fagerström Test for Nicotine Dependence**

Question	Answer Choices	Score
1. How soon after waking do you smoke your first cigarette?	Within 5 minutes (3); 6–30 min (2); 31–60 min (1); After 60 min (0)	
2. Do you find it difficult to refrain from smoking in forbidden places?	Yes (1); No (0)	
3. Which cigarette would you hate most to give up?	The first one in the morning (1); Others (0)	
4. How many cigarettes per day do you smoke?	10 or less (0); 11–20 (1); 21–30 (2); 31+ (3)	
5. Do you smoke more during the first hours after waking?	Yes (1); No (0)	
6. Do you smoke even when sick in bed?	Yes (1); No (0)	

## SCORE INTERPRETATION:

- 0–2 = Very low dependence
- 3–4 = Low dependence
- 5 = Medium dependence
- 6–7 = High dependence
- 8–10 = Very high dependence

**Table 4 – Printable: Nicotine Replacement Therapy Dosage Chart**

Level of Dependence	Fagerström Score	Suggested NRT	Available Dosages (mg)
Low	0–2	Gum or Lozenge	2 mg
Low to Medium	3–5	Patch + Gum	Patch: 7 mg, 14 mg; Gum: 2 mg, 4 mg
	6–7	Patch + Inhaler or Nasal Spray	Patch: 21 mg; Inhaler: 10 mg cartridge; Spray: 1 mg/spray
Very High	8–10	Combo Therapy	Patch: 21 mg + Gum (4 mg), Inhaler, or Spray

**Table 5 – Printable: Weaning Worksheet**

Week	Number of Cigarettes/Vapes/Dips per Day	Triggers Identified	Replacement Strategy Used	Notes on Cravings & Mood
1				

2				
3				
4				
5				
6				

**INSTRUCTIONS:**

At the start of each week, plan how many nicotine uses you'll allow.

Note any cravings, what triggered them, and what strategies you used instead.

Track your mood and physical responses to help spot patterns.

**HELPFUL WEBSITES**

[smokefree.gov](http://smokefree.gov)

[cdc.gov/tobacco](http://cdc.gov/tobacco)

[truthinitiative.org](http://truthinitiative.org)

[drugabuse.gov](http://drugabuse.gov)

<https://us.zyn.com/questions/>

Remember, you're not alone. Help is out there, and it's okay to ask for it.

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Contact me if you have any question.

Name - Althea Woodley

Breath of Change: A Handbook to Be Smoke Free

Phone - 404-660-5460

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Website - [www.woodleysolutions.com](http://www.woodleysolutions.com)

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