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How to Help Someone Quit Smoking

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General hints for friends and family

Do respect that the person trying to quit is in charge. This is their lifestyle change and their challenge, not yours.

Do ask the person whether they want you to ask regularly how they're doing. Ask how they're feeling – not just whether they've stayed quit.

Do let the person know that it's OK to talk to you whenever they need to hear encouraging words.

Do help the person who's quitting to get what they need, such as hard candy to suck on, straws to chew on, and fresh veggies cut up and kept in the refrigerator.

Do spend time doing things with the person who's quitting to keep their mind off

Don't scold, tease, nag, blame, or make the person who's quitting feel guilty. Be sure they know that you care about them, whether or not they smoke.

If the person who's quitting relapses

Research shows that most people try to quit smoking several times before they succeed. (It's called a *relapse* when people trying to quit go back to smoking like they were before they tried to quit.) If a relapse happens, think of it as practice for the next time. Don't give up your efforts to encourage and support your loved one. If the person you care about fails to quit or starts smoking again:

Do praise them for trying to quit, and for whatever length of time (days, weeks, or months) of not smoking.

Do remind them that they didn't fail – they are learning how to quit – and you're going to be there for them the next time and as many times as it takes.

Do encourage them to try again. Don't say, "If you try again..." Say, "When you try again..." Studies show that most people who don't succeed in quitting are ready to try again in the near future.

Do encourage them to learn from the attempt. Things a person learns from a failed attempt to quit may help them quit for good next time. It takes time and skills to learn to how to be a person who doesn't smoke.

Do say, "It's normal to not succeed the first few times you try to quit. You didn't smoke for (length of time) this time. Now you know you can do that much. You can get even further next time." Most people understand this, and know that they have to try to quit again.

If you smoke and are in contact with someone trying to quit

Do smoke outside and always away from the person trying to quit.

Do keep your cigarettes, lighters, and matches out of sight. They might be triggers for your loved one to smoke.

Don't ever offer the person trying to quit a smoke or any other form of tobacco, even as a joke!

Do join your loved one in their effort to quit. It's better for your health and might be

easier to do with someone else who is trying to quit, too.

Call the American Cancer Society at 1-800-227-2345 to find out what resources might be available to help someone quit and stay quit.

Hyperlinks

1. smokingcessationleadership.ucsf.edu/

Written by

[The American Cancer Society medical and editorial content team](#) Our team is made up of doctors and oncology certified nurses with deep knowledge of cancer care as well as journalists, editors, and translators with extensive experience in medical writing.

This content has been developed by the American Cancer Society in collaboration with the [Smoking Cessation Leadership Center](#)¹ to help people who want to learn about quitting tobacco.

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