

Can I really help someone who is trying to quit tobacco?

Yes, you can. Once a smoker or tobacco user has decided to try to quit, they are more likely to make it when family, friends, and co-workers give their help and support.

Encourage them to share how they are feeling and then listen. Give them your attention, laugh at their jokes and offer praise as often as you can. Encourage them to share the triumphs with you as well.

How do I begin?

Quitting is different for each smoker or tobacco user. Ask them how you can be most helpful. This will show that you care and really want to help. Remember, it's not your fault if the smoker or tobacco user doesn't quit.

What kind of things can I do to help?

- Tell them that you think they can make it this time – even if they have tried before and failed. Most smokers and tobacco users have to learn how to quit. It may take numerous attempts before they quit for good.
- Be ready to help for the first few days after the smoker or tobacco user quits. They may want to talk or want extra help when a tough situation arises (coffee break, party, crisis at home or work, etc.)

- Offer to call or visit to check on how it's going. Ask how they are feeling, not just whether or not they are still tobacco or smoke free.
- Don't nag, scold, or preach! Let them know you admire them for trying to quit. Make sure they know that you care about them whether they quit or not.
- Give lots of praise and offer rewards for getting through a day, a week, or a month without smoking or using tobacco. Rewards can be simple – flowers, a lunch treat, or helping with a chore. Rewards are a great way to reinforce the new healthy behavior change they are making.
- Offer to do things together like exercising, going to an event, or eating in the nonsmoking section of a lunchroom or restaurant.
- Try to see it from their side. They are not sure that they really want to quit. Tobacco has been a steady friend for a long time. These feelings are normal even in smokers and tobacco users who succeed. Try to be understanding.
- Be patient and stay with it! They are trying to break an addiction that may have lasted many years.

My friend is really worried about gaining weight. What can I say?

Some people do gain weight when they stop smoking or using tobacco, but they are still much better off without tobacco. Exercise will help your friend beat the tobacco addiction. Exercise really helps to keep weight down. Do activities together where smoking and using tobacco don't fit: swimming, brisk walking, biking, theatre, etc.

Sometimes when people quit tobacco, they desire sweet foods. Help your friend make healthy food choices. Encourage them to drink water. Offer low-fat snacks like carrots, fresh fruit or vegetables, plain popcorn, sugarless gum, etc.

How can I help make a plan to handle urges to smoke or use tobacco?

Those who succeed in quitting plan ahead. Help them think of simple things that they can do when the urge comes. Here are some suggestions:

- Call you. Remind them that the urge will pass in just a few minutes.
- Help them to focus on something else.
- Encourage another activity or distraction.

- Practice controlled breathing. Deep breathing is an excellent relaxant. Breathe in and out slowly to bring more air into the lungs.
- Avoid places that may trigger the urge to smoke or use tobacco. It may be best to stay away from parties and alcohol for the first few weeks. Alcohol or coffee may increase the desire to smoke or use tobacco.

I quit tobacco myself a long time ago. Should I tell my friend it was pretty easy for me?

No. Quitting is different for everyone. You can be of special help since you already went through it. Do so by sharing how glad you are that they are trying to quit, offer praise, share quit tips, ask how they are feeling and if you can help in any way.

Do tobacco users really have withdrawal symptoms when they quit?

Many people do have symptoms during the first few weeks after they quit smoking or using tobacco. Common symptoms are: trouble sleeping, lack of concentration, and feeling anxious or restless. These symptoms will subside when the body gets rid of the nicotine and other toxins. Your friend may be grouchy, irritable, nervous or pushy... be forgiving. These symptoms will not last.

I work with someone who is trying to stop smoking/using tobacco, but I don't know them well. What can I do to help?

- Offer to walk or exercise with your fellow worker on breaks or at lunch. It will be a great way to get to know each other.
- Bring in a healthy snack to share or straws to chew on instead of smoking or using tobacco.
- Give lots of praise or offer a simple reward.

I never smoked or used tobacco. Can I really help a friend quit?

Yes! You just need to listen and offer encouragement. It takes more than willpower to quit. Most are addicted to tobacco and have a really hard time quitting.

I'm a smoker/tobacco user myself. Can I do anything to help?

Yes! You can help the most by not smoking or using tobacco around your friend. You can think up new tobacco-free activities to do to replace those where you used to smoke or use tobacco together. Consider quitting. They may be more likely to stay quit if you quit too.

What do I do if they start smoking or using tobacco again?

Forgive. Let go of blame or guilt. They are learning how to quit – not failing. Remind them of any progress they may have made. Feel good about yourself for helping. Encourage them to try again. Offer to help when they are ready to try again.

How long do I need to help?

- The first 7 to 10 days are usually the toughest and your friend may need extra help.
- Most smokers and tobacco users who go back to using tobacco, do so within the first three months – keep in close touch for that time.
- Slips (having puffs of a cigarette or some chew) are quite common. If they have slipped, remind them of all the good reasons they decided to quit. Forgive and forget.
- People who have quit tobacco sometimes have urges for months and even years after they stop. This is normal and should not worry them. The urges will happen less and less often.

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**Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center
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How to Help A Friend or Family Member Quit Tobacco

You can help make the difference!