

Helping a Smoker Kick the Habit

The University of WI-Stevens Point is a tobacco-free campus

If you are a non-smoker, chances are you are proud of it. You may believe that it is your job to help others develop a dislike for smoking as well. Unfortunately, you may have found it frustrating that none of your well-meant advice has the effect you hoped for.

According to smokers, nonsmokers comments range from minor nagging to shocking, rude put downs and have done more harm than good. Most nonsmokers simply do not know how to help health-concerned smokers. This handout will offer some suggestions for the nonsmoker, the one who is attempting to help a *smoker who wants to quit*.

What Doesn't Help

The ideal approach does *not* include hostile confrontations, threats, put downs, preaching, nagging, or hiding smoking paraphernalia.

Coercive, scare-type approaches or those based on excessive judgment, rationality, and criticism have little place in a quit-smoking program.

Hard sell approaches, which attempt to induce guilt or shame in smokers, should be avoided because they overwhelm the ego rather than inform, insist, or strengthen ego and esteem.

Approaches grounded in negativity or punishment, verbal or emotional, leave the smoker afraid, ashamed, or guilt-ridden, and not necessarily motivated to kick the habit.



Getting angry, hiding cigarettes, yelling, bribing, demanding, or any other efforts leave both the smoker and the helper frustrated.

Supportive Strategies

Nagging and picking on your friends or family members to get them to quit smoking should be avoided. Yet, there is room for approaching and suggesting ideas.

Take a smoker aside and tell them how much you care for them and how concerned you are about



their health. Express oneself in this manner encourages and supports the person.

When a smoker lets you know they are thinking about quitting, let them know how happy you are for them. Express confidence in their ability to make a change.

Consider giving up something yourself. Maybe candy, dessert, soft drink, or coffee consumption is something you have wanted to change for a while. Do this change to demonstrate your support.

Help the smoker establish boundaries and goals. For example, a new boundary might be “No smoking in the living room” or “no smoking on the way to class.”

Have the smoker keep track of the number of cigarettes smoked each day. Help with a daily or weekly decrease.

Support the smoker in keeping a log of when and where they smoked. Keeping track of smoking urges is helpful in changing habits and routines to achieve success. Help them to see their alternate options to smoking during this time too.

A supportive relationship with a caring nonsmoking friend or family member can make the smoker feel more secure, thus providing the positive motivation to change.



Things to Keep in Mind

- *Understand that smoking is a strong physical and psychological addiction.*
- *Refrain from telling a smoker what to do.*
- *Encourage smokers to engage in healthy enjoyable activities and positive nutrition decisions.*
- *Be appropriate and courteous when asking a smoker not to smoke in your presence.*





This document was prepared by the staff of the UWSP Student Health Promotion Office.
This information should not be used in lieu of medical care.
Last updated: August 2014
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