

WHAT IF YOU DON'T SMOKE . . . BUT WANT TO HELP SOMEONE QUIT?

"Smokers with support from family and friends are more successful in quitting smoking." (Pathways to Freedom, p. 15)

The *Pathways to Freedom* guide has seven suggestions for nonsmokers who want to help family and friends to stop smoking. The advice is found in the "HOW TO QUIT" section under the heading "If You Want to Help." Three of the nonsmokers in the fictional Freeman Family -- the daughter, Nia; the son, MJ and Grandma -- dispense valuable advice throughout the booklet.

1. Spend Time in Smoke-free Places

Nia: "Don't ask to go places where people will be smoking. Suggest a movie or a smoke-free restaurant instead." (PTF, p. 17)

Encourage smokers who are trying to quit to spend time in places where smoking is not allowed to avoid temptation. When you choose places for family and friends to eat or be entertained, check out the smoking policy first and look for places that are entirely smoke-free rather than places with smoking sections.

2. Understand Withdrawal

Grandma: "People can get very edgy when they are trying to quit smoking. Be understanding. Their grumpiness will pass with time." (PTF, p. 19)

Try to be caring during the time when smokers are going through nicotine withdrawal. Gentleness is the watchword. Former smokers can become jittery, edgy and even argumentative, especially during the first 48 hours of a quit attempt. Don't respond in kind. And never get so bothered that you consciously or subconsciously encourage the person to go back to smoking again just so you can have a more peaceful environment. Hang in and things will improve.

3. Support the ex-Smoker

Grandma: "If you have a friend who's trying to quit, be there for them. They need someone to tell them it's going to be all right." (PTF, p. 21)

Provide constant support and positive reinforcement for the person who is trying to quit. You may need to be available for late night calls! Keep reassuring the former smoker that the withdrawal symptoms will subside soon and that once cigarettes are behind them, life will be better and healthier.

4. Learn More about Cessation

MJ: "If family members want to know more about quitting smoking, tell them you'll look up stuff on the computer. If there is no computer at home, try the library." (PTF, p. 23)

Get as much current information on smoking cessation as you can and don't base everything on your personal experiences and beliefs, even if you are a former smoker who quit successfully. Be knowledgeable about cessation resources that are available locally. People who are trying to stop smoking generally welcome all the news and information about successful quitting they can get. Churches and community centers can also become repositories of information on cessation

5. Avoid Confrontation

Nia: "Parents who are trying to quit smoking can be very stressed out. We kids should be on our best behavior and stay out of trouble." (PTF, p. 25)

When a smoker tries to quit smoking, it's a family affair. Everyone has a part to pay in lessening the day-to-day stresses that the quitter faces. This is especially important advice for children and teenagers who may want a loved one to stop smoking but not realize that quitting will require some behavior changes from the kids and teenagers as well as the adults in the household.

6. Assist with Weight Management

Grandma: "Don't go on a cake and pie baking spree when someone is trying to quit smoking. (PTF, p. 27)

Quitters often try to compensate for losing their cigarettes by eating sweets and high-calorie foods. While that may work for the short-term, excessive weight gain eventually could precipitate a return to smoking. Encourage anyone who is trying to quit to: (1) exercise more, (2) eat healthier and (3) use non-fattening cigarette substitutes.

7. Be Less Critical

Grandma: "An ex-smoker who starts smoking again needs encouragement to try again - not your criticism." (PTF, pg. 31)

Avoid making critical and negative comments, even if a person trying to quit smoking relapses back to regular smoking. Nagging a smoker rarely gets the desired result. Encouragement, on the other hand, can help an individual who is going through rough times to find his or her faith, become re-energized, and then re-commit to quitting.