

Smoking and stress

Many people say stress is the main reason they smoke. Stress is also a reason why some people start again after they've quit for a while.

It's good to remember that smoking doesn't fix the problems that cause you stress. Those difficulties exist whether you smoke or not, and smoking actually causes more problems than it solves!

When you decide to quit, it's important plan for how you'll manage everyday stress. Identify healthy activities you can do every day, instead of smoking, to take a break and relax.

Here are some ideas you can try out now.

- Walking
- Listening to music
- Reading
- Meditating
- Journaling
- Calling a friend



It's also good to have a few strategies to cope with particularly stressful moments instead of reaching for a cigarette. Here are a few examples:

- Remove yourself from a difficult situation for a few minutes, if possible.
- Focus your attention on repeating a short phrase or “mantra,” either silently or out loud. Try “I choose to be smoke-free,” or “The urge to smoke will pass.” Let other thoughts go as you repeat your phrase.
- Deep breathing. Take at least three deep breaths. Learn more about deep breathing and other relaxation techniques using [this information](#) from [Helpguide.org](#).

Be careful not to confuse feeling stress related to “life” with cravings or stress caused by nicotine addiction.

- The stress you feel when you “need” a cigarette is actually your body going through withdrawal from nicotine.
- Smoking will make you feel better, but at some point you'll feel irritable or moody again. Once again you'll “need” another cigarette, and the cycle will continue.
- Quitting completely breaks this cycle.

Click on the links to learn more about [nicotine withdrawal](#) and [managing cravings](#) at [Smokefree.gov](#).

Visit this page at [smokefree.gov](#) to learn more about managing stress, mood and other challenges when quitting.

Continue to the next page for information on FREE help with quitting.

FREE ways to get help with quitting tobacco

- If you have **questions**, want **free information**, or **free in-person, one-one-one coaching** - call MGH Community Health Associate's [Living TOBACCO-FREE](#) at 781-485-6210.
- If you want **free over-the-phone coaching and free nicotine patches** - call the Massachusetts Smoker's Helpline at **1-800-Quit-Now** or **1-800- Déjalo (Spanish)**. Other languages: 1-800-784-8669. Deaf/TTY: 1-888-229-2182. 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. For more information, visit [Make Smoking History](#).
- If you want **free online help with quitting** - visit [Smokefree.gov](#) (also offers **texting** programs) and [BecomeAnEX.org](#).
- If you are a **Partners HealthCare employee**, contact **Partners in Helping You Quit** at 617-724-2205 or PiHQ@partners.org. You may be eligible for free medication or over-the-phone counseling to help you cut down or quit.



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