

## Being a True Support

### How do I support someone trying to quit?

If you know someone who is trying to quit tobacco, being truly supportive can be hard. People who use tobacco and try to quit go through withdrawal symptoms. They may get irritable, angry, depressed, lack concentration, etc., which can make them not so enjoyable to be around. Don't give up on them. The worst of the withdrawal symptoms usually last two weeks, and the cravings usually lessen within three months. In the meantime, use the following tips as a guideline to help you be a true support. (The following ideas are adapted from American Cancer Society's fact sheet, [Helping a Smoker to Quit: Do's and Don'ts.](#))

- Respect that the quitter is in charge – not you. Listen to what he/she asks of you in terms of support, and try to honor that, even if he/she asks you not to do something that is suggested here. These are guidelines; people who quit are individuals who have their own support needs.
- Ask the person if he/she would like you to call, visit, or e-mail regularly to see how he/she is doing.
- Tell the person it is okay to call, visit, or e-mail you when they need some encouragement.
- Do **NOT** offer advice. Just ask how you can help with the plan or program they are using.
- Help the person get what they need to help them quit, such as picking up tobacco substitutes they like (e.g., straws or toothpicks to chew on, fresh vegetables cut up and refrigerator ready, sugar-free hard candy to suck on, etc.), or going to get their nicotine replacement medicine.
- Spend time with the person to help keep his/her mind off tobacco – go to the movies or take a walk to get past a craving.
- Help the person with a few chores, occasional child care, cooking, or anything else that may lighten the stress of quitting.
- Celebrate along the way. Quitting is hard, and it is a big deal. Praise the person, and help him/her

celebrate as they meet short-term goals, even if it is making it through one movie without having to go outside and smoke. These short-term goals can be major accomplishments for someone who has smoked regularly for years.

- Do **NOT** take any of the person's grumpy moods personally during his/her nicotine withdrawal. Remember, this period usually will pass in about two weeks.<sup>1</sup>

If the person you care about fails to quit, don't give up your efforts to encourage and support:

- Praise him/her for trying to quit for whatever amount of time was possible (four days, three weeks, two months, etc).
- Encourage him/her to quit again. Don't say "If you try again." Say, "When you try again." Studies have shown that most people who don't succeed in quitting are ready to try again in the near future.
- Remember, the person may try to quit many times before quitting for good. Trying to quit five to seven times is not uncommon. Encourage him/her to learn from each attempt. Things a person learns from a failed attempt can help him/her in the future.<sup>1</sup>

If you use tobacco, you can still be supportive of the person trying to quit:

- Smoke or use other tobacco products outside, always away from the person quitting.
- Keep your tobacco products, matches, lighters, etc. out of sight; they may be a trigger for the person trying to quit.
- Don't ever offer the person tobacco, even in jest.<sup>1</sup>

#### Source:

1. American Cancer Society (2005). Helping a smoker quit: Do's and don'ts. Retrieved March 3, 2005. From [http://www.cancer.org/docroot/PED/content/PED\\_10\\_3x\\_Help\\_Someone\\_Quit.asp?sitearea=PED](http://www.cancer.org/docroot/PED/content/PED_10_3x_Help_Someone_Quit.asp?sitearea=PED).

