

Coping with cigarette cravings: Tips from former smokers.

Jingmin Zou*

Faculty of Psychology, Southwest University, Chongqing 400715, China

Introduction

Quitting smoking is a significant achievement, but it often comes with the challenge of dealing with cigarette cravings. These cravings can be intense and can make the quitting process more difficult. Understanding how to manage these cravings can make all the difference in maintaining a smoke-free lifestyle. This article explores practical tips from former smokers, offering evidence-based strategies to overcome cravings and stay on track in the journey to quitting smoking [1].

Cigarette cravings are intense desires to smoke, usually triggered by nicotine withdrawal. Nicotine, a highly addictive substance, affects the brain's reward system, making quitting difficult. When a person stops smoking, their body experiences withdrawal symptoms, which can include irritability, anxiety, and strong cravings for nicotine. Recognizing these symptoms and learning to manage them is crucial for long-term success [2].

One of the first steps in managing cravings is to identify triggers—situations or feelings that prompt the desire to smoke. Common triggers include stress, social situations, and even routine activities like drinking coffee. Former smokers recommend keeping a diary to track when cravings occur and what might have triggered them. This awareness allows individuals to develop coping strategies, such as avoiding high-risk situations or replacing smoking with a healthier habit [3].

Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) has been proven to help manage withdrawal symptoms by providing low levels of nicotine without the harmful chemicals found in cigarettes. NRT options include nicotine gum, patches, lozenges, and inhalers. Former smokers often find NRT to be a helpful way to gradually reduce their dependence on nicotine while they adjust to a smoke-free life [4].

Deep breathing is a simple yet effective way to combat cravings. It helps to calm the nervous system, reducing anxiety and stress that may trigger a desire to smoke. Former smokers suggest practicing a series of slow, deep breaths whenever a craving strikes. This can help shift focus away from the urge to smoke and back to the present moment [5].

Many former smokers find that taking up new hobbies or revisiting old ones can keep their minds occupied during moments of temptation. Engaging in physical activities, such as walking or yoga, can also provide a natural boost to mood and energy levels, counteracting the low feelings that

sometimes accompany nicotine withdrawal. The key is to find activities that bring joy and fulfillment, helping to replace the habit of smoking with something positive [6].

Social support is one of the most effective ways to stay motivated during the quitting process. Friends, family, and support groups can provide encouragement and accountability, making it easier to stay committed to quitting. Former smokers emphasize the importance of reaching out when struggling with cravings, as talking through the challenge can make it feel more manageable [7].

Celebrating small victories can help maintain motivation throughout the quitting process. Former smokers recommend setting goals and rewarding oneself for reaching milestones, such as going a week or a month without smoking. Rewards could include treating oneself to a favorite activity or buying something special with the money saved from not purchasing cigarettes. Drinking water can help reduce cravings by keeping the mouth busy and providing a healthy alternative to reaching for a cigarette. Staying hydrated also helps the body flush out toxins from nicotine more quickly. Former smokers often recommend carrying a water bottle to sip from whenever the urge to smoke arises [8].

Smoking is often linked to daily routines, such as having a cigarette with morning coffee or during a work break. Former smokers suggest altering these routines to break the association between smoking and specific activities. For example, if morning coffee triggers a craving, try switching to a different drink or changing the location where you enjoy your beverage [9].

During difficult moments, it can be helpful to remember why quitting is worth the effort. Make a list of the benefits of quitting, such as improved health, better breath, and the money saved from not buying cigarettes. Keep this list handy to read through whenever cravings strike, as it can reinforce the motivation to stay smoke-free. Technology can be a valuable ally in quitting smoking. There are numerous apps designed to help track progress, provide encouragement, and offer strategies for managing cravings. Former smokers have found these digital tools to be a convenient way to stay focused on their goal and monitor their achievements [10].

Conclusion

Coping with cigarette cravings is a challenge, but it is not insurmountable. By using strategies like identifying triggers,

*Correspondence to: Jingmin Zou, Faculty of Psychology, Southwest University, Chongqing 400715, China. E-mail: Jin.zou@swu.edu.cn

Received: 01-Oct-2024, Manuscript No. AARA-24- 153121; Editor assigned: 02-Oct-2024, PreQC No. AARA-24- 153121 (PQ); Reviewed: 16-Oct-2024, QC No. AARA-24- 153121;

Revised: 21-Oct-2024, Manuscript No. AARA-24- 153121 (R); Published: 30-Oct-2024, DOI: 10.35841/aara-7.5.229

practicing deep breathing, and seeking social support, former smokers have successfully managed their cravings and maintained a smoke-free life. Quitting smoking is a journey, and each day without a cigarette is a step toward better health and well-being.

References

1. Baenziger ON, Ford L, Yazidjoglou A, Joshy G, Banks E. E-cigarette use and combustible tobacco cigarette smoking uptake among non-smokers, including relapse in former smokers: umbrella review, systematic review and meta-analysis. *BMJ open*. 2021;11(3):e045603.
2. Cooper SY, Henderson BJ. The impact of electronic nicotine delivery system (ENDS) flavors on nicotinic acetylcholine receptors and nicotine addiction-related behaviors. *Molecules*. 2020;25(18):4223.
3. Adkins-Hempel M, Japuntich SJ, Chrastek M, et al., Integrated smoking cessation and mood management following acute coronary syndrome: Protocol for the post-acute cardiac event smoking (PACES) trial. *Addict Sci Clin Pract*. 2023;18(1):29.
4. Miglin R, Kable JW, Bowers ME, Ashare RL. Withdrawal-related changes in delay discounting predict short-term smoking abstinence. *Nicotine Tob Res*. 2017;19(6):694-702.
5. Chellian R, Behnood-Rod A, Bruijnzeel DM, Wilson R, Pandey V, Bruijnzeel AW. Rodent models for nicotine withdrawal. *J Psychopharmacol*. 2021;35(10):1169-87.
6. Taylor KL, Webster MA, Philips JG, et al., Integrating tobacco use assessment and treatment in the oncology setting: quality improvement results from the Georgetown Lombardi Smoking Treatment and Recovery Program. *Curr Oncol*. 2023;30(4):3755-75.
7. Saraiva SM, Jacinto TA, Gonçalves AC, Gaspar D, Silva LR. Overview of caffeine effects on human health and emerging delivery strategies. *Pharmaceut*. 2023;16(8):1067.
8. Hotta CT. From crops to shops: how agriculture can use circadian clocks. *J Exp Bot*. 2021;72(22):7668-79.
9. Strayer RJ, Friedman BW, Haroz R, Ketcham E, Klein L, LaPietra AM, Motov S, Repanshek Z, Taylor S, Weiner SG, Nelson LS. Emergency department management of patients with alcohol intoxication, alcohol withdrawal, and alcohol use disorder: a white paper prepared for the American Academy of Emergency Medicine. *J Emerg Med*. 2023;64(4):517-40.
10. Niederberger E, Parnham MJ. The impact of diet and exercise on drug responses. *Int J Mol Sci*. 2021;22(14):7692.