

Conquer Stress



Causes of Stress

Stress can be caused by anything from major life events to daily hassles that add up over time. Even happy events, like holidays with family or a pregnancy, can be stressful. The causes of stress are different for each person. Knowing your specific stressors is an important step in finding ways to deal with them. [What are the stresses in your life?](#)

The Stress-smoking Link

Many people smoke when they feel stressed. Even though they know that smoking hurts them and the ones they love, some smokers find it hard to give up cigarettes as a way to cope with stress.

Stress is part of life, so a key part of quitting smoking for many people is finding ways to handle stress and take care of themselves without smoking. Spend some time thinking about and looking for ways to deal with the busy days that are so often a part of life.

Dealing With Stress

Here are some tips that may help reduce the stress in your life. Try them out. Come up with your own ideas. If something works for you, great! If not, no big deal. Simply try another one. Keep looking for ways to make your quit easier.

- Take a break. Even if it is just for a few minutes, take a breather from a stressful situation. This might mean doing something that you find relaxing, like playing a game or talking with a friend. It could also mean stepping away from the situation for a while by taking a walk or going to get a snack.
- Breathe deeply. Take a few slow, deep breaths. For an extra benefit, breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth. You will feel your body relax.
- Exercise. When your body is active, it sends out natural chemicals that improve your mood and reduce your stress. Walking is one of the easiest exercises for most people. Even a short walk every day will help you to reduce your stress and improve your health.
- Visualize. Close your eyes and imagine you are in a place where you feel safe, comfortable, and relaxed. It can be a real place or one you make up. Picture it as clearly as you can. Let yourself enjoy being there for a few minutes.
- Scan for tension. Our bodies hold on to stress and tension. Scan through your body and look for places where you are tight. These are areas you should target for stress relief. Some simple things you can do to reduce stress include stretching, exercise, or getting a massage. Even a few minutes of rubbing your shoulders, neck, and head can release lots of tension.
- Talk to someone. Talking with a friend or family member about your life is a great way to help reduce stress.
- Focus on the here and now. A lot of people get stressed out thinking about the future. Try focusing just on what is happening now, not on what you might have to deal with in the future.
- Take care of yourself. Especially right after quitting smoking, you should make extra efforts to take care of yourself. This includes basic things like:
 - Eating a balanced diet
 - Drinking lots of water
 - Getting enough sleep
- Cut out caffeine. Caffeine helps keep you awake when you are tired, but it also can make you feel tense, jittery, worried, and stressed. If you are feeling stressed, drinking caffeinated coffee, tea, or soda can make it worse. This is especially true when you are quitting smoking. Cutting back or even eliminating caffeine can help reduce your stress.
- Face the problem. Stop and think about what makes you stressed. Is there something you could be doing to fix the problem? It can be helpful to talk with others about what is happening and see if there are ways to make it better