

**Empowering  
your life**

BY AJIT LUDHER



**S**MOKING is one of the leading causes of preventable death in the world. In Malaysia, about 100,000 deaths per year are attributed to smoking-related diseases. At least half of all lifelong smokers die early as a result of smoking.

If you want to live a long and healthy life, you should quit smoking. Some people are able to quit smoking on their own, but research shows that the best way to quit is through evidence-based smoking cessation technologies and programmes.

While 70% of smokers will attempt to quit smoking without using a programme, 90% of them will relapse.

Here are some tips to increase your chances of quitting on your own.

**► Have a plan**

To quit smoking, you must be prepared. Pick a goal date – between two weeks and 30 days from today – when you will smoke your last cigarette and start your life as a non-smoker.

**► Get a physical**

Be aware of any health problems that may exist. It's better to know. Make sure it's okay for you to exercise.

**► Get regular exercise**

Walking is a great way to start. Riding a bike or doing exercise videos at home is another. Exercising will also help you deal with negative feelings that may arise in your first days of quitting.

**► Prepare to quit**

If you smoke over a pack a day, give yourself two weeks to prepare your mind to quit smoking. If under a pack, give yourself a week. Adjust if necessary and based on your intuition and experience.

During your preparation period, write down all the reasons why it's so important for you to quit smoking. The more emotional, the better.

Write your reasons down on a few pocket-sized cards and carry them with you. Put them up where you will see them. Read them several times a day.

**► Change your diet**

Since nicotine acts as an appetite suppressant, you don't want to gain weight after you quit smoking. Start to eat three healthy meals a day with healthy snacks in between. Increase protein and reduce carbohydrates.

In your preparation period, start to scramble your smoking pattern. For instance, if you hold the cigarette with your left hand, use your right instead. If you like smoking on the front porch, change your smoking spot to some

# Break that habit

**> Here are some tips to help you quit smoking**

uncomfortable place like out by the trash cans. Also, start cutting cigarettes in half.

**► Finding a replacement**

In my opinion, this is the No.1 secret to successfully quit smoking. There are many reasons people smoke: to ease boredom, reduce stress, relax, as a reward, or simply because it's a habit.

Of course, there is the addiction component as well.

Find things to replace smoking with and have them ready on your quit day. Find ways to stay busy to keep from being bored. At work, instead of a smoke break, take a short walk.

Keep your mouth busy chewing on gum, carrot, celery or fruits. Drinking milk and plenty of fresh fruit juices works too.

Keep your hands busy with a stress ball, or an object you can keep in your hand like a pen or small stone. Take a Vitamin B supplement to help with stress.

**► Use affirmations**

Use positive self-talk such as "I am free!" or "I can do this" or "I am in control" or "I'm worth taking care of" or "I am healthy, happy and free from addiction". Make it a habit to say them several times a day.

Pick your quit day carefully; a day when you have time to focus on your goal. After you quit smoking, avoid alcohol which can decrease your motivation.

I suggest giving them up at least for the first month of being a non-smoker, longer even, as they are major triggers that will make you want to smoke.

If coffee makes you want to smoke, cut down or eliminate it for a while.

**► Get lots of sleep**

Your body needs energy to heal. Get your teeth cleaned and get checked for oral cancer. Get your car clean up if you smoked in it.

Avoid situations that will tempt you. Stay away from bars and parties where people will be smoking. Ask those close to you to refrain from smoking in front of you.

Give yourself a reward. Have a plan to get a massage after 30 days of being smoke free. Or take a trip. Or buy something for yourself.

And if you are looking for help to aid in your quest, hypnosis has been found to be more than twice as effective as quitting "cold turkey", and over 10 times as effective as nicotine replacement therapy.

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