

About Smoking

For most of the hundreds of years since smoking became a habit, it was not known that it was harmful. In the middle of the 20th century, however, we became aware that it is one of the major causes of and contributors to preventable death. At least half of long-time smokers die prematurely. Studies also show that non-smokers live at least ten years longer than smokers. Why then, do people still smoke?

Nicotine

People who habitually smoke cigarettes develop a 'craving' for them. Cigarette tobacco consists of nicotine and several other dangerous, addictive chemicals. Even when a smoker knows that tobacco and tobacco smoke is dangerous, nicotine's effect is so powerful that they continue to use it. The unpleasant withdrawal symptoms outweigh the desire to quit.

Dangers of Smoking

Apart from financial loss, smoking poses health dangers to smokers and anyone nearby who inadvertently breathes in 'second-hand' smoke. This is a hazard for people in public places and those living in the same household as the smoker. Smoke lingers on clothes, skin, hair and breath. Physical damage from smoking or inhaling second-hand smoke includes:

- ◆ Stroke
- ◆ Hardening of the arteries
- ◆ Lung diseases, such as Emphysema
- ◆ Bad breath and yellowing of the teeth
- ◆ Eye problems, such as macular degeneration or cataracts
- ◆ Cancers, such as bladder, gum, kidneys, lung, mouth and throat
- ◆ Brittle bones and skin damage including premature wrinkling and ageing
- ◆ Anxiety and stress when you want a smoke but it's inconvenient at the time
- ◆ Heart disease, including a heart attack
- ◆ Impaired circulation, leading to gangrene

Quitting

Most smokers admit that they would really like to quit. But the unpleasantness they feel when they try is so bad that they believe they 'cannot' quit. But, there is help available!

Quit programs are increasingly accessible. Attitudes towards smokers' difficulties are generally sympathetic rather than condemnatory. Many smokers have told me that you can't know what withdrawal is like unless you have experienced it.

Support from family, friends, colleagues and a trusted therapist helps keep 'quitters' motivated, on track, determined to reach their goal. For example, see: www.quittas.org.au

You could also check out *MiCBT for Smokers*, a Mindfulness training course. If you would like to know more about this, get in touch. Begin to turn your life round for the better today!

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