

Smoking Desire: Strategies to Manage Avoid, Cope and Escape (ACE)

After you quit, you will experience urges for a cigarette. Most urges *will* pass within a few minutes and become less frequent and less intense with time. However, a few minutes spent craving a cigarette can seem like forever. Learning to cope with these cravings will increase your ability to successfully quit smoking.

Here are some important tips for managing urges, called the ACE strategies:

A = Avoid

C = Cope

E = Escape

Avoid

You can prevent many smoking urges by avoiding or changing situations that make you want to smoke. For example, you may want to avoid:

- Places where people are likely to smoke.
- Smoking break areas at work.
- Stressful situations (when possible).
- Places where you typically smoked before.
- Smoking sections of restaurants.
- Food and drinks that make you want to smoke (coffee, alcohol).
- People who are smoking.
- Feeling run down by taking good care of yourself.

Some of these may seem unreasonable, but remember this is not forever. Once you are confident that you can handle your urges without smoking, avoiding certain situations may no longer be necessary. And remember, the number and intensity of your urges will likely decrease with time - so hang in there!

Cope

If you cannot avoid or leave a situation that triggers an urge to smoke, your only option is to cope with the urge until it passes. You have to find other things to associate with your smoking

triggers. The idea is to find an alternative to smoking. This alternative should be one that either serves a similar function to smoking (e.g., relaxation, relieve boredom) or one that distracts you long enough for the urge to pass. Keep in mind that it will take some time to identify all your triggers and change how you respond to them.

Ask your healthcare provider for a copy of “Preparing to Quit” to find out more about coping with triggers.

Escape

If you get into a situation that is too overwhelming - ESCAPE! For example, if someone starts smoking around you and you cannot ask him or her not to smoke, excuse yourself and leave, even if it is only for a few minutes. Do not let anything threaten your abstinence. As you get stronger, you will need to escape from fewer situations, but do not be afraid to do it if you have to!