



## **RELAPSE WARNING SIGNS: Smoking**

- A. **LETTING UP ON DISCIPLINE:** It takes discipline to stay smoke-free which includes regular contact with smoke-free supports as well as regular use of coping skills: (i.e. avoiding triggers, stress management, using NRT regularly, etc.)
- B. **LOSS OF STRUCTURE:** Idle time is deadly in staying smoke-free. It takes a well-planned lifestyle to avoid return to bad habits. Think ahead
- C. **BAD ASSOCIATIONS:** Hanging around with smokers even when they are not using is very dangerous, so is staying around smoking environments.
- D. **HOLDING IN FEELINGS:** Part of what probably helped you get through the stress of quitting was talking about feelings so holding them in can take you right back.
- E. **DISHONESTY:** This starts with the little lies that get bigger and bigger. Next come lies to yourself (Denial). Also, it may be that you are practicing your lies for when you may try to sneak your next cigarette.
- F. **FRUSTRATION:** If things aren't going your way it could be very tempting to go back and smoke to deal with it. Instead practice using your supports and coping skills.
- G. **ARGUMENTATIVENESS:** Part of what gets someone to quit is being open-minded and listening to others. Thinking your way is always the right way probably got you into trouble in the past, and unfortunately it will again if you're not careful
- H. **SELF-PITY:** Feeling sorry for yourself is an all too common excuse for returning to smoking. Self-pity can lead to discouragement. Discouragement can lead to giving up
- I. **IMPULSIVENESS:** One of the things you hopefully learned about staying smoke-free is to **THINK BEFORE YOU ACT**. It is essential to keep this up to avoid bad habits
- J. **COCKINESS:** Overconfidence can lead you back down roads you have no business going down if you want to stay smoke-free.
- K. **"I DON'T CARE ATTITUDE":** This is probably the most common. All it takes is one minute of saying, "who cares" to take a risk that ends up in relapse. Don't ever forget the consequences. Be wary of the lie of "just one more"
- L. **SUBSTITUTING or ATTEMPTS AT CONTROLLED USE:** Believing you can control smoking is like playing with fire. Changing one substance for another can sometimes be like jumping out of the frying pan into the fire.
- M. **FANTASIZING ABOUT SMOKING:** this leads to craving, craving leads to use.



## A RELAPSE HISTORY TO CONSIDER

Relapse is a PROCESS. Many things often happen before someone picks up another cigarette after quitting. There are also signs that someone is going to use again that are often undetected by the person until after it's too late. Look at this simple relapse history and see if you can find examples of **Smoking Relapse Warning Signs**. Using the list on the previous page, mark them in the story below with the corresponding letters from the preceding page. You can also find relapse triggers and motivators in this story as well.

### MARY'S RELAPSE HISTORY

My name is Mary and I am a pack-a-day smoker. I went to one of those smoking therapy groups last month because I was sick of all the problems related to smoking. My family was complaining about the smell and my children have been asking me to stop because they're worried about my health since their grandfather died of lung cancer last year. At first I thought the group was a bunch of baloney, but I kept going and I started to take suggestions and eventually I was able to stay smoke free for 6 weeks.

My friend Alice was a big help. We work in the same building so we started meeting together for lunch instead of going out with my smoking co-workers. I started squeezing a stress ball when I felt overwhelmed which helped too and I was also using deep breathing to relax during those high stress moments. Another thing that helped was talking with Alice about things instead of holding them in.

The mornings were so tough for me so I started exercising in the morning rather than sitting around smoking and drinking coffee. I have to admit things were going really well.

However, after a few weeks, I started getting into some frustrating problems at work. I still stayed smoke free and I was absolutely sure I wasn't going to smoke. I was so sure, in fact that I went out one day with my old smoking buddies and I still didn't smoke. After that, I stopped going out with Alice so much. My confidence continued to grow and I eventually stopped using my stress ball and deep breathing because I felt I didn't need too any more. Soon I stopped exercising in the morning too because I was so preoccupied with other things. What was most important to me though was that I still wasn't smoking.

I told the others in my group on my one month smoke-free date that I was doing well. They were kind of upset to here that I had stopped some of my good habits but I argued "Hey, trust me, I know what I need to do, I made it this far didn't I?"

Then after about 5 weeks I just had one of those days. I had stopped talking to Alice so much so I just kept it to myself. I was feeling down so my husband took me out for dinner and a drink. He lit up a cigarette and without thinking I asked for one and lit up. When he asked what I was doing I said "I deserve this one, I've been doing good and I just having a bad day". In order to show him I still was in control I only smoked half. When I got home, my kids asked me if I had smoked but I told them "no" because it was only a little.

The next week was another rough one and on that following Friday, I found myself thinking about how nice a drink and a cigarette would be again. So that night, I convinced my husband to take me out again. This time I thought, "Who cares if I only smoke once in a while?", so I allowed myself to smoke and enjoy my entire evening. The next day I bought a pack and decided I'll just smoke this last pack and then get on the wagon again...I've been smoking every day ever since.