

# Life's Essential 8: Stop Smoking and Vaping

Hi, Brian here. If you smoke, the absolute best thing you can do for your health is to stop today. I know it isn't easy, but it's not impossible.

I know from personal experience what it's like to live with second-hand smoke. And I'm really grateful to my dad who chose to give up his habit. It's been almost thirty years now, but I still remember. Right after I blew out my seven birthday candles, my dad tousled my hair and asked me, "So what'd you wish for?" I think he was pretty stunned when I told him, "I wished that you would stop smoking."

He's my dad, and I was worried about him. But I'm so proud of him. He took my birthday wish to heart, and he's still smoke-free to this day.

You can trade out a bad habit and replace it with a good one, so let's look at the practical how's and why's.

First we'll talk about why.

A healthier life begins the moment you toss out that final cigarette. Even if you've smoked for years, your body can start the repair process as soon as you stop harming it with more smoke.

And it's not only about you. When you do your part to clean up the air, you can also help those who live with you to have better health too.

If you're ready to start your plan for smoke-free health, let's get going. It's a good idea to talk with your health care provider, too. Medication can be helpful for some people during the kick-the-habit phase.

But with or without a prescription, here's a good plan to improve your chances for success.

Don't let your action plan go up in smoke. Make it happen!

First, focus on the rewards. It's a lot more satisfying to make life changes when you focus on the positive rewards that motivate you. So today, make a list of all the benefits you'll experience by tossing out those cigarettes.

- Think of the money you'll save.

- The benefits to your health (and to the health of those around you).

- The satisfaction of conquering your cravings.

Now, keep your positive list handy.

The hardest part is usually the first couple of weeks. Here's what my dad did. He wore a rubber band around his wrist and whenever had the urge to smoke, he'd snap himself, check the clock, and go over his positive motivation list. He made a deal with himself that he would wait 15 minutes from the rubber band snap to allow the craving to pass. If it wasn't gone in 15 minutes, he would go for a walk or do something else to help get rid of his tension. So, make a plan now for how will you distract yourself during that time. Start by planning out day one. Be creative. You can quit one day at a time. And remind yourself that the difficulty is TEMPORARY! The craving to smoke will not last forever and once you get past this challenging part, you'll be well on your way to better health.

And then, choose your reinforcement. I can remember the calendar on my dad's desk with a big red X for every day he had conquered. I think it helped him to see what he was accomplishing. So check out some of

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the material on our website and plan to reinforce your choices regularly until the good habits become easy for you.

Yep, it's a habit, but you can break it. Reward yourself for your hard work with something good that reinforces your choices for living well.

Everyone needs a breath of fresh air!