**So, you want to quit. Now what?**

If you’re reading this article, you’ve probably thought about stopping smoking. Maybe you even tried kicking the habit before. But something always holds you back or triggers you to start up again. That something is addiction.

“We know instinctively that smoking is bad for us, and the research confirms it,” says Tonja Dodd, Senior Health Strategy Analyst at Vitality USA. “Data from the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)[[1]](#footnote-1)[1] shows that smoking causes 90% of lung cancer deaths, 80% of pulmonary disease including from emphysema and chronic bronchitis, and 20% of all deaths linked to heart disease.”

If we know how bad smoking is for us, why can’t we throw the cigarettes away? “Why is it so hard to exert some good old-fashioned self-control?” as Behavioural Economics Professor Dan Ariely puts it in his book, *Predictably Irrational*.

**Spoiler: Willpower is not enough**

Ariely’s groundbreaking research on human behaviour reveals why it’s so easy to avoid going for health checks, saving for retirement, sticking to a diet or stopping smoking. “We usually think of ourselves as sitting in the driver’s seat, with ultimate control over the decisions we make and the direction our life takes; but, alas, this perception has more to do with our desires – with how we want to view ourselves – than with reality,” he says.

So, what *can* you do to stop smoking for good? **First, surrender control**.Recognize that quitting smoking is *not* justa matter of willpower and start using behavioural tools and techniques like the ones in Ariely’s book to overcome the addiction instead.

**Claim that smoke-free ‘23**

It may be a relief to know that it’s not you, it’s the habit of smoking that’s holding you hostage. Here are new habits, backed by science and supported by Vitality, that you can foster for a smoke-free ’23.

1. **Before you quit ... pre-commit**

This means committing to a future action (being smoke-free) by a specific deadline (for example, your next birthday). Your plan of action may include:

* Cutting down on the number of cigarettes you smoke a day and gradually smoking less over time.
* Not keeping tobacco products in the house.
* Using nicotine-replacement therapy like gum, patches or lozenges to overcome the physical dependence.
* Joining a smoking cessation programme to deal with the emotional dependence, like [Allen Carr’s Easyway to Stop Smoking](https://allencarr.co.za/), [GoSmokeFree](http://www.gosmokefree.co.za/) and [Quit Genius](https://www.quitgenius.com/).

1. **Share your goal with someone you respect**

Tell your partner, best friend, parents, or work colleagues (even your pet if you think that will hold you accountable) that you’re committing to being smoke-free by your next birthday.

1. **Make a visual representation of your goal**

Stick a note on your fridge, write it on a calendar, set a reminder on your phone or write it on your LinkedIn page.

1. **Make it interesting**

Keep a *smoke-free for ’23* jar at home or work and add money every time you have a cigarette. Your friends or colleagues can decide what to do with the money and you’ll soon feel the tug of loss aversion overcome your need to smoke.Or you can reward yourself for not smoking by putting the money you would’ve spent on cigarettes in a savings account. Your wealth will grow, as your health soars too.

1. **Find fun new things to do instead**

Professor Ariely tells the story of an attorney – a rational man – who started craving cigarettes every time he was in the bath. His solution? Shower instead. Understanding your triggers and finding creative ways to overcome them can lead to fun new experiences and help you make new friends.

Whatever you do, make sure it’s good for you and your health.

1. [1] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). 2021. Health effects of cigarette smoking. [Link](https://eur02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cdc.gov%2Ftobacco%2Fdata_statistics%2Ffact_sheets%2Fhealth_effects%2Feffects_cig_smoking%2F&data=05%7C01%7CLindsay.Hartmann%40vitalityglobal.com%7Ce7283e254fed464388e208db0f56f3f3%7C710b1675b8704652b453d417a82a0b6f%7C0%7C0%7C638120638353702860%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=Rw%2BAuYZtx7RQFclAyaDUHg5iSNKK9X14uAkUJT5Qz%2Fc%3D&reserved=0). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)