



Tobacco Awareness Groups: 10 Topics for Discussion

1. For people who have other substance use disorders, is smoking a recovery issue?

- Is smoking a substitution for other drug or alcohol use?
- Explore the role of smoking/using tobacco in recovery
- Ask permission to offer information about special health issues, how smoking can be a trigger in relapse to alcohol/other drugs
- Stopping everything all at once: ways to cope without smoking
- Discuss how both of the founders of A.A. died from smoking-related illnesses

2. Ingredients in cigarettes and cigarette smoke/secondhand smoke

- Anatomy of a cigarette, including tars and nicotine
- The processing story from the farm to the consumer
- Ingredients in cigarettes and smokeless tobacco
- What is secondhand smoke?
- Harm reduction and secondhand smoke

3. Nicotine: the addictive substance

- How is nicotine a drug?
- The effect of nicotine on the brain
- Effect on the heart and effects on the body
- Similarities with other drugs
- Smoking and stress management

4. Health information

- Short and long-term health consequences of tobacco: present information that is relevant now, such as the relationship between smoking and fatigue, loss of stamina, coughing, respiratory infections
- Less obvious tobacco-related health consequences, such as gum disease, cervical cancer; infertility in men and women; loss of vision; disc degeneration; diabetes
- Gender-specific health consequences, health issues in different racial and ethnic groups
- The impact of smoking on people living with HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis C Virus
- The impact of smoking on commonly prescribed medications (certain anti-anxiety meds, anti-depressants, and anti-psychotic medications, HIV treatment medications, insulin, etc.)
- Discuss the health impact of smoking on each individual and his/her loved ones

5. Weight gain after quitting: myths, realities, and prevention

- Healthy eating and exercise tips
- Nicotine and body metabolism
- Early recovery from nicotine addiction is not a time to diet, as dieting and deprivation can jeopardize quit attempts
- Body image: myth and reality
- The relationship between food and moods
- Identifying eating disorders and resources for support

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6. Advertising/media awareness

- Examine magazine advertisements, and ask: how does the tobacco industry convince us that there is no problem with smoking?
- Discuss placement of ads and to whom they are targeted

7. Decisional Balance

- What are the benefits of smoking and what is the downside of smoking?
- What are the benefits of quitting and what is the downside of quitting?
- Explore personal barriers to quitting, including fears about quitting, and a list of personal concerns and reasons to stop smoking

8. The process of quitting tobacco use: Part 1

- Importance of having a **Quit Plan**
- Learning from past quit attempts: What worked? What was difficult? What did you NOT expect or prepare for? How can this information help now?
- Preparation and practice **BEFORE** quitting
- Build support system: review/provide resource lists of quit smoking programs, Smoker's Helpline, Nicotine Anonymous; individual and group counseling; hypnosis; acupuncture; others resources people have heard about or tried
- Discuss applying 12 Step recovery principles to recovery from nicotine addiction

9. The process of quitting tobacco use: Part 2

- Benefits of stopping smoking
- Normalize the experience of quitting smoking: what to expect
- Dealing with physical withdrawal symptoms: consider nicotine replacement therapy, Zyban, or Chantix.
- Learn stress management skills and relaxation techniques.
- Dealing with psychological cravings: Identify triggers and learn cognitive and behavioral strategies: positive self-talk, stress management skills, relaxation techniques, as well as substitute behaviors (i.e. drinking water).
- Dealing with others in the quitting process: advantages/disadvantages of quitting with someone else; seeking support; watching out for others' sabotage
- Practice new behaviors: limit-setting and assertiveness

10. Change is a Process: A stage based model of behavior change

- Explore the following: What makes change difficult? What makes it happen? What promotes change?
- Learn about the Stages of Change model. Discuss what stage each person is in regarding tobacco use and other behaviors they wish to change. What helped them get from the previous stage into the present one? What will help them move to the next stage?
- Change is a process, it does not happen overnight. Any positive change should be celebrated. The process of quitting smoking is not an all or nothing one.
- Most people make 8-12 quit attempts before quitting for good. **DON'T GIVE UP!!**

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