Healthy brain

- The brain is important because it helps us make decisions that keep us strong, happy and healthy.

- When we do things that are healthy for our body and mind, the brain makes a natural chemical called dopamine.

- Dopamine is like a reward for the brain. When we make healthy lifestyle choices, it thanks us by making us feel good.

- That’s why when we do exercise and learn something new, we feel good!

- Dopamine rewards the brain for making healthy and smart choices and helps us feel good and survive.

- There are many healthy things we can do that make us feel good like:
  - eating healthy foods
  - getting enough sleep
  - spending time with family
  - learning at school
  - playing sport or going hunting
  - working everyday.

- There are also unhealthy things we can do that feed dopamine in the brain, then the brain gets tricked into wanting to do the unhealthy things over and over again. Smoking cigarettes is one of them.
When we do things that are healthy for our body and mind, the brain makes a natural chemical called dopamine.

Dopamine makes our brain feel good and that makes us feel good.
When you smoke, the brain makes a lot more dopamine than it needs.

This can make you feel very good for a short time. It may even help you concentrate and have more energy.

But when people smoke cigarettes for a long time, the brain starts to think it needs even more dopamine to make it happy. This means smokers want to smoke more and only another smoke will make them feel better.

This is called addiction or getting addicted to cigarettes.

Being addicted to cigarettes means that people can’t stop smoking, even when they know it is not good for them. This can make them sick and can even kill them.

Addiction is a powerful thing. It can force the brain to make decisions that are unhealthy, like smoking cigarettes.

That’s why it’s important to help the brain to remember how to be happy and healthy, without cigarettes.

Quitting smoking can help the brain and body feel happy and healthy again.

There are lots of ways the brain can remember how to be happy without cigarettes.
Quitting

Addiction to smoking

When you smoke, the brain makes a lot more dopamine than it needs.
Then the brain starts to think it needs even more dopamine to make it happy.
This means you want to smoke more, and only another smoke will make you feel better.
This is called addiction or getting addicted.
To quit smoking, it is necessary to break the addiction. This is hard because the brain feels like it needs the nicotine from cigarettes to feel good. It has forgotten how to feel good without cigarettes.

When someone stops smoking, they feel bad for awhile because the brain and body are missing the cigarettes. This is called *withdrawal* (from nicotine). The brain has forgotten how to make dopamine on its own and it’s like the brain is screaming for more cigarettes.

This can be painful and can make people go back to smoking even though they want to quit. This is because the *withdrawal* is very hard.

These are some of the things that can happen in *withdrawal*.

- **Cravings**: a strong desire or urge to smoke again. All you can think about is having another cigarette.

- **Change in feelings**: you might start to feel cranky, angry, frustrated, anxious, sad and even depressed. You may even find it hard to concentrate, become restless, and not be able to sit still for very long.

- **Changes in the way you sleep**: you may start waking up more at night and not sleep as well after quitting.

- **Weight gain/getting fat**: you may start eating more food than before and putting on weight.

The good news is that the *withdrawal* gets easier as time goes by. To quit smoking it is important to get past the *withdrawal*, and let the brain learn to make dopamine (the feel-good chemical) on its own again.
When someone stops smoking, they feel bad for awhile because the brain and body are missing the cigarettes.

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The brain has forgotten how to make dopamine on its own and it’s like the brain is screaming for more cigarettes.
Dealing with cravings

It is important to deal with the cravings and get through the withdrawal, so the brain can learn to make its own dopamine and live without smoking again.

When people get through these cravings they will feel good again. This will take awhile.

There are some things that can help teach the brain to make its own dopamine and feel good again without smoking, like:

— exercise and eating healthy food
— using Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) products like patches, lozenges and gum.

Beating addiction is one of the most difficult things smokers will ever have to do. They will have to make hard choices every single day.

This could mean choosing to stay away from places and situations that make them want to smoke — even staying away from family and friends.

It can take a long time to give up unhealthy addictions but in the end the brain will be healthier and happier.

Remember, everyone has the choice to beat addiction.
Dealing with cravings

To quit, you must deal with the cravings and get through the withdrawal, so the brain can learn to make its own dopamine and live without smoking again. These things can help:

Doing exercise and eating healthy food.

Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) products like patches, lozenges and gum.
If you want to quit, it is important to change the way you think.

It is important to understand which **triggers** make you want to smoke. These might be:

**Situations:**
- spending time with family or friends who smoke
- drinking tea, coffee or alcohol
- talking on the phone
- having a smoke break at work (‘smoko’)
- when other people smoke
- after eating
- certain places where you hang out with friends.

**Emotions:**
- feeling stressed, bored, sad, angry, relaxed or tired.

When these **triggers** happen, learn to ignore them and do something else instead of smoking. You could go for a walk, exercise or spend time with children or a non-smoker.

When quitting, it may be best to avoid these **triggers** completely.

It can take a long time to think like a non-smoker and be around these **triggers** and not feel like a smoke, but it will get easier over time.
QUITTING

Change your thinking
People don’t have to quit on their own; there are many things that can help them quit smoking. It is important to work out which one works best for you.

Health workers or tobacco workers can help smokers work out the best way to help them quit, and give support.

These are some of the main ways to quit:

— **Cold turkey**: quitting smoking suddenly without getting help.

— **Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT)**: different types of medicine that feed the brain nicotine for a short time to help with the cravings while getting off the smokes. Different types of NRTs are patches, chewing gum, lozenges, tablets or an inhaler.

— **Quitline (Call 131 848)**: this is a telephone coaching service that offers help when smokers are finding it hard to stay off the smokes.

— **Quit as a group**: finding other people who want to quit and doing it together, to support each other during the withdrawal and cravings.

— **Hypnosis**: a type of treatment where a trained hypnotist can work deeply with your beliefs to help you think and act like a non-smoker.

— **Acupuncture**: a treatment that has helped many people quit smoking using very small needles that act on different parts of the body and mind.

— **Quit text message services**: receiving free text messages on your mobile phone to provide support during quitting.

— **Cutting back**: smoking less and less each day may help some people work towards quitting.
Ways to quit

Nicotine gum

Patches

Quit Line 131 848

Aboriginal Health Centre

Quit Smoking

Health Centre

Aboriginal Health Centre
Health Centre
Quit Smoking
131 848
When someone tries to quit and then starts smoking again, it is called **relapse**.

When someone wants to quit, they go through lots of different stages on the road to quitting. This is sometimes called the “stages of change” as shown in this picture.

This explains why **relapse** can be a normal part of quitting. A relapse can help a person learn how to quit successfully in the future.

In the picture, you can see these ‘stages of change’ for the smoker:

- doesn’t care about quitting
- starts to think about quitting
- starts planning to quit
- quits
- either stays quit, or relapses and goes through the cycle again.

On average, it can take 3 to 4 tries before a smoker successfully quits smoking forever.

Things like stress and depression are reasons that people **relapse**.

Out of every 100 people who try to quit on their own (cold turkey), only 4 people make it through.

Smokers are less likely to **relapse** when they have support from health workers and use NRT medication like patches and gum.

Getting support will help you quit forever.
SMOKER STARTS HERE

STAYING QUIT FOREVER

NOT THINKING ABOUT QUITTING

RELAPSE

STAYING QUIT

QUIT

THINKING ABOUT QUITTING

PLANNING TO QUIT

PLANNING TO QUIT
When a smoker is ready for a change, a health worker or tobacco worker can help them quit using the following steps. This is sometimes called a brief intervention.

**Ask:** Talk to your client about their smoking habits. This may be things like when they smoke, what they smoke, how much they smoke and why they think they smoke.

**Advise:** Talk to your client about giving up smoking in a way that does not shame them. Give them information that may help them decide.

**Assess:** Show the client the Stages of Change picture, and together work out their smoking habits and levels of dependence.

**Assist:** Talk with your client about what they think about their smoking habit, both the good and bad things. Educate them about quitting, make a quit plan together and then talk about ways to help stop relapse.

**Arrange:** Once the client is thinking about quitting or has tried to quit, organise a follow-up visit.

It is very important for tobacco and health workers to continue to support a smoker who has quit, otherwise the smoker is in danger of relapse.

Support from family and friends will also help the smoker quit and stay off the smokes for good.
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The smoke from cigarettes is bad for everyone, even the non-smokers. Children and teenagers can breathe in smoke and it can cause health problems for them (called passive smoking).

Smokers often ask their non-smoking family and friends for money to pay for their cigarettes. This is stressful for everyone, especially old people.

There are many things that families and communities can do to help stop the sickness that comes from smoking.

One of the things is to change the way people think about smoking.

It is important to teach people that smoking is not a normal part of family life, homes and culture.

A good way to do this can be to make ‘smoke-free zones’. This means not letting people smoke in certain places like the house or the car.

This will keep the air fresh in the house and car, keeping all of the family healthy, and making it harder for the smokers to smoke. It can also help smokers cut down on smoking or quit altogether.

It is also important that health and tobacco workers become good role models for the community by not smoking.

Help your family and community to become healthier and happier by thinking of ways to stop the smoking sickness where you live.
Smoke-free zones