

## Responses to Patients' Reasons for Continuing to Smoke

### 1. *"I just can't quit."*

**Response:** There are two aspects of smoking that make it difficult; the physical addiction to nicotine and the psychological craving. Both of these problems need to be addressed. I can give you medication to reduce the physical discomfort and provide you with behavioral strategies to help you deal with the psychological associations. It may take you several tries before you quit for good, but I will help you in any way I can.

### 2. *"But I enjoy smoking...it seems to be one of the few things that gives me pleasure."*

**Response:** Smoking has immediate rewards such as making you more relaxed and alert. The harmful effects often occur much later, making it easy to put them out of mind. Think about the risks as well as the benefits of smoking. Consider, too, the degree to which smoking reduces the pleasure from:

- tasting and smelling favorite foods
- sexual stimulation due to reduced blood flow
- physical activity due to shortness of breath

Try to think of quitting smoking as a way of regaining lost pleasures rather than what you are giving up.

### 3. *“Smoking relaxes me.”*

**Response:** Because your body has become dependent on nicotine, you may feel nervous and tense when too much time passes between cigarettes. Having a cigarette gives you a dose of nicotine and makes you feel more comfortable. Many people also smoke when they face difficult situations, causing them to believe that smoking relaxes them and helps them cope.

Instead of smoking, think about other ways of managing difficult situations, such as going for a brief walk, having something nearby to keep your hands occupied, or practicing a relaxation exercise.

### 4. *“Smoking helps me to concentrate.”*

**Response:** It is true that when your body is going through withdrawal from nicotine (either when you quit or when you haven't had a cigarette in a while), you may have difficulty concentrating. However, once you stop smoking, your body and brain will get more oxygen and function more efficiently. The difficulty you have with concentration should disappear within one month. Caffeinated beverages or a brief bout of exercise (e.g., a brisk walk) may help until your concentration returns to normal.

