

Can We Talk?



A Guide to Having Courageous Conversations about Smoking



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About This Guide

For a long time, tobacco companies have deliberately marketed their addictive products to Black communities. This has made smoking seem normal in our communities — and now smoking is a major cause of preventable illnesses and deaths among African Americans. It's important for us to realize how much influence the tobacco industry has had on our communities and take back control by changing attitudes towards smoking. One way to start is to openly talk with family, friends, and others close to us about smoking. The *Can We Talk?* program can help you have these discussions. By talking about tobacco use, we can change how our communities see tobacco and support our loved ones in their journey to reducing tobacco use and achieving better health.

These conversations can focus on:

- **Talking about How Tobacco Companies Target Us:** We need to make everyone aware of how tobacco companies deliberately try to get us hooked on their products. It's a matter of fairness and justice, and by understanding this, we can work towards stopping smoking from being seen as normal in Black communities.
- **Encouraging Healthy Changes:** We should support our loved ones in making healthier choices by talking to them about quitting smoking. It's about improving their overall health and making their lives better.
- **Sharing Quitting Tools:** We can share information with our family and friends about different ways to quit smoking, like nicotine replacement therapy (NRT), medications, counseling, and other resources that can help them on their journey to quit.
- **Setting Boundaries for Secondhand Smoke:** If someone we know smokes around us, we need to speak up and establish boundaries. This is important for changing what's considered okay in our communities, protecting our health and the health of others, and making our surroundings healthier for everyone.

The key to having these conversations is to meet your loved ones where they are. Some people can quit cold turkey, but for most people, it takes time and multiple attempts to be successful. *And that's okay — actually, that's great! Every quit attempt is a success.* In fact, research shows that the more quit attempts a person makes, the more likely they are to succeed in quitting for good! That's why it's helpful for us to think of quitting as a *journey*, and not something that happens in an instant. Taking small steps in a positive direction, like smoking fewer cigarettes than usual, is a great way to reap the benefits of a reduction in smoking and build confidence towards more quit attempts. *Support*, not judgment, from friends and loved ones is key to this journey.

About This Guide

The *Can We Talk?* guide is here to help you talk about smoking with your family and friends in a caring and understanding way. The goal is to help your loved ones get healthier and change how people think about smoking in our community. This guide is flexible, and it even has an Action Plan from [pages 25 to 29](#). It gives you step-by-step advice on how to have the conversation, with tips and example sentences you can use. You can choose what works best for the person you're talking to, based on their needs and what they prefer. The steps you can use to have an effective conversation are:

- **Step 1: Consider your approach.**
- **Step 2: Prepare key messages for the conversation.**
- **Step 3: Make sure you feel ready for the conversation.**
- **Step 4: Have the conversation.**
- **Step 5: Follow up on your conversation and provide support.**

It is important to keep in mind that you may have more than one conversation with your family member or friend about their tobacco use, depending on how ready and willing they are to address their tobacco use. You can come back to the *Can We Talk?* guide and use it to prepare for each of those conversations.



Step 1: Consider Your Approach

First, think about how you'll approach the conversation, and when is the right time to have it. You understand your family member or friend better than anyone else, so use that knowledge to decide how and when to bring up the topic of their smoking. It could be the first time you've talked about it, or maybe it's been discussed before. This conversation might happen over a few days, weeks, or even months. Each time you talk about it, it's important to plan carefully to make sure you're considering their feelings and approaching them with care and understanding.

1 A. How In-Depth You Expect the Conversation to Be

The person you're talking to might be at different stages when it comes to changing their smoking habits. They could be not even thinking about changing, thinking about it, getting ready to change, starting to change, or already maintaining a change. If they're not thinking about a reduction/cessation journey or do not even seeing smoking as a problem, the conversation might be tough. In this case, you could just drop a hint or share some info about smoking's effects to get them thinking. But if they're ready to start their cessation journey or already trying, you can have a more detailed chat. You can offer support, talk about ways to reduce their smoking, and even discuss how the tobacco industry works to keep them motivated.

1 B. Your Angle or Focus

Different people react differently when you talk to them about smoking. So, when you're talking to someone, think about what might make them think about treating their tobacco use or keep trying if they're already trying. What works for one person might not work for another. You can decide how to approach the conversation based on:

- Wanting to expose how tobacco companies target Black communities and make smoking seem okay. You want to change that and make smoking less acceptable.
- Being worried about their health because you know how bad smoking is for them.
- Wanting to set rules about secondhand smoke because you're worried about your own health and your family's health, especially kids.
- Wanting to share tools and tips to help them reduce smoking, like medications or counseling, in case they're interested.
- Wanting to provide emotional and other forms of social support if your loved one has embarked on their journey to cessation.

Step 1: Consider Your Approach

1 C. Where and When You Will Have the Conversation

Consider when and where it would be best to have this talk. Think about if it's better to talk on the phone or in person. Plan ahead and think about the next few times you'll see or talk to them. Try to bring up the topic naturally so they don't feel surprised or uncomfortable. Make sure you pick a time and place where they feel at ease, like a private spot, and make sure they're not already having a rough day.

1 D. Whether to Have the Conversation in Person, on the Phone, or in Writing

Think about how you want to have this talk. Sometimes it's best to do it face-to-face, other times over the phone, or even through writing like texts, emails, or letters. Having a chat in person can help you show your love and support through your body language and tone. But sometimes, writing it down feels more natural or effective. If you choose to write, be careful with your words to make sure they sound kind and understanding. For instance, adding emojis in texts or emails can help show your tone, like hearts or hugs. What really counts is just having the conversation, no matter how you do it.



Step 2: Prepare Key Messages for the Conversation

It is important to prepare some key messages for your conversation.

2 A. Prepare What You Will Say to Begin the Conversation

How you begin the conversation will depend on how deep you think it'll go and the approach you've decided on in Step 1. Depending on how they might react and what angle you're taking with them about tobacco use, you can use parts of the example scripts below. Just make sure they fit the person and sound genuine coming from you.

| Start the Conversation by... | Example |
|--|--|
| Approaching them with love and concern | <p>"There's something I've been wanting to talk to you about, and it comes from a place of love and concern."</p> <p>"I've been reading about the health effects of smoking, and it worries me. Did you know that quitting can have positive impacts on your health?"</p> |
| Approaching them with curiosity | <p>"Have you tried addressing your tobacco use before?"</p> <p>"What are your thoughts and feelings about your tobacco use?"</p> <p>"You mentioned that you are trying to address your tobacco use the last time we saw each other. How is that going?"</p> |
| Approaching them with your concern for the community | <p>"I've been thinking a lot about our community and our well-being, and I wanted to talk to you about something that's been on my mind."</p> <p>"I've noticed that smoking is pretty common in our community, and I'm genuinely concerned about the impact it might have on our health collectively."</p> <p>"I've learned some things about what the tobacco industry has done to make smoking common in our community. It's shocking and quite frankly, I'm upset about it. Can I tell you about what I learned?"</p> |

Step 2: Prepare Key Messages for the Conversation

| Start the Conversation by... | Example |
|--|--|
| <p>Approaching them with support & tools you learned about</p> <p>Note: This approach works only if the person has recently expressed that they would like to address their tobacco use.</p> | <p>“I know we’ve talked about how you want to address your tobacco use recently, and I learned about some things that could help you. Could I share those with you?”</p> |

2 B. Now Prepare a Key Message(s) That Center on the Focus or Angle You’re Going to Take That Will Keep the Person Open to the Conversation

Depending on your angle or focus, you can pick and choose from the sample scripts below or create a new one(s) using information in the fact sheets that are linked in the table below. Remember that the key messages should be tailored to the person you’re talking to and sound authentic, like something you would naturally say.

| If Your Focus or Angle Is... | You Might Say... |
|--|---|
| <p>You want to expose the predatory nature of the tobacco industry</p> | <p>“I learned information about the tobacco industry targeting Black communities, making smoking socially accepted. I want to make social change to take back our power from the tobacco industry.”</p> <p>“I saw a billboard about how the tobacco industry has pushed cigarettes on our community, and I’m fired up about it!”</p> <p>“I heard that tobacco companies have been sneakily pushing menthol on our community through sponsorships, coupons, and magazine ads. I don’t want them tricking us anymore.”</p> <p>“The tobacco industry has targeted and pushed their deadly products on African Americans with their marketing tactics. They’ve made smoking a normal thing in our community. This upsets me.”</p> <p>See Tobacco Industry Target Marketing in Black Communities Fact Sheet for more information to help you write key messages.</p> |

Step 2: Prepare Key Messages for the Conversation

| If Your Focus or Angle Is... | You Might Say... |
|---|---|
| You want to have a healthier community where smoking isn't accepted | <p>"I hope more and more community members would try to talk about how smoking is so accepted, and how we shouldn't tolerate it. It would help people in the community who smoke with addressing their use, because it wouldn't be everywhere like it is now."</p> <p>"We as a community decide what we will accept and what we won't accept. I don't want our community to be manipulated by the tobacco industry's marketing anymore and accept smoking. I want change."</p> |
| You are concerned for their health | <p>"I believe what I've heard about smoking causing all kinds of cancers and increasing the risk of heart attack or stroke. I've also heard it contributes to type 2 diabetes and increases the risk of complications from the disease. I'm concerned."</p> <p>"My friend's dad just passed away from lung cancer, and it made me feel scared. I want you to have a long, healthy life."</p> <p>See Tobacco Health Impacts Fact Sheet for more information to help you write key messages.</p> |
| You want to set boundaries about secondhand smoke | <p>"I understand you're addicted and you want to no longer smoke — you've told me that you know it's bad for you. I also know that smoke from cigarettes is unhealthy so I am going to ask that you don't smoke in the house when we're visiting, in the car when we're together, and if you want to smoke when we're outside together, that you step away."</p> <p>"I believe what I heard about there being no safe level of second-hand smoke. Because I believe it, I don't want to put me or my kids' health in danger so I would like to ask you to not smoke when we're together."</p> |

Step 2: Prepare Key Messages for the Conversation

| If Your Focus or Angle Is... | You Might Say... |
|--|--|
| <p>You want to share support tools to address tobacco use that you've learned about (like NRT, counseling)</p> | <p>"I've heard that there are therapies and medications that you can take to treat tobacco use. Can I share some information with you about these?"</p> <p>"I just learned that you can just go into a pharmacy and get nicotine patches, gum, and lozenges. These reduce withdrawal feelings by giving you a small, controlled amount of nicotine but none of the other dangerous chemicals found in cigarettes. This small amount of nicotine helps satisfy your craving for nicotine and reduces the urge to smoke. You don't even need a prescription. Insurance usually covers them or you can get them free from different places."</p> <p>"If you talk to your doctor you can get a prescription for a nasal spray or oral inhaler. These need a prescription so your doctor can make sure you have the right dose and show you how to use them."</p> <p>"You may have heard of Wellbutrin, Zyban, or Chantix? These are medications your doctor can prescribe to you to treat tobacco use."</p> <p>"Your doctor can refer you to counseling and other resources."</p> <p>"If you want to go to a support group, I can help you find one and I'll attend it with you."</p> <p>See Tools and Medications for Addressing Smoking for more information to help you write key messages.</p> |
| <p>You want to provide emotional and other forms of social support to your loved one on their tobacco reduction or quitting journey.</p> | <p>"I know you've been working on cutting back — I wanted to check in with you and see how you're doing."</p> <p>See Supporting Your Loved Ones on Their Reduction or Cessation Journey for more ideas for providing support.</p> |

Step 2: Prepare Key Messages for the Conversation

2 C. It's Important to Prepare Other Key Messages to Ensure You Are Having the Conversation in a Caring and Empathetic Way

You can pick and choose any of the sample scripts below, tailoring them to the person you are going to talk to and ensuring they sound like they are authentically coming from you.

| To Have the Conversation in a Loving Manner, it May Be Important to Share... | Example |
|--|---|
| You understand tobacco is addictive and addressing its use is hard | <p>"I know you've tried to address your tobacco use, and I give you so much credit for trying. It's so hard."</p> <p>"Addressing smoking is tough. The nicotine in cigarettes is highly addictive, so it's extremely difficult to treat smoking."</p> |
| You have empathy for them, because life is stressful and smoking is a coping mechanism | <p>"I understand why you smoke."</p> <p>"Life is very stressful, and smoking is a way to cope with stress."</p> |
| You really love and care about the person and their health | <p>"You are important to me. I want to see you healthy and live a long, long life."</p> <p>"You are important to your children."</p> <p>"I love you. I want to see you around for many more years."</p> |
| The strengths, successes, and skills they have that will help them address their smoking | <p>"Your ability to overcome challenges is admirable, and taking on the journey toward cutting back on smoking is something you clearly have the determination and resilience to do."</p> <p>"Remember the times when you faced adversity and emerged victorious. You have the power to apply that same resilience and triumph over smoking."</p> <p>"Your past achievements are a testament to your ability to make positive changes. With that same mindset, you can successfully address smoking and reclaim your health."</p> |

Step 2: Prepare Key Messages for the Conversation

2 D. Prepare for Common Responses You May Hear and What You Can Say in Response

| They May Say... | You Can Respond by Saying... |
|---|---|
| "I can't address my use now. I have too much stress in my life right now and smoking helps me relax." | "I understand your life is stressful and you need a coping mechanism. I wonder if there are other tools you can use when you're stressed that aren't as harmful." See Coping Strategies When Addressing Tobacco Use for more information on coping strategies when addressing tobacco use. |
| "I've tried to stop smoking before and can't do it." | "It's okay if you've struggled in the past. Treating tobacco use can be tough, and it's completely normal for people to try many times before succeeding – it's a part of the journey, and it actually shows that you're committed to change. I have faith in you. We can try again together." |
| "I'm afraid of gaining weight if I stop smoking or using tobacco." | "I hear your concern about weight gain. Let's work on a plan that can help you address your smoking while also maintaining a healthy lifestyle. We can explore ways to manage your weight and stay on track." |
| "I enjoy smoking, and it's my choice." | "I respect that you're so passionate about your rights, and I care about your health. If you ever decide you want to address your tobacco use, I'm here to support you in making that choice. Your well-being is important to me." |
| "I've smoked for so long; it's too late to address my use now." | "It's never too late to make a positive change for your health. Even reducing the amount that you smoke can still have significant benefits, even if you've smoked for a long time. I'm here to help you every step of the way." |
| "I don't think I have the willpower to treat my tobacco use." | "Addressing tobacco use can be challenging, but you are stronger than you think. There are also tools, medication, and counseling that are available that make it easier. And you don't have to quit all at once — we can start with small steps that feel less overwhelming. I believe in you, and I'm here to support you." |

Step 2: Prepare Key Messages for the Conversation

| They May Say... | You Can Respond by Saying... |
|--|---|
| "I'm afraid of withdrawal symptoms." | "Withdrawal symptoms can be tough, but they are temporary. We can research and prepare for them together, and I'll be here to support you through those challenging moments." |
| "I'm not ready to address my tobacco use yet." | "I respect your decision, and I'm here to support you whenever you're ready. Just know that when you are, I'll be by your side, helping you through the process." |
| "I don't want to talk about it." | "I care about you, and I want to support your well-being. Whenever you're ready to discuss it, I'm here for you, without judgment, to help explore options for a healthier lifestyle." |
| Nothing. | "Your well-being is important to me, and I'm here to support you whenever you're ready to talk about managing tobacco use. Take your time, and know that I'm here with care and understanding." |



Step 3: Make Sure You Feel Ready for the Conversation

Make sure you are in the right frame of mind to have the conversation.

- **Have realistic expectations.** Be prepared for the conversation to not go well or have the outcome you're expecting. If the conversation isn't going well, end the conversation so the person doesn't feel pushed, keeping the conversation open for the future. Sometimes you need to plant the seed to have them open to talking about it later.
- **Give a heads up if needed.** If you feel the person needs a "heads up" about you wanting to talk about smoking, be sure to let them know that you'd like to have a conversation about their tobacco use. For example, in a text say: "Hey, can we chat later tonight? I'd love to talk to you about smoking."
- **Practice the conversation.** Take some time to practice your key talking points. Practice by talking to the mirror or asking a friend or family member to role-play with you.
- **Center yourself.** Take a few deep breaths before starting the conversation to ensure you approach the person calmly.



Step 4: Have the Conversation

Have the conversation using key points and be sure to:

Listen carefully

- You will have key messages that you prepared, which are important, but nothing is more important than listening to the person and showing them that you are listening.
- Truly listen and respond to what they're saying. Don't think about what you want to say next, only being concerned with sharing your messages.
- Let them know that you're there to listen and be supportive of them.

Encourage the person to share

- Give your family member or friend the opportunity to express their thoughts, feelings, and concerns about addressing their smoking.

Use positive body language

- Show the person you're open to listening and approaching them with love and empathy by using positive, open body language; for example, smile, avoid crossing your arms, and make appropriate eye contact.

Share your own experience of smoking and addressing it, if applicable

- By sharing your own experience, you normalize that smoking is something many people do and that it is possible to address its use.

Lead with empathy

- Share that you understand the thoughts, feelings, and perspective of the person, without judgment.



Step 4: Have the Conversation

Know where they can get support with addressing their tobacco use, if they are interested.

See a doctor for:

- Prescription for nicotine inhaler or nasal spray
- Prescription for medication (bupropion SR or varenicline)

For free NRT, check out:

- UMMC ACT Center for Tobacco Treatment, Education, and Research
Jackson Medical Mall
350 West Woodrow Wilson Suite 611
Jackson, MS 39213
www.act2quit.org
Phone: 1-601-815-2005

For free nicotine gum or patches as well as counseling, information, and tips, reach out to:

- Mississippi State Department of Health Tobacco Quitline
Phone: 1-800-784-8669 (1-800-QUIT-NOW)
Website & Online Chat: www.quitlinems.com

Look up local support groups and let your family member or friend know their location and dates/times. Offer to accompany them.

Close the conversation in a positive and loving manner. For example:

- “If you want to begin addressing your smoking, I am here to support you however you need me.”
- “Addressing your smoking is totally up to you. My goal is to give you as much information as you need to make that decision.”
- “I appreciate you taking the time to talk with me, and I am here to support you in any way that I can.”

Step 5: Follow Up on Your Conversation and Provide Support

Remember, cessation is a journey, and your conversation may be the first of many. If your loved one is not ready to address their tobacco use, don't be discouraged — just having the conversation is groundbreaking. You may just be planting the seed to get your family member or friend to think about addressing their tobacco use. After the initial conversation, use the steps in this guide to think about how to follow up with them. It is important to continue showing your concern about the acceptance of smoking that the tobacco industry has established and/or their health.

If they've decided to try to embark on their cessation journey, ask them how it is going and what you can do to support them. Offer ongoing support and help them navigate any challenges they may encounter. You can share the [Coping Strategies When Addressing Tobacco Use](#) handout, if appropriate, and use the [Supporting Your Loved Ones on Their Reduction or Cessation Journey](#) handout for ideas on how to provide support.

Project BAT is made up of community members in Jackson, Mississippi, who work to raise awareness, educate, and create tools to change beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors around smoking for a smoke-free future. For more information about *Can We Talk?*, including an example conversation, check out our website: <https://www.projectbatjackson.org>.



The Health Impacts of Tobacco

- Smoking is directly responsible for approximately 90% of lung cancer deaths and approximately 80% of deaths caused by chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), which includes emphysema and chronic bronchitis.
- Among current smokers, 73% of diagnosed smoking-related conditions are chronic lung diseases. Even among smokers who have treated their tobacco use, chronic lung disease still accounts for 50% of smoking-related conditions.
- Smoking harms nearly every organ in the body and is a main cause of lung cancer and COPD. It also is a cause of coronary heart disease, stroke, and a host of other cancers and diseases.
- Smoking contributes to type 2 diabetes and increases the risk of complications from the disease, including poor blood flow to legs and feet.
- Smoking increases the risk of an ectopic pregnancy (when a fertilized egg implants somewhere other than the uterus, where the egg can't survive and the pregnant person's life is at serious risk).
- Secondhand smoke causes approximately 7,330 deaths from lung cancer and 33,950 deaths from heart disease each year.
- There is no risk-free level of exposure to secondhand smoke, and even short-term exposure potentially can increase the risk of heart attacks.
- Secondhand smoke contains hundreds of chemicals known to be toxic or carcinogenic, including formaldehyde, benzene, vinyl chloride, arsenic, ammonia, and hydrogen cyanide.
- Secondhand smoke can cause stroke and heart attacks; even relatively brief exposure can trigger a heart attack, according to a report by the Institute of Medicine.
- Successfully treating smoking improves health by: (1) reducing the risk of lung, throat, mouth, cervical, liver, kidney, and colon cancers, (2) lowering the risk of heart attack and stroke, and (3) improving lung function.

Cigarette smoke contains more than 7,000 chemicals, 69 of which are known to cause cancer.



Tobacco Industry Target Marketing in the Black Community

The tobacco industry has repeatedly infiltrated and exploited the Black community for corporate gain under the guise of charitable investments in numerous organizations, institutions, and causes, such as by

- donating to historically Black colleges and universities,
- sponsoring scholarships for African American students, and
- giving money to influential African American people, officials, and organizations.

Marketing plays a big role in whether people try or use commercial tobacco products. Being around commercial tobacco ads makes smoking appear more appealing and increases the chance that someone will try smoking for the first time or start using commercial tobacco products on a regular basis. Below are just a few examples of how the tobacco industry influences the Black community to use tobacco products.

- Neighborhoods and areas with more African American residents tend to have more stores that sell tobacco.
- Tobacco companies advertise more heavily in stores whose customers are mostly African Americans.
- Tobacco companies have advertised more heavily in magazines with larger numbers of African American readers.
- Tobacco companies use promotional pricing strategies such as discounts and multi-pack coupons—which are most often used by African American people, other minority groups, women, and young people—to increase sales.



- Tobacco companies support cultural events designed to draw in certain groups in the Black community (for example, a recent campaign targeted Black young adults with hip-hop converts in convenience stores).

Tobacco companies have aggressively marketed menthol cigarettes to African American people since at least the 1950s and continue to do so today:

- In the 1970s and 1980s, a tobacco company's "menthol push" included ad campaigns tailored to Black people, with images of Black models or hip-hop icons.
- In 2019, about 85% of Non-Hispanic Black adults who smoked cigarettes used menthol cigarettes. In 2019, about 58% of African American youth aged 12 to 17 who reported smoking cigarettes used menthol cigarettes.



You've got what it takes.
Salem Spirit

Warning: The Surgeon General Has Determined That Cigarette Smoking Is Dangerous to Your Health.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH 1985

SAVE \$1.00
 on 3 packs of Salem

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TERMS OF COUPON OFFER
 CONSUMER: CAUTION! Coupon good only when brand style(s) specified purchased; it cannot be transferred or exchanged for other coupons. You must pay applicable sales taxes. Participation in this promotion is at the discretion of the manufacturer.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH 1985

SAVE \$1.50

IPON

Tools and Medications for Addressing Smoking

Treating tobacco use (i.e., quitting) for good often requires multiple attempts. Using counseling or medication alone increases the chance of an attempt at treating tobacco use being successful; the combination of both is even more effective.

There are seven medications approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to aid in addressing smoking.

Available over the counter:

- Nicotine patches
- Nicotine gum
- Nicotine lozenges

Available by prescription:

- Nicotine nasal spray
- Nicotine inhaler
- Bupropion SR (Zyban®)
- Varenicline (Chantix®)



Individual, group, and telephone counseling are effective. Telephone quitline counseling is available in all 50 states and is effective for many different groups of smokers.

There is a National Hotline that provides free support, coaching, educational materials, and referrals for people who want to treat their tobacco use: **1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669)**.

Coping Strategies When Addressing Tobacco Use

Addressing tobacco use can be a challenging process, and it's common for people to experience stress or cravings for cigarettes, especially if smoking was a way they used to cope with stress. To manage these moments without giving in to the urge to smoke, you can try the following coping strategies:

- **Deep Breathing:** When you feel the urge to smoke, take a few deep breaths. Inhale slowly through your nose, hold your breath for a few seconds, and then exhale slowly through your mouth. This can help calm your nerves.
- **Physical Activity:** Engage in physical activities like walking, jogging, or doing yoga. Exercise releases endorphins, which can help improve your mood and reduce stress.
- **Healthy Snacking:** Keep healthy snacks like fruits, vegetables, or nuts on hand. Chewing on something can help distract you from the urge to smoke and provide oral satisfaction.
- **Support System:** Lean on your support system, whether it's friends, family, or a support group for people treating their tobacco use. Talking to someone can provide emotional support and motivation.
- **Mindfulness and Meditation:** Practice mindfulness and meditation to stay in the present moment and reduce stress. These techniques can help you manage cravings and focus on healthier choices.
- **Behavioral Replacement:** Identify the triggers that make you want to smoke and find healthier alternatives. For example, if you used to smoke after a meal, consider chewing gum or brushing your teeth instead.
- **Stay Busy:** Keep yourself occupied with activities that you enjoy or that require concentration. This can help take your mind off the urge to smoke.



- **Set Goals and Reward Yourself:** Set specific goals and rewards for being successful at treating tobacco use. For example, if you go a week without smoking, treat yourself to something you enjoy, like a movie night or a special meal.
- **Avoid Triggers:** Identify and avoid situations, places, or people that trigger your cravings. Try to change your routines to minimize exposure to smoking triggers.
- **Visualize the Benefits:** Remind yourself of the reasons you decided to address your smoking. Visualize the health benefits, cost savings, and improved quality of life that come with being smoke-free.
- **Professional Help:** Consider seeking professional help from a health-care provider or counselor. They can provide guidance and support tailored to your needs.





Supporting Your Loved Ones on Their Reduction or Cessation Journey

A key part of successfully reducing and quitting tobacco use is the support of family and friends. To support your loved one on their tobacco reduction or cessation journey and let them know you are there for them, you can try some of these ideas:

- **Spend time with them:** Quality time with others is a great way to relieve stress and cope with withdrawal symptoms. You can watch sports, go on walks, go to the movies, or restaurants, or have a conversation over coffee. Take part in activities that your loved one would enjoy.
- **Help them avoid tobacco products:** Depending on where they are in their journey, your loved one may have trouble being in settings and around people who use tobacco. When you do spend time with them, do what you can to remove reminders or pressure to use tobacco - for example, you might hang out at a sports bar that doesn't sell hookah or cigars.
- **Celebrate victories, big and small:** Verbalize your support and appreciation of your loved one. You might say things like, "It's great that you smoked just one pack today!", or "I'm really proud of you for not taking a cigarette break at work."
- **Check in with them:** If they are comfortable, reach out from time to time to see how they are doing. Ask your loved one directly, "How can I support you?" "What do you need?" "How are you doing?" Let them tell you what they need.
- **Have patience and give grace:** Reducing or quitting tobacco use may take several attempts, over a long period of time. Remember that quitting is a unique journey for each person, and every quit attempt is a step closer to the goal of reduction or cessation. If your loved one sets a goal and fails to meet it, don't pressure, judge, or criticize. Instead, lift them up with empathy and encouragement.

How Big Tobacco Makes Cigarettes More Addictive

We all know smoking is bad for you, but what's not always clear is how tobacco companies intentionally make their products more addictive. Knowing how they design cigarettes shows how carefully they plan to get people addicted, making it tough for many to quit.

Bronchodilators

Added chemicals expand the lungs' airways, making it easier for tobacco smoke to pass into the lungs.

Flavorings

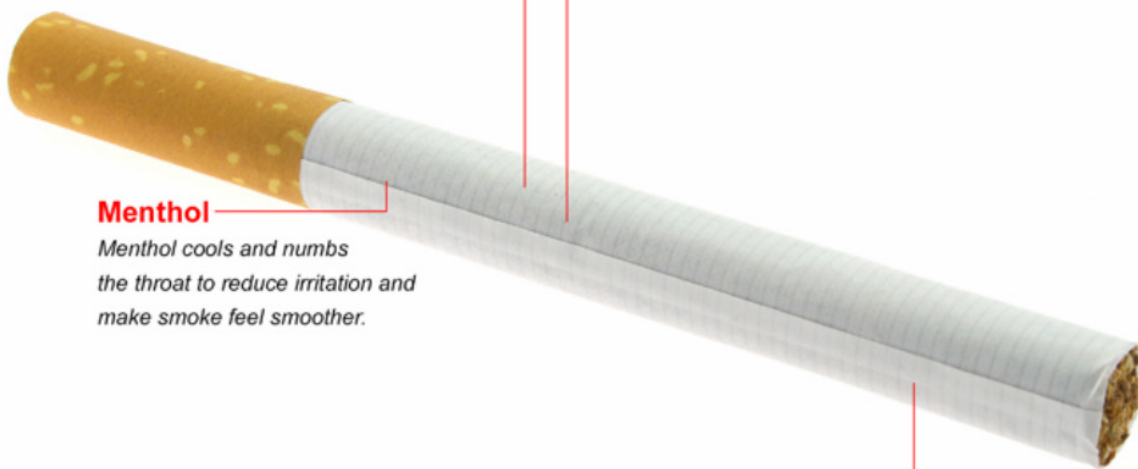
Added flavors like liquorice and chocolate mask the harshness of smoke and make products more appealing to new users, especially kids.

Menthol

Menthol cools and numbs the throat to reduce irritation and make smoke feel smoother.

Levulinic Acid

Added organic acid salts reduce harshness of nicotine and make smoke smoother, less irritating.



Alternative Smoking Products

Hookah, vaping, cigars, and cigarillos have risen in popularity over the past few years, especially among young people. These products are often advertised as safe cigarette alternatives - but they all come with the potential for addiction and health risks. All of these products contain many of the same toxic chemicals as traditional cigarettes. Using any of these products increases your risk of developing conditions like heart disease, bronchitis, emphysema, and cancer.

Hookah

- The heated tobacco and burning charcoal releases toxic chemicals. The water in hookah does not filter these chemicals out.
- A single 1-hour hookah session can result in a user inhaling 100 - 200 times the amount of smoke they would get from a single cigarette.
- Tobacco companies target young people to market hookah to by advertising hookah as a fun and social activity, using bright colored advertising, selling sweetened and flavored hookah, and creating hookah stores, bars, and clubs around college campuses.

Vaping (e-cigs, e-pens, tanks, mods, JUULs)

- E-cigarettes contain nicotine and have many risks associated, like e-cigarette or vaping use-associated lung injury (EVALI), which is a serious, life-threatening condition.
- Although e-cigarettes are promoted by tobacco companies as a safer alternative to smoking, there are only 7 FDA-approved (safe) methods for quitting smoking. Vaping is not one of them.
- Tobacco companies deliberately target kids and teens in vape marketing, using strategies like false claims that vaping is risk-free, use of pleasant scents and flavorings, and attractive packaging that is easy to hide from parents and teachers.

Cigars

- One large cigar contains as much tobacco as an entire pack of cigarettes.
- Cigarillos and little cigars are not safe alternatives to large cigars or cigarettes, even though they are small and have pleasant flavorings.
- Tobacco companies target Black communities when marketing cigars and cigarillos by doing things like: selling flavored Black and Milds, pouring millions into celebrity endorsements and product placements (thus associating luxurious and successful lifestyles with cigar use), and concentrating ads, sales, and product availability and accessibility in Black neighborhoods (like offering lower prices and having more retail stores carry these products).



Can We Talk?

An Action Plan for Having Courageous Conversations about Smoking

For a long time, tobacco companies have unfairly targeted Black communities with sneaky marketing to make smoking seem normal. If someone you know smokes, it might feel tough to talk about how smoking is seen as okay in our community, or how it affects their health, or even how secondhand smoke affects you or others. The *Can We Talk?* program can help you have these conversations.

Use this action plan to keep track of your strategies and key points that you can use to have this important conversation with a family member or friend about smoking.

Step 1: Consider Your Approach

Who are you talking to? _____

1. Based on how open you think the person may be to talking about tobacco, how in-depth do you expect the conversation to be?

- ☐ “Plant the seed” by sharing a brief message to get the person thinking about tobacco use
- ☐ Have a more in-depth conversation (for example, sharing information and tools to address tobacco use, sharing loving and supportive messages)
- ☐ Other: _____

2. What focus or angle would be most effective in initiating a conversation with this individual?
Talking about...

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> The tobacco industry targeting Black communities | <input type="checkbox"/> Setting boundaries around secondhand smoke |
| <input type="checkbox"/> The health impacts of tobacco | <input type="checkbox"/> Providing emotional or other forms of support |
| <input type="checkbox"/> NRT/medication/tools to address tobacco use | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

3. What is the most appropriate...

...setting/place to have the conversation? _____

...day/time to have the conversation? _____

4. What is the best way to have the conversation?

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> In person | <input type="checkbox"/> Email |
| <input type="checkbox"/> On the phone | <input type="checkbox"/> A letter |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Text | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

Step 2: Prepare Key Messages for the Conversation

1. What will you say to start the conversation? See [pages 5 & 6](#) of the *Can We Talk?* guide for examples.
2. What are the key messages you will share that are based on your approach with the person (from Step 1B)? See [pages 6 to 8](#) and the handouts on [pages 16 to 19, and 22](#) of the *Can We Talk?* guide for examples.
3. What other key messages do you want to share? See the *Can We Talk?* guide for examples on [page 9](#) and the fact sheets on [pages 16 to 24](#).
4. Write what you anticipate the person's response may be in the first column. Write what you can say in response in the second column. See the *Can We Talk?* guide for examples on [pages 10 & 11](#).

| What the Person May Say... | What I Can Say in Response... |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| | |
| | |
| | |

Step 3: Make Sure You Feel Ready for the Conversation

What will you do to feel ready for the conversation?

- ☐ Set realistic expectations for how the conversation will go
- ☐ Give the person a heads-up that you want to talk to them, if needed
- ☐ Practice having the conversation with someone else, or practice in the mirror
- ☐ Center yourself with deep breathing and other relaxation techniques

Step 4: Have the Conversation

Be sure to:

- ☐ Listen carefully
- ☐ Encourage the person to share
- ☐ Use positive body language or other methods to convey a loving, non-judgmental tone
- ☐ Share your own experience of smoking and addressing it, if applicable
- ☐ Lead with empathy
- ☐ Share where they can get support with addressing tobacco use:
 - See a doctor for prescription nicotine nasal spray or prescription for medication (bupropion SR or varenicline)
 - Get free NRT from:
 - ♦ UMMC ACT Center (www.act2quit.org)
 - ♦ Mississippi State Department of Health Tobacco Quitline (www.quitlinems.com) or the National Hotline 1-800-QUIT-NOW

Step 4: Have the Conversation

- Local support groups; list groups in your area, as well as the days/times they are held:

◆ _____

◆ _____

- ☐ Close the conversation in a positive and loving manner

Step 5: Follow Up on Your Conversation and Provide Support

After the conversation:

- ☐ If the person is ready to address their tobacco use:
 - Check in about how their plan or attempt to treat their tobacco use is going
 - Share coping strategies found in the *Can We Talk?* guide on [pages 20 & 21](#)
 - Offer ongoing support, helping them navigate challenges they encounter. See [page 22](#) in the *Can We Talk? guide* for ideas on how to support loved ones
- ☐ If the person isn't ready to address their tobacco use:
 - Use a new worksheet to plan out your next conversation
 - Continue showing your concern about the tobacco industry, health impacts, second-hand smoke, or tobacco treatment tools (like medication, counseling, NRT)