

The “Why I Smoke” Test

Have you ever wondered why you started smoking in the first place and why you still do? The “Why I Smoke” test is an effective tool from the National Cancer Institute, used by smokers, physicians, smoking cessation specialists, and others to help indicate the reasons a smoker has for smoking. If you are a smoker who is having a hard time understanding why smoking is such an integral part of your life, take this test. Make sure to record your scores carefully so you can match them up later with the descriptions that best fit you.

	Always	Frequently	Occasionally	Seldom	Never
A. I smoke cigarettes to keep from slowing down.	5	4	3	2	1
B. Handling a cigarette is part of the enjoyment of smoking it.	5	4	3	2	1
C. Smoking cigarettes is pleasant and relaxing.	5	4	3	2	1
D. I light up a cigarette when I’m upset about something.	5	4	3	2	1
E. When I run out of cigarettes I find it almost unbearable.	5	4	3	2	1
F. I smoke automatically without even being aware of it.	5	4	3	2	1
G. I smoke to perk myself up.	5	4	3	2	1
H. Part of the enjoyment of smoking comes from the steps I take to light up.	5	4	3	2	1
I. I find cigarettes pleasurable.	5	4	3	2	1
J. When I feel uncomfortable about something, I light up a cigarette.	5	4	3	2	1
K. I am very much aware of the fact when I am not smoking.	5	4	3	2	1
L. I light up a cigarette without realizing I still have one burning in the ashtray.	5	4	3	2	1
M. I smoke to give myself a “lift”.	5	4	3	2	1
N. Part of the enjoyment of smoking is watching smoke I inhale.	5	4	3	2	1
O. I want a cigarette most when I am comfortable and relaxed.	5	4	3	2	1
P. When I feel “blue” or want to take my mind off of my cares, I smoke a cigarette.	5	4	3	2	1
Q. I get a real craving for a cigarette when I haven’t smoked for a while.	5	4	3	2	1
R. I’ve found a cigarette in my mouth and didn’t remember having put it there.	5	4	3	2	1

Adding Up Your Score

Use the following table to score yourself:

1. Enter your circled number for each statement in the space provided, putting the number for statement A on line A, for statement B on line B, and so on.
2. Add the three scores on each line. For example, the sum of your score on lines A, G, and M give you a total score for the “Stimulation” category.

A	G	M	Stimulation
B	H	N	Handling
C	I	O	Pleasure
D	J	P	Relaxation/ Tension Reduction
E	K	Q	Craving
F	L	R	Habit

A score of 11 or more indicates an important reason you smoke. The higher your score (15 is the highest), the more important the reason. If you have a high score in more than one area, it may make quitting more difficult for you. When you know what you derive from smoking, you can look for satisfying substitutes.

Now that you’ve take the test and you have your scores recorded, you can begin to understand the reasons why your smoke. Do some of the things you do when you smoke surprise you? Were you aware of the reasons you smoke? The following section provides you with strategies you can use based on the reasons you smoke.

Strategies to Help You Quit Smoking

Stimulation

If you scored high in this category, smoking stimulates you. You believe it helps you wake up and get organized and keeps you on your toes during the day. When you quit, you need to find substitutes that stimulate. For example:

- Take a brief walk, ride a bike, do calisthenics, or simply make yourself busy around the house.
- Plan ahead. Organize your day ahead of time so you won’t need a cigarette to get going.
- Chew on cinnamon sticks, sugar-free gum, or carrot sticks; rinse with mouthwash; or brush your teeth to give your tongue and mouth some stimulation.
- Avoid fatigue. With plenty of sleep, you won’t need a stimulant to get you going.

Handling

A high score here means you like to handle a cigarette or watch the smoke. There may be other parts of the ritual of smoking that are also habit forming for you. Listed below are some ways to keep your hands busy.

- Wear a rubber band around your wrist and snap it.
- Doodle with a pen or pencil when you're on the phone, in meetings, etc.
- Handle a coin or polished rock or play with a paper clip.
- Do a crossword or jigsaw puzzle.
- Squeeze a small ball (also great for your wrist muscles).
- Clean or polish your fingernails.
- Knit, sew, or crochet (you'll be way ahead on birthday and holiday presents).

Pleasure

If you scored high in this category, here are some alternatives:

- Contemplate the harmful effects of smoking. You may find that's enough to help you quit.
- Keep a list of the pleasures of being a non-smoker.
- Spend time with friends, go to the movies, or read a magazine.
- With your physician's approval, get involved in a sport – you'll be surprised how good you'll feel.
- Treat yourself to something special.

Relaxation/Tension reduction

Many smokers use their habit as a crutch in moments of discomfort. If you are this type, you may find it easy to quit when things are good, but tough when things go wrong.

- Take up a hobby. Activity is a great tension reducer and distraction.
- Try some deep-breathing exercises. Believe it or not, they do work for many people. Feel free to talk to your health-care professional about other relaxation techniques.
- Think about what you really need when you're upset: a talk with a friend?

Craving

If you scored high in this category, you're not unusual. Your craving for another cigarette begins to build up the moment you put one out. Is the craving psychological, physical, or both? If you physically crave nicotine, you are uncomfortable because the level of nicotine in your blood drops. Medications can help. As for the psychological part of the craving, you can try the following:

- Reorder your day to avoid situations that trigger your smoking urge. For example, change your morning routine and your work habits, alter your driving route, etc.
- Stay busy! Don't allow yourself to have gaps of unscheduled time.

Habit

Smoking has become a habit for you. You smoke automatically. Chances are you enjoy only a fraction of the cigarettes you smoke. Here are some strategies that might help you quit.

- Throw away your cigarettes, ashtrays, etc.

- If your significant other or friends smoke, designate a portion of your living space as smoke-free. If you live in the residential halls, it is already totally smoke-free.
- Chew sugar-free gum.
- Go to places where smoking is prohibited – public buildings, movies, theaters, libraries, etc.
- Take a soothing bath or shower.
- Listen to music.
- Have your car cleaned. Wash out the ashtray and fill it with toothpicks.
- Have the inside of your house – drapes, carpets, and furniture – thoroughly cleaned.

Did this test give you insights into why you smoke and how you can help yourself and receive the help of others in order to quit smoking? If so, good for you! For even more information regarding the reasons you should quit smoking and how you can organize your life in order to quit smoking, please refer to the sections call “[Reasons to Quit Smoking](#)” and “[How to Quit Smoking](#),” both of which contain good information on the steps toward quitting smoking and the benefits that it can provide to you and those around you.