

Addictions - Smoking

Did you know that 25% of Americans smoke cigarettes? Most have tried to quit many times and feel hopeless. I'd like to share some words of hope for quitting: First, know that success does take persistence, as most smokers need 3-7 attempts in order to quit. Today, there are many wonderful resources for quitting, including books and websites (such as quitnet.com and quitsmoking.com, which help you design your quitting plan, answer frequently asked questions, and even give live support for cravings or relapses). Because smoking has been said to involve about 10% physical addiction and 90% psychological addiction, local support is also a must. Find as many friends as possible to quit with you. And, find at least one ex-smoker whom you can call when you are having those terrible cravings in the first few days (don't worry, that's the worst of it). Finally, tell your family physician that you plan to quit and enlist her/his support (some folks use smoking to medicate symptoms of anxiety or depression and need temporary medication or talk therapy with a therapist to help them with the emotional difficulties that can arise with smoking cessation). Finally, remember to give your body time to recover from the chronic stress of smoking. Many people smoke to relax- which may indeed be the sensation they get in their minds. But, just the opposite happens in the body. Due to increased heart rate and blood pressure with every cigarette, preoccupation with planning smoking breaks, and nicotine withdrawal in the body between cigarettes, the smoker's body is in a constant state of tension. After a few months, however, your body will adjust to your new way of living (yes, decreased tension can be a difficult adjustment!). What's more, you'll never miss feeling out of breath, the frequent sinus /respiratory problems, or the other negative health and social effects of smoking!