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A Conversation Guide to Helping Partners Go Smokefree

This guide is for healthcare professionals to use in combination with these educational videos, to aid discussions with dads and partners of pregnant women and/or new mums who are going smokefree. These videos feature success stories of four men who have quit smoking.

This guide was created by Kenvue
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Part one
Introduction

In England, 8.8% of women were smoking in pregnancy during 2022–23.[1]

A pregnant smoker is more likely to become smokefree if they...[2]

- Don't live with a smoker
- Have the support of a tobacco dependency advisor
- Have the support of family and friends

Whilst it is extremely important that pregnant women access professional support to create more smokefree families, it is vital that **partners and family members** of pregnant women and new mums feel supported as well. If dads and partners quit smoking, this can also help to **reduce the harm that secondhand smoke causes** to babies and children in the home.[2]

These four videos have been created for educational purposes and showcase success stories from dads and partners who have quit smoking. In the videos, the partners candidly discuss the **challenges and barriers** faced throughout their journey to becoming **smokefree**, along with the **strategies** that helped them **succeed in their quit attempts**.

To supplement the videos, Kenvue has created this conversation guide for use by **healthcare professionals**, particularly those who are **engaging with partners** before they have accessed, or considered accessing, specialist stop smoking support. It can be used to **inform a conversation with dads and partners –** firstly assessing their readiness to quit, and then planning an appropriate support programme.

Ultimately, it is important to remind dads and partners who smoke of the benefits of **accessing specialist stop smoking support** to help **increase their chance of success**.[3]

Meet the Dads and Partners

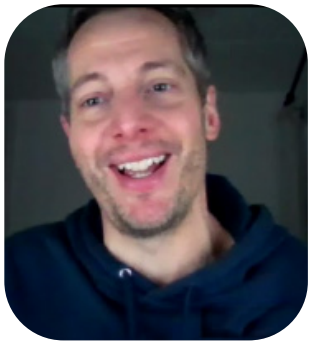
An estimated 20% of women are exposed to secondhand smoke in the home throughout their pregnancy.[4] The best way to protect them and create a smokefree home is for no one in the household to smoke.

Here are the four dads and partners we've spoken to who successfully quit smoking:

Introducing

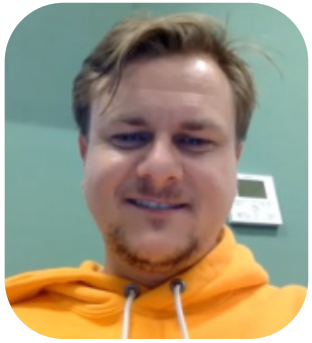
Thufel:

A 35 year old train driver and father of two children aged 6 years old and 17 months old.



Nick:

A 42 year old IT systems engineer and father of three children aged 9 years, 7 years, and a baby aged 3 months old.



Lewis:

An IT consultant who has recently been made redundant. Lewis gave up smoking after meeting his new partner, who was already pregnant.

Justin:

A youth worker and father to four children aged 13 years, 8 years, 5 years, and 16 months old.

Part two

Identifying reasons for quitting

Quitting smoking can be challenging, with one study estimating it can take smokers **30 or more quit attempts** before succeeding.[5] However, smokers are **three times** more likely to succeed when offered specialist support compared with willpower alone.[3,6]

It is important to **understand dads' and partners' drivers** for becoming smokefree – not only to assess their readiness to quit, but because it can make their commitment to quitting stronger.

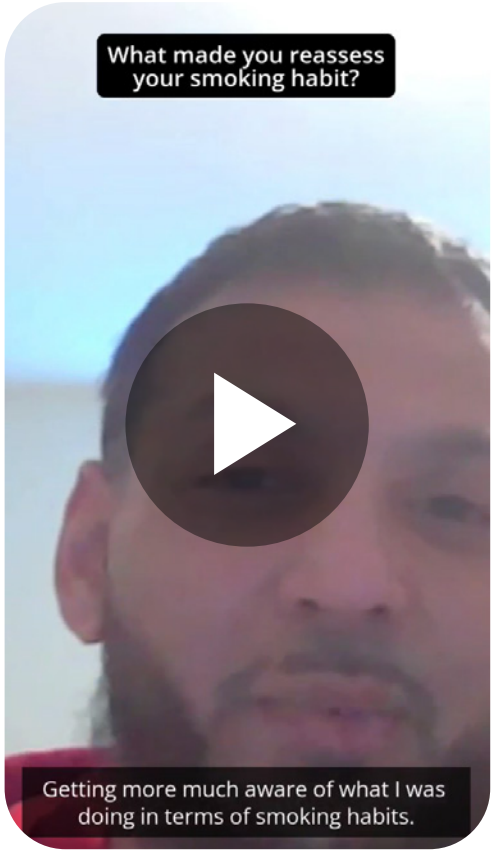
In the following clips, a new baby on the way was a key motivator – although some men didn't manage to quit for their first baby, they kept trying. They highlighted many other reasons for quitting too.

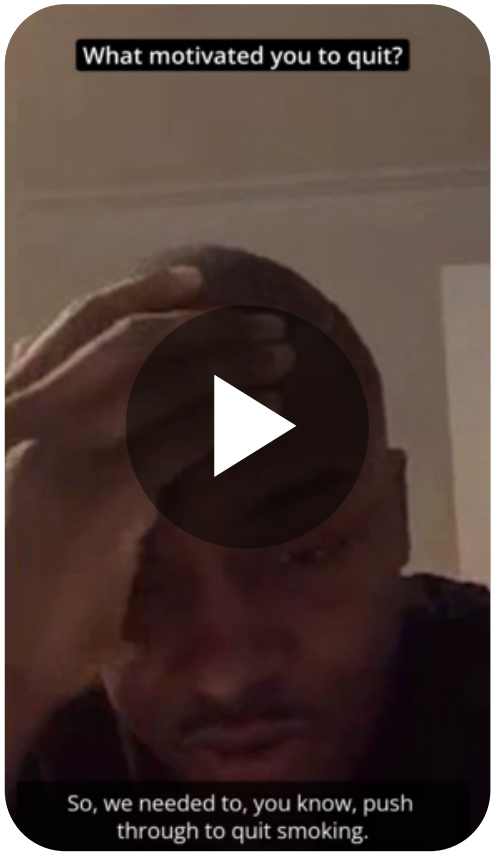
You may want to encourage smokers to **make a list of reasons to quit**, so that they can refer to them during difficult moments.

Fatherhood and/or partner being pregnant

Listen to the dads and partners talk about how becoming a father has prompted them to quit smoking. Some of the motivators they discuss include:

- Wanting to be a **role model** for their child
- Fears that their **child will also start smoking** later in life
- Concern for the harm **secondhand smoke** could do to their baby





Considerations:

- When discussing smoking cessation with dads and partners, **be empathetic and non-judgemental**, as preparing for parenthood can be overwhelming.
- **Reassure them** that it is important to talk about how they're feeling and ask for help if they need it.
- Let them know that **specialist support is available** to them and that accessing this can increase their chances of quitting. If their pregnant partner also smokes, **encourage them to quit together**.
- Remind them that the **help of partners, family, and friends** is important.
- They may not be aware of what **secondhand (or passive) smoke** is; you may want to use this opportunity to tell them about the **harm it can have on a pregnant woman, unborn babies and children**.
- Let them know that it is **not uncommon to relapse** on the journey to becoming smokefree and after becoming a parent.[7,8]
- You may wish to discuss **prevention techniques** and **coping strategies** (see 'relapse' section on page 22 for more information).

Questions you could ask:

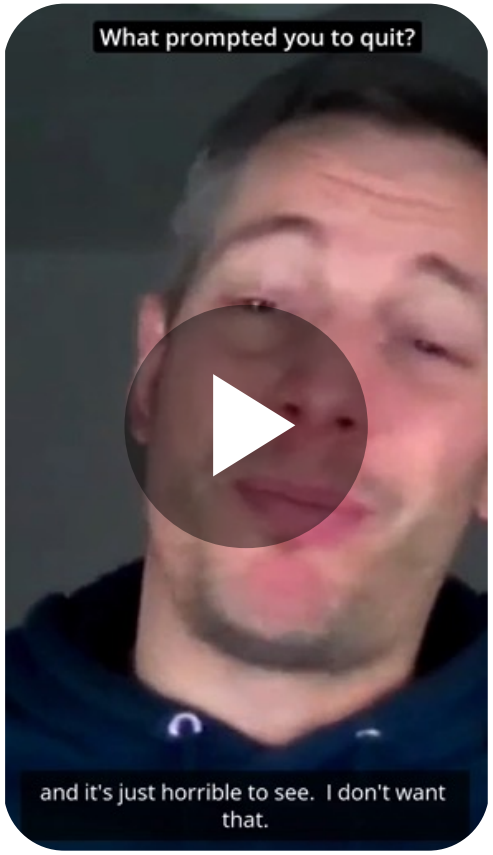
- "Tell me about how you are feeling about becoming/being a dad?"
- "Have you felt that finding out you are going to be/being a dad has changed how you think about your health?"
- "Being there for your baby/children and your children's/baby's health are important reasons for quitting smoking. How do you feel about stopping smoking?"
- "Are you aware of the risks of secondhand smoke to pregnant women and unborn babies?"
- "If your partner smokes too, have you considered reaching out to maternity services for help quitting together?"

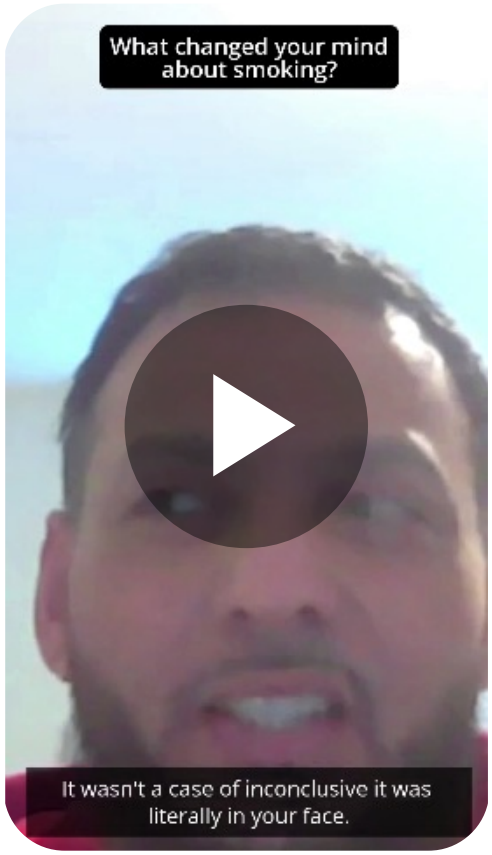
Family history and health issues

Other reasons that people mentioned for quitting smoking were **health concerns** – in particular, watching family members struggle with smoking-related illnesses, and the fear of not being around to see their children grow up.

It is important to address these concerns, offering reassurance that quitting smoking is extremely important for their health and the health of their family.

Understanding their concerns about quitting can help you to **evaluate their readiness to quit**, while **identifying potential barriers and facilitators**.





Considerations:

- You may want to reiterate how going smokefree can significantly **reduce the risk of developing serious long-term health conditions** such as heart disease, lung cancer and strokes.[9]
- Reassure them that the day they stop smoking, their **body starts clearing itself of toxins** and the repair process begins.[9] They will notice some **benefits within days or weeks** such as a better sense of taste and smell, and better blood circulation to the heart and muscles, which will give them more energy.[9]
- Having a **mental or physical health condition** should not deter someone from quitting smoking. However, they may need **additional/ specialist support**. Informing their **wider care team** about their smoking cessation efforts will help them to access the right support.

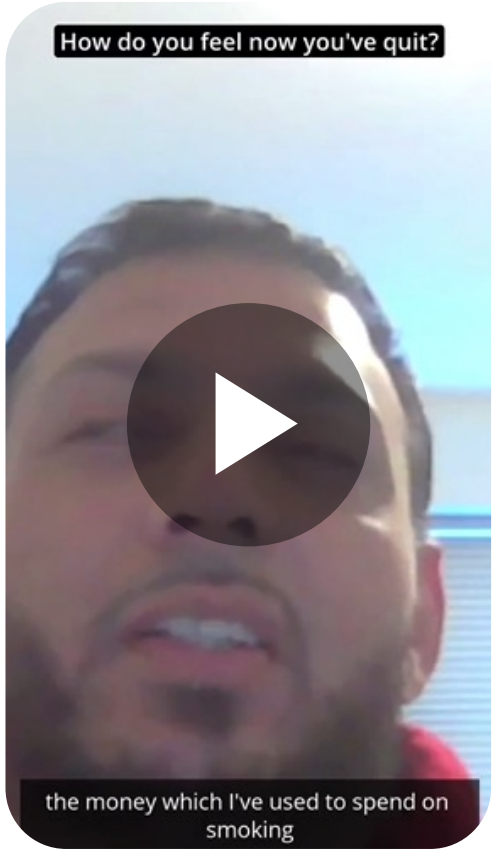
Questions you could ask:

- "Are or were any of your family members smokers? Do any of them have health problems that might be related to smoking?"
- "Are there any particular health issues related to smoking that you're worried about?"
- "Do you suffer from any physical illness or disorder?"
- "How would you describe your current mental health and well-being?"

Financial reasons

Bringing a new baby into the world can put pressure on a family's finances, so quitting smoking can be a great way to **save money** and alleviate some of that strain. Studies have shown that financial motivation can be stronger than health motivation in quitting smoking.[10]

Sensitively finding out whether financial reasons are motivating them to stop smoking may help to reaffirm their desire to quit. Here's what Thufel had to say about quitting to save money.



Considerations:

- Some people may find that **financial gains** from quitting smoking are **more immediately noticeable than health gains**, which is why reminding them of the money they can save by quitting smoking can sometimes be useful.
- Discussions around financial hardship should be tackled **sensitively**. It's important **not to inadvertently shame** partners for spending their money on tobacco.
- If a person is showing serious concerns over finances, you should **offer them information** about organisations that can give them advice and support.
- You may wish to let them know that on average, smokers lose an estimated **£2,000** of their income each year due to costs of smoking.[11]

Questions you could ask:

- "Do you know how much money you spend per week on tobacco?"
- "What difference do you think having that extra amount of money would make to you and your family?"

Making a plan

After **identifying their reasons** to quit and evaluating their readiness, it is important to work with dads and partners on a **plan for quitting** or refer them to **specialist support**.

This may involve:

- Identifying goals and setting a quit date
- Identiyfing triggers and barriers
- Considering practical ways to overcome barriers

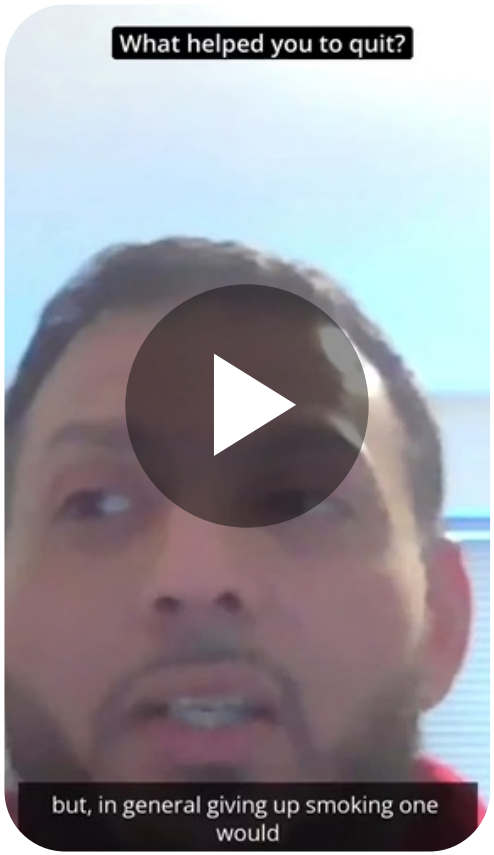
You may also find it useful to visit the **National Centre for Smoking Cessation and Training (NCSCT) website** for further training resources.

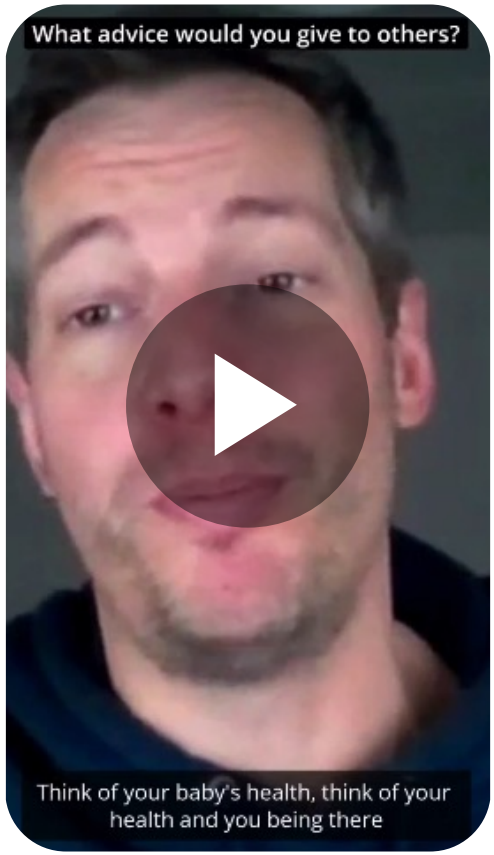
Identifying goals and setting a quit date

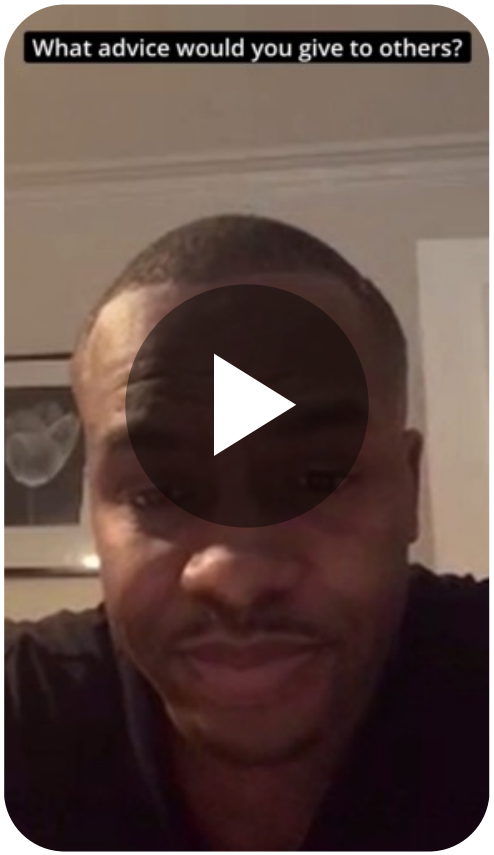
When we asked dads and partners what advice they would give to someone in their position who is trying to stop smoking, all of them spoke about their **children being a reason to quit**.

Getting dads and partners to **identify their goals** for quitting smoking can help to keep them **motivated and on track.** A goal could be **having more money available** to spend on essentials or getting ready for their **baby's arrival**, supporting their pregnant partner, and ensuring a **healthy environment for their baby/pregnant partner**.

Setting a **quit date**, thinking about their **goals,** considering potential obstacles, and identifying **helpful methods**, are key steps.







Considerations:

- Encourage dads and partners to **set a quit date**.
- If they don't feel ready, ask what is stopping them. **What would need to change to make them quit?**
- Explain that the goal from the quit date onwards is to **not have a single puff of a cigarette.**[12] Acknowledge that many smokers will have slip ups – but it is important to learn from these and **not be discouraged**.
- If people hear themselves **commit out loud** to going smokefree after their quit date, it can help to reinforce what the aim of the quit attempt is and hold themselves accountable.[12]
- If the person's pregnant partner also smokes, it is important to discuss the **benefits of quitting together** and how they can support each other.
- When discussing making a plan, you may wish to share the **'Quitting smoking together for a smokefree home'** guide:


Quitting together for a smokefree home

A smokefree household gives your baby and children the best chance of a healthy start in life. So if anyone smokes in your household where there are children and babies, there has never been a better time to quit together.

Become smokefree together

Six steps to quit smoking together:

1. Agree your reasons to quit

2. Talk to each other about your worries

Not sure how to bring up quitting? Try these conversation starters:

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Smokefree Families

Questions you could ask:

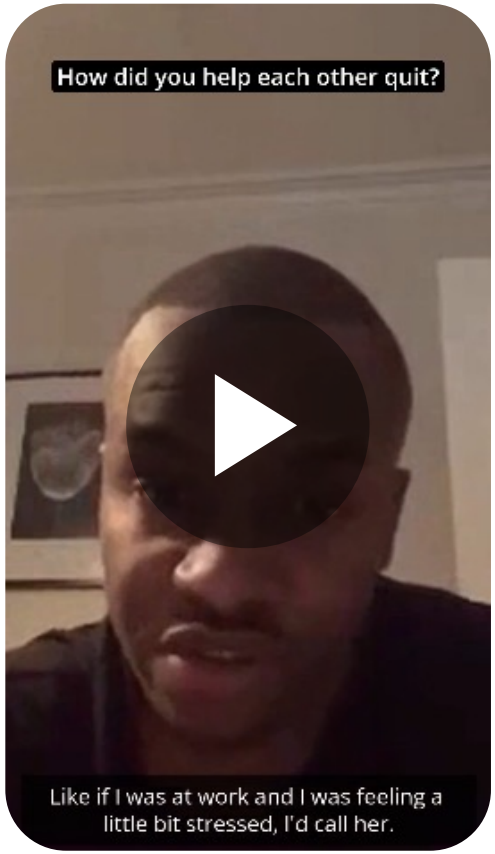
- "When do you think you might be ready to quit smoking completely? Is it possible to commit to a specific day?"
- *If they answer 'no' to the above:* "Is anything stopping you from feeling ready to quit? What changes, if any, would help you feel more prepared to take that step?"
- "Could involving your partner in the quitting process help you? What are your thoughts on quitting together and supporting each other through it?"

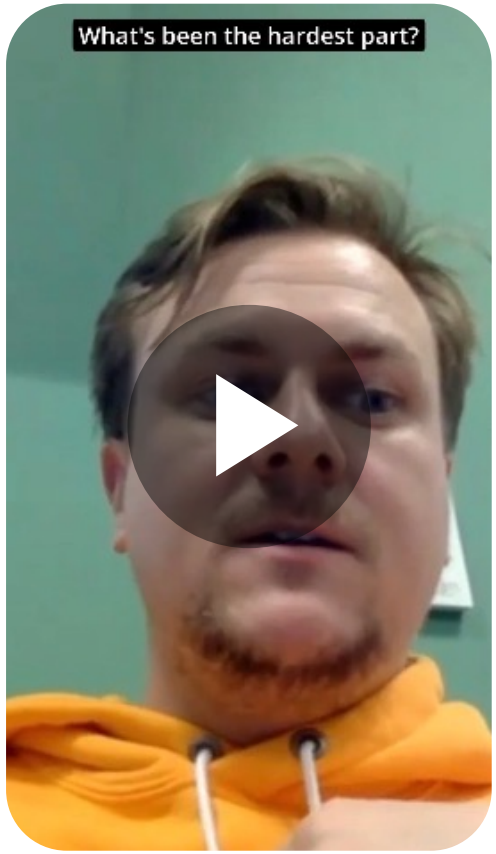
Identifying triggers and barriers

Once a quit date has been set, a key part of any smoking cessation plan is to pre-empt **possible triggers and cravings.** Discussing these in advance will help the person to **identify coping mechanisms** and strategies for dealing with these situations.

It can also be useful to ask if they have any **past experiences of quitting** that they can draw upon for their current quit attempt. You should reassure them that not having tried to quit before will not harm their chances of success.[12]

Here are some **triggers and barriers** that the partners we spoke with identified.





Considerations:

- Discuss **common triggers for cravings** and **strategies to deal with them**. Ask if they think they might experience any. This could be a **broken night's sleep** if they've recently welcomed a baby, **seeing someone else smoke**, having regular breaks at **work** where they'd usually have a cigarette, being with people who they used to smoke with, **feeling stressed**, or drinking **alcohol**.
- Provide assurance that during their journey, there will likely be moments post-quit date where the **urge for a cigarette** gets too much, and they may really want to smoke. You may wish to reiterate that experience tells us it is **worth having several strategies** to manage these instances effectively.

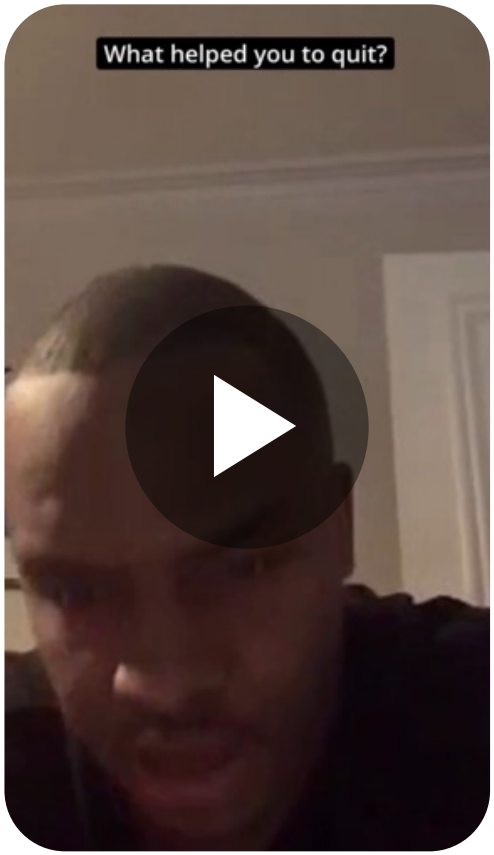
Questions you could ask:

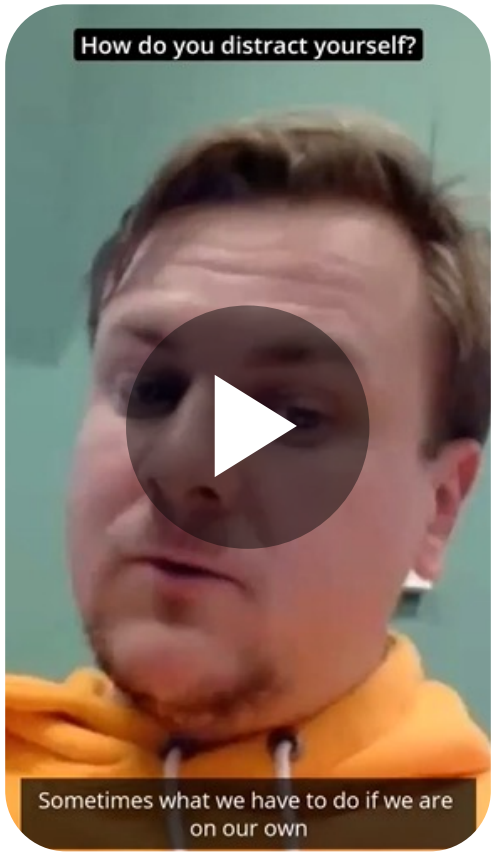
- "Can you tell me about any previous attempts you've made to quit smoking, if any?"
- "From previous quit attempts, what have you learnt about what works for you?"
- "Can you share what led you to start smoking again after a previous quit attempt?"
- "Is there anything you could do to approach quitting differently this time around?"
- "Are there any times of day or situations when you typically smoke now? These may act as a trigger for smoking. How do you think you could deal with/avoid these triggers?"

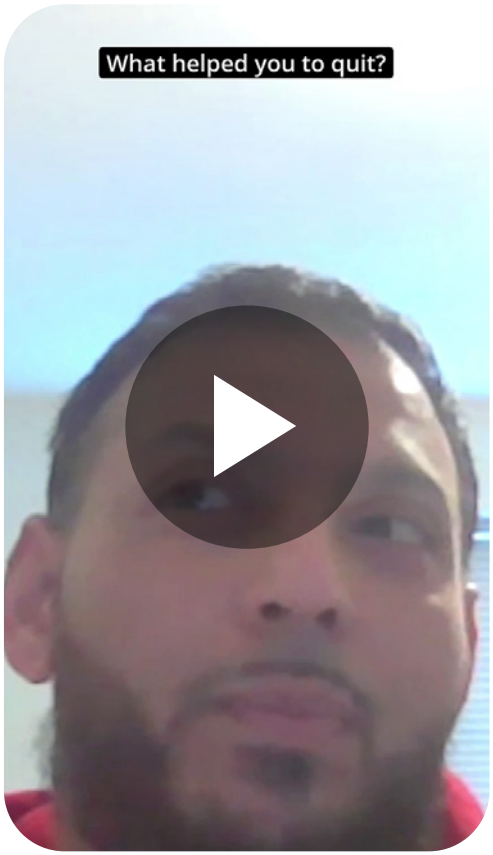
Practical ways to overcome barriers

Once the person has identified their triggers, it is important to offer reassurance that there are **strategies that will help them cope**.

Listen to Justin, Lewis and Thufel discuss **coping mechanisms** that helped them during their quit journeys.







Considerations:

- Offer **encouragement and support** to come up with their own ideas for coping with their smoking triggers/ urges, which you can elaborate on or supplement.
- Having them **identify strategies** themselves can help to **increase motivation and engagement**, but you may wish to suggest some methods if they're struggling to come up with them on their own, such as *"Some people have found XYZ helpful. Would that work for you?"*
- Strategies could include **removing cigarettes and ashtrays** from the home, avoiding situations where **common triggers** occur, distraction, short periods of **exercise**, imagining telling people they have started smoking again.
- You may wish to refer to these guides, which outline some useful strategies for people with children in particular:

Questions you could ask:

- "There might be moments after your quit date when you really want a cigarette. Can you think of some tactics that could help you when you get a strong urge to smoke?"
- "If you're quitting alongside your partner, could you ask each other what your triggers are and agree to support each other in overcoming them?"
- "Could changing your daily routine help you cope with cravings at times when you would typically smoke? Some people find this helps them."

Cravings, Withdrawal, and Relapse

Smoking addiction is not a lifestyle choice but a **long-term relapsing condition.** In addition, it becomes integral to people's daily routines, and this further reinforces dependence.[14] As a result, people may struggle with **withdrawal symptoms** to the extent where they **relapse.**

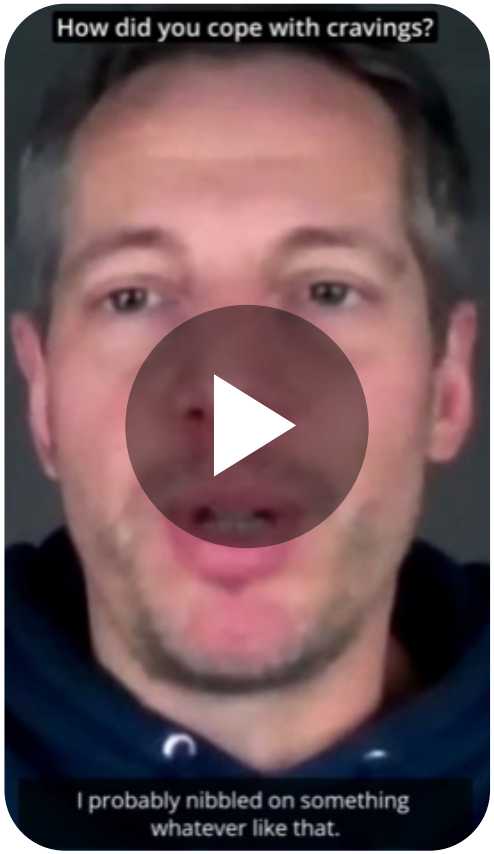
Once a quit plan has been made, you may wish to **inform dads and partners** of these **possible symptoms.** It is important to reassure them that there are **ways to overcome** them that can help to **minimise the likelihood and duration of relapse.**

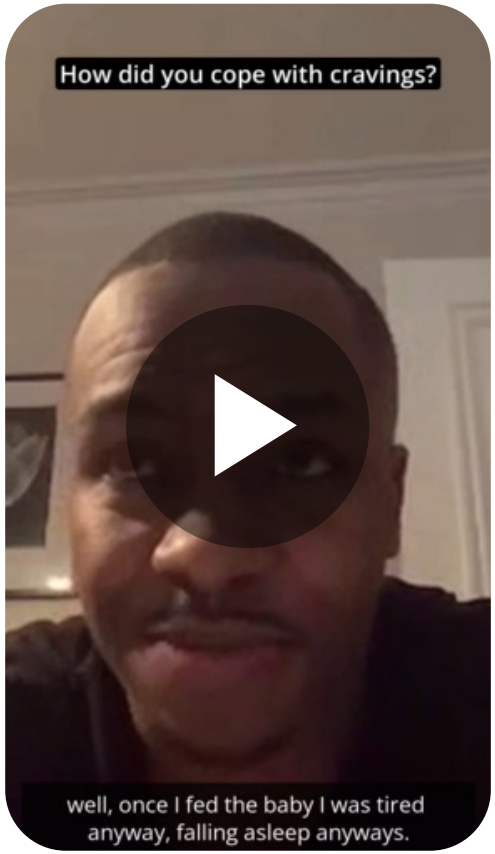
Physical withdrawal symptoms

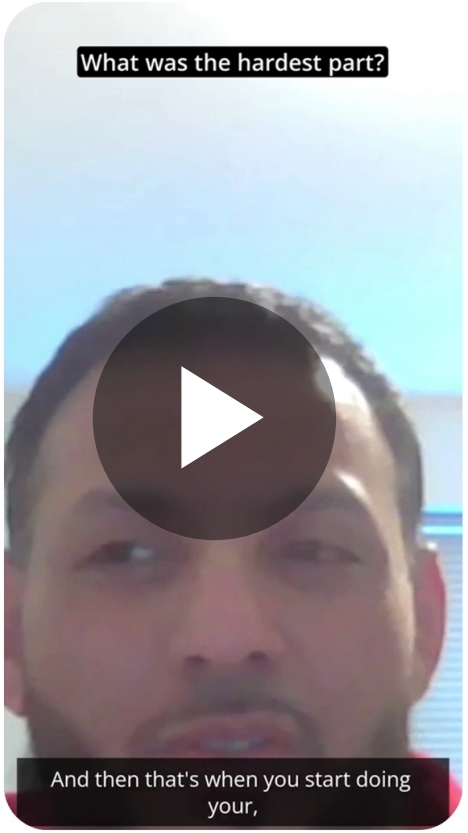
When discussing the physical withdrawal symptoms people might experience, it can help to explain that most symptoms **gradually disappear in the first four weeks** of a quit attempt as long as they don't smoke a cigarette.[12]

Here, Nick and Justin explain the **withdrawal symptoms** they experienced and how they overcame them.

Thufel also explains how he found the **first week the hardest** – so you may wish to reassure dads and partners that while withdrawal symptoms can seem intense at first, they will **subside in time.**







Considerations:

- Respond appropriately to any concerns and remind them that these symptoms are **all normal and will pass** with time as long as they **do not smoke.**
- You can also remind them that **smoking only provides temporary relief** from withdrawal symptoms and cravings. Even a single puff on a cigarette reminds the mind and body what they are missing by not smoking, so **withdrawal symptoms are not going to go away if they smoke** after their quit date.[12]
- Setting **expectations for withdrawal symptoms** can help people better prepare for them.

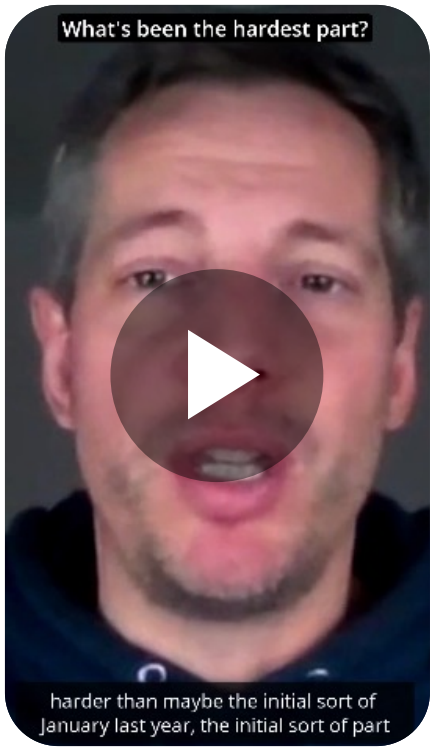
Questions you could ask:

- "If you go without a cigarette for a long time, do you notice any symptoms?"
- "Is there anything that works for you when dealing with cravings – other than smoking?"
- "If you and your partner decide to quit smoking together, how could you work together to distract each other when either of you feels an urge to smoke?"

Stress

Becoming a father can place **added pressure** on someone, which could be a trigger for smoking. Not only this, but many people believe smoking is a helpful method for dealing with stress, possibly leading to relapse in some cases.[12]

Here, Nick discusses how, besides physical cravings, he experienced varying levels of **stress while quitting smoking** and adjusting to life with a newborn.



Considerations:

- Many people report that they smoke because it helps them cope with stress. However, we know that after **four weeks** of stopping, people report **significantly less stress and anxiety** and **improved mood**.[14] You may wish to explain that this can be one of the many benefits of quitting smoking.
- Although smoking feels pleasurable, that feeling is actually **relief from nicotine withdrawal.** You may want to explain this to dads and partners, reminding them that once they've had a cigarette, their body will start to crave nicotine again.[14]
- Since coping with stress is a commonly stated barrier to stopping smoking for good, it can be useful to **understand why a person who smokes perceives their smoking helps with stress.**
- You may wish to help them come up with other **ways to deal with stress** – such as asking for support from people around them, avoiding some situations or exercising.
- It may be other issues within their lives are impacting their ability/motivation to quit, such as **financial and housing issues.** It is useful to know what **organisations are available to support** people with such issues so you can provide contacts or referrals.

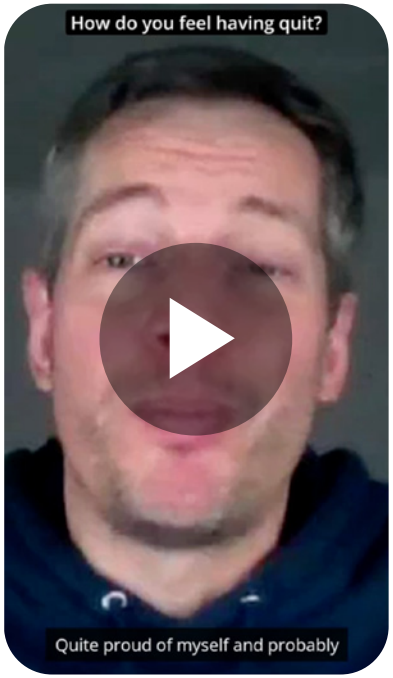
Questions you could ask:

- "How do you think smoking affects your stress levels, if at all?"
- "Do you feel there is a link between becoming/being a dad, and how much you smoke?
- "What do you know about the relationship between smoking and stress levels? Do you think quitting smoking could have an impact on your stress levels?"

Relapse

The **risk of relapse is greatest during the first month** after quitting.[14] It is important to assess the risk of relapse, and the need for ongoing support. You can then openly discuss **ways of preventing relapse** at an early stage and at each point of contact, and where to seek **further specialist support.**[15]

Most of the dads and partners we spoke to had tried to quit previously, so discussing any prior relapses with them, how they felt during those setbacks and what they learnt, may help to keep them on track.



Considerations:

- If dads and partners have a setback on their smokefree journey, encourage them **not to be too hard on themselves.** Being a dad can be challenging, and adding quitting smoking on top can be even tougher.
- You may also wish to explain that **living with and being around smokers presents an extra challenge** for them and their family. Highlight that support can be arranged for friends and family members interested in quitting. Even if they are not interested in quitting at the time of conversation, **100% smokefree should be a priority,** especially for households with children and/or a pregnant woman.
- There are lots of things that people can do to get themselves back on track and **prevent relapse** again. For instance, looking back at previous quit attempts can help to **identify high risk situations** where they are particularly vulnerable to relapsing.
- It should be acknowledged that while relapses may occur, s**etbacks do not mean failure,** and that rather than dwelling on it, they should draw a line under it, **move on and try again.**
- Try and **reiterate the strategies that have worked well** for them, encouraging confidence in approaching the coming weeks.

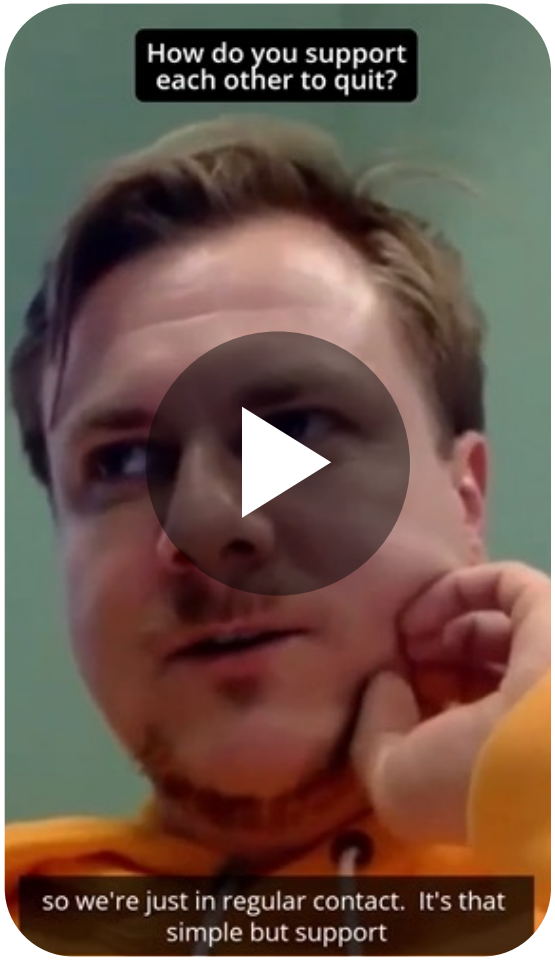
Questions you could ask:

- “How are you feeling about not smoking over the coming weeks?”
- “If there are other smokers in your household, do you think they’ve be open to quitting smoking with you?”
- “How comfortable would you feel asking any smoking friends or family members to avoid smoking around you and your partner/baby?”
- “What do you know about the link between having a partner quit smoking alongside you and the chances of you both staying smokefree?”
- “If you quit smoking previously but had a setback, were there any particular situations or triggers that led you to relapse?”
- “How can you use your previous experience to help you stay quit this time?”

Support

People who smoke who receive **support from family and friends** are more likely to **successfully quit.**[16]

Watch Lewis discuss how his partner has quit smoking alongside him and has played a crucial role during his quit journey.



Considerations:

- Reinforce any **positive feedback** they have had from friends and family about stopping smoking.
- However, be conscious that **people may have had a negative experience** telling their friends and family. Acknowledge that some people may attempt to undermine their quitting efforts and lead them off track. Help to identify those situations and **how they can manage/avoid them.**
- If they are quitting alongside their partner, help them think through how **quitting together will help** but also **any challenges this may present** and how they can be overcome. You may also want to refer to this guide on *Quitting together for a smokefree home*.

Questions you could ask:

- “Have you told your friends and family that you have stopped smoking and if so, how did they react?”
- “Are there people around you that you could ask for support? What do you think they could do to help you?”
- “If you’re quitting alongside your partner, do you think there are any potential challenges you anticipate facing as a family, and could you work together to overcome them?”

References

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