

How to Run a Smoking Cessation Session Using Hypnosis

Hypnosis is the best way to help the habitual smoker to quit. Why? Because hypnosis is the ideal tool to help individuals change their behavior patterns. While there are many products on the market to help address the chemical addiction to nicotine, few, if any, of those products address the behavior patterns associated to smoking, or the emotional and psychological gains that smokers perceive they are getting from smoking.

The thing to keep in mind when working with smokers is that they have an internal conflict. You see smokers want to quit smoking, and smokers also want to keep smoking. They are conflicted, and this internal conflict is what sabotages their conscious efforts to quit.

Most people start smoking because of social influence and pressure from their peers who smoke, usually at a very young age, when they are most impressionable and lacking in self-esteem or will power. They continue to smoke throughout their lives, out of habit, and begin to develop positive associations to the act of smoking.

Ask most smokers and they'll tell you that they smoke to relax, or they smoke to curb their appetite, or they smoke because it gives them a chance to "get away" for a little bit and take a break from work. Most of these "perceived" benefits are coping mechanisms, so if you can teach a smoker how they can get the same benefits they "thought" they were getting from smoking, but from healthier options, then the smoking loses much of its appeal and power.

Where Does It Start?

Your session with a smoker starts with the very first contact. Whether that's your web site, marketing materials, or a phone call to your practice. They need to feel confident that you know what you're doing and that you have their best interest in mind.

Start with a pre-session interview. Find out why they want to quit: is it because someone asked them to, or because they decided on their own to do this for themselves? If they are doing it for someone else, it's unlikely to work, no matter what method they use. However, if they are truly compelled to quit then hypnosis can help.

You want to ask some basic questions to get some background information about the origin of their smoking: things they have tried in the past to quit; their motivations for smoking; and their motivations to quit smoking. In Appendix A you will find two sets of questions to help discover a person's motivations for smoking and for quitting smoking.

It could also be helpful to find out if they have ever tried hypnosis before. If so, what was their experience like? For how long did they quit? What sort of induction did the hypnotist use? This information can help you to adjust your session to fit their experience. You can include the techniques that they felt were effective and exclude those techniques that were less effective.

Structuring the Session

The session begins with the pre-talk and a series of reframes (changes of perspective). You'll begin by reframing fears and failures. If they have tried patches and gums, you inform them that these products only address the chemical addiction but do nothing to address the psychological, behavioral component of smoking. If they have tried to quit using will power, you can explain to them about the 88% working against

the 12%. Explain how you will speak directly to their subconscious to help overcome their past negative behaviors and open up access to the resources they need to be successful.

Address their fears about failure, weight gain and withdrawal symptoms. Explain that the reason people typically gain weight when they stop smoking is because they replace cigarettes with food, however this program will give them other resources for coping with stress and anxiety, without the need for cigarettes or the need to replace cigarettes with food. Explain that they won't be losing anything, because you will show them how to get the same benefits that they thought they were getting from cigarettes, but from healthier sources, so they won't even notice the pangs, or may not experience them at all.

Symbolic Associations

Another thing you'll need to get from your client is any symbolic associations they have to smoking. This will be a little more difficult to drag out of them, but it's important to understand, because it speaks toward motivation to smoke.

You'll want to see if smoking plays a part in their self-identity. Do they identify themselves as a smoker? Do they smoke because it makes them feel cool, or rebellious, or independent? This is an indication that they have some internal image about what smoking represents and they are internally driven to try and live up to this image, which can undermine their desire to quit. Look for imagery, like the "Marlboro Man" or symbols of "masculinity" or "being sexy".

The Right Mental Attitude

Now, you'll want to find out if they "really want" to stop smoking. How motivated are they? Never "beg" your clients to quit, make them do all the work to find their own internal motivations for stopping.

Start off by "gently" asking them "Why do you want to quit?" The three main reasons people give are Family, Health and Money. Other reason could be negative social image, tired of being a slave to paper and tobacco, or some recent shock, which made them re-evaluate their habit, like someone close to them dying of cancer.

Now test their motivation by asking "Are you absolutely sure you really want to quit now?!" There are only three possible reactions to this question:

1. "Yes!" – They are enthusiastic about the idea of stopping. This reaction means that you are ready to begin your session.
2. "Yeah...sure." – They are on the fence. "Fire Them" until they are "really" ready to quit.
3. "I don't think so" – Again, "Fire Them" until they are "really" ready to quit.

Bottom line, if you get any reaction other than total enthusiasm, send them away to really think about it and to only come back when they are "really" ready to quit. If you want, you can offer to take them through a special "motivation to quit" session to help them with their decision. I would recommend charging them for this session.

When you first start out you may feel compelled to give sessions like these away for free. However, it has been my experience that "nothing ventured, nothing gained" so if they don't have an investment of some sort, then it will be less effective for them.

Motivation to Quit Session

This is the session you would take a client through if they are unsure whether they want to quit, and want your help to decide. You will use this session to really increase their motivation to quit, by getting them to really “feel” the consequences of a life as a smoker, as opposed to the life as a non-smoker.

Explain to your client what you are going to do and that the secret of this session is to help them to really get in touch with the “feelings” and “mental imagery” associated to smoking and not smoking.

Now, induce trance and deepen. Create two paths that lead to the future, the left path leads to a future where they continue to smoke. The “right” path leads to a future of non-smoking. Take them down the left path first and really build up the worst possible scenarios that could arise from a life of continued smoking – a horrible death, a destitute family, business failure, etc. Really build up and enhance the feelings in this visualization. Get them to describe their experiences and feelings along the way.

Now take them down the “right” path of becoming a permanent non-smoker. In this guided visualization, life is grand, the best of everything comes true, health, business, family, etc. Again, have them “really” experience the feelings of happiness, health and prosperity. Throw in as many positive emotions and scenarios as possible.

Now, bring them back to the present and integrate the lessons learned from both paths, really emphasizing the difference between both paths. Now ask them which path they want. If they are still undecided, then run through the scenarios again, building up the experience even more. If they choose the “right” path, then test them with the question “Are you really ready to walk down the path of a non-smoker, and be sure that this is the right path for you?” Some will decide on the spot, others will want more time to think it over, in either case, end the trance and let them decide or go off and think about it.

If they have decided to quit, then schedule a follow-up appointment to be their “stop smoking” session.

The Stop Smoking Session

While you are just starting out, give yourself plenty of time for this session, at least an hour to an hour and a half. Let the client know that after this session, absolutely no more smoking...period. We say this, and you can explain this to the client, because some people won't believe how easy it is to quit with hypnosis, and they think about testing themselves, by smoking just one cigarette. This is a huge mistake, because the old neuropathways are still there, and testing themselves in this manner will undermine all they have worked so hard to accomplish.

Now, induce trance and deepen. A moderate depth is sufficient. Utilizing the Dynamic Scripting framework presented earlier in this book, you can now go through a series of reframes while they are in trance. Talk about how they have smoked for “x” number of years and that they have had their fair share of cigarettes...they have not been cheated. Talk about how their subconscious mind has had its reasons for keeping this habit alive, but now they know that smoking is no longer what is good for them and that it's time to let it go.

Reframe the fact that all of the benefits that they once “thought” they were getting from smoking (confidence, relaxation, etc.), were not from smoking at all, but were from resources that have been inside them all along. At this point increase the feelings of relaxation and confidence and give them a trigger to revive these feelings whenever they need them. Tell them, “Each and every time you find yourself in a situation, which in the past may have caused you stress or anxiety, all you have to do is pinch your index finger and thumb together, then take a really deep breath, and as you exhale, release your fingers and say to yourself ‘relax’ and feel the relaxation wash over your entire body, from the top of your head, down to the tips of your toes.”

Let them know that this is their tool to use anytime they need it, as often as they want, and that each and every time they use it, the effects get strong and stronger, each and every time.

Future Pacing

Now, take your client on a little journey. Have them visualize or imagine sometime in the near future, in a situation that, in the past, they may have been tempted to smoke. Have them see themselves now going through this situation as a non-smoker, feeling relaxed, calm and confident, totally unaffected by the scene. Do this with several of the situations, that they had told you in the initial meeting were common times or situations where they smoked. Run through each scenario, feeling relaxed, calm and confident and completely smoke free.

This future pacing technique builds up a feeling of accomplishment, and gives them a glimpse of a positive future, as if it has already happen. This helps to overcome some of the fear of the unknown, or uncertainties about what the future holds for them and will help to further integrate the suggestions into their new reality.

Test, Test, Test!

While you still have them in trance, test their conviction to quit. If the suggestions are going to break down, it's better to have them break down in front of you, so you can deal with them right away.

Have your client imagine smoking a cigarette and see what happens. If they are sickened by the idea, then reinforce these feelings of repulsion. If they say they enjoyed it, then you know that you still have a little more work to do. Have them describe the situation to you in great detail. What are they doing? Where are they? Are they alone or with someone? How does it make them feel? What is their perception of the scenario?

We're looking for clues as to the internal or external motivators that are still driving them, so that we can address those drivers specifically and dis-empower them, so that they don't become an issue when your client leaves your office.

Creating New Behaviors

Once you feel that the suggestions have taken strong effect within your client, you will want to help them to create new positive behaviors to replace the old ones that accompanied their smoking. Go back through the list of times and places that they used to smoke and have them describe to you their thoughts on healthier, more creative ways to deal with those situations, without smoking.

This exercise forces their subconscious mind to get involved in the process and creatively design new positive behaviors for your client, which will then be internal suggestions and motivations that will help them to stay on track.

Dealing with Saboteurs

The last thing to do while your client is still in trance is to teach them how to deal with saboteurs, such as other smokers, stress, curiosity, arrogance, etc. It's not uncommon for other smokers to undermine the success of someone trying to quit. They don't do this maliciously, or even consciously.

People are generally resistant to change, and if you change, it means that, in some small way, they too must change, so they will try to keep things the same as they have been. They may say things like, "come

on, hypnosis? Man, you have tried to quit dozens of times in the past and you always start smoking again, so why bother, just accept the fact that you're a smoker and deal with it."

These types of comments may come from other smokers, or from non-smokers that have associated your client's identity with being a smoker, and so they are unwilling to change that perception, so they try to undermine your client's progress. Let your client know that these situations will come up, but they will be able to maintain their resolve and get through these situations, calmly and confidently.

Explain that they may feel cocky or arrogant that they were able to quit so easily and might be tempted to 'test' themselves. Let them know that this is unnecessary, and that they should be happy with the results they are getting and that the mere idea of "testing" themselves is nonsense and a ridiculous notion.

End the Session

Now, bring your client out of trance and use the 'double dip' technique described earlier in this book to reinforce the suggestions of calm, relaxed confidence and that they are on the "right" path toward a brand new future as a permanent non-smoker.

Appendix A

Questions about why you smoke

1. Do you smoke because of anger or boredom?
2. Is handling or watching the smoke part of the enjoyment?
3. Do you think smoking is pleasant and relaxing?
4. When you run out of cigarettes do you find it almost unbearable until you get some?
5. Do you smoke cigarettes automatically without even being aware of it?
6. Do you smoke to stimulate or perk yourself up?
7. Do you get a real gnawing hunger for a cigarette when you have not had one recently?
8. Do you often find a cigarette in your mouth and not remember putting it there?
9. Do you smoke at work as a means of getting away for a few moments?
10. Do you smoke at home as a means of getting away for a few moments?

Questions about motivation

1. Why do you want to stop smoking?
2. Do you really want to stop?
3. How many cigarettes do you smoke each day?
4. Do you smoke them all the way down?
5. What brand do you smoke? (for nicotine level)
6. At what age did you start smoking?
7. Have you stopped and started again before?
8. How did you stop?
9. How easy or hard was it to stop then?
10. What made you start again?
11. When do you smoke?
12. What are the triggers?
13. What do you like and dislike about smoking?
14. Do you have any fears about stopping smoking?
15. Are there times you can go many hours without smoking and it does not bother you?