

Getting out of it:

How to cut down or quit cannabis

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Acknowledgments

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Introduction

If you've been smoking cannabis and want to cut down or stop, you may be finding it harder than you expected. Plenty of people have found it difficult to change their use.

This booklet is based on their experiences and presents the kinds of things they found most useful. Some of the ideas may work better for you than others, but that's normal, since everyone's different. We hope you find this a useful starting point; you may find solutions we don't even mention here.

Throughout the booklet, there are points where you can stop and think about what is going on for you. You may feel you don't need to complete these bits, but we encourage you to give them a go - we sometimes get a lot more out of writing stuff down than just thinking about it.

Before we get into the nitty gritty of it all, think about where you're at right now:

I believe I have a problem with cannabis because...

The best thing about changing my cannabis use would be...

The hardest thing about changing my cannabis use is...

Getting ready

Where are you at?

It's easier to make change when you know where you're starting from. So how much would you typically smoke in a day, a week or a month?

If you're not sure, try keeping a record for a few days or weeks to find out. There's a daily diary - at the back of this booklet - that you can use to record more information on how much you're smoking, and your pattern of smoking. If you are concerned about someone else reading it, you can use abbreviations or symbols that only you will understand.

Amount	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
How much							
Cost							
How often							
OK or too much?							

Where does smoking fit into your life?

To work out how cannabis is affecting you, it helps to look at both the good and bad things about smoking. If cannabis was a totally unpleasant experience, you probably wouldn't be smoking as much as you are, if at all. If there was nothing bad about it, you probably wouldn't be reading a booklet like this.

So what's good about smoking cannabis? What do you like about it? What do you look forward to when you are thinking about smoking?

- It's relaxing
- Helps me to unwind after work
- Helps me sleep
- Helps me get boring chores done
- Improves sex
- Problems don't bother me so much when I smoke
- Helps ease painful feelings like depression, anxiety, grief or anger
- Relieves pain
- I like feeling different from "straight" people
- Laugh and find things funny
- Have interesting ideas or feel creative
- Enjoy smoking with my partner
- Like the feeling in my body
- Enjoy the ritual of preparing the cannabis and smoking it
- A lot of people I know smoke – it's just what we do
- _____
- _____
- _____

So what don't you like about it?

- Expensive
- It's illegal – problems with the law or risk of getting caught
- Causes conflict with other people
- Dealing with dealers
- Paranoid thoughts
- Hard to remember things or think clearly
- It's not as enjoyable as it used to be
- Debt
- I worry about my health
- Find it hard to get other stuff done
- Worry about how it's affecting my kids
- Feel bad about myself
- Feel tired a lot of the time
- Have to hide it from other people
- Do stupid things when I'm stoned
- Makes it hard to work or get a job or study
- How much I eat when I get the munchies
- It's getting too repetitive
- My tolerance is too high – it takes heaps more now to get me stoned
- _____
- _____
- _____

What would be good about cutting down or stopping? What are you looking forward to?

- More money
- Feeling healthier
- Get other things done
- Be able to work better or find work
- More energy
- Think more clearly
- Feel better about myself
- Better relationships with other people – especially people who don't smoke
- Look better or healthier
- Be a better parent
- Enjoy other things in life
- Being able to sleep without smoking
- Remember things better
- Not have this secret from people who don't smoke
- Save money for other things that are important to me
- _____
- _____
- _____



So what makes it hard to quit or cut down? What gets in the way?

- It's a habit
- It's hard to say no when it's offered
- It's too easy to get hold of
- Still enjoy it
- Dealing with problems
- Don't know what else to do with my life
- Difficulty sleeping when I stop or cut down
- Dealing with unpleasant feelings in other ways
- Cravings – think about it a lot
- Feeling irritable or moody when I stop or cut down
- Boredom
- Risk of stuffing up when I try new things
- Relaxing or unwinding
- Would have to avoid some or all of my friends for at least a while
- My partner still wants to smoke
- I get along best with my partner when stoned
- Don't want to be like straight people – mortgage, 2.4 kids and picket fence
- _____
- _____
- _____



How do you want your cannabis use to change?

If you're going to make changes to your cannabis use, it helps to know what you want it to change to. Consider the following questions:

Do you want to stop completely or just cut down?

If you plan to stop, do you want to cut down gradually to nothing, or stop all at once?

If you want to keep on smoking, what is your ideal level of use? (Think about how often you want to smoke – eg per week or month, how often you won't smoke, how much you'll smoke, when will be "regular use" and when will be "heavier use" and how much you want to spend on smoking.)

Amount	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
How much							
Cost							
What time of day							

How do people change their habits?

We might think about *what* we want to change in our lives but we don't necessarily think so much about *how* we make change in our lives. A couple of researchers, Prochaska and DiClemente, observed that people go through some common stages when they are trying to change their substance use:

Precontemplation	You like what you're doing and don't see any reason to change how much you smoke
Contemplation	You can see there might be some problems – eg it's expensive, you're health isn't so good, or your partner doesn't like it – but you still enjoy it and you're not sure what you want to do
Decision	You've decided your current level of use isn't right for you any more
Action	You quit or cut down
Maintenance	You work on keeping to your new levels of use
Relapse	You end up using more than you wanted – either as a one-off or over a longer period of time.

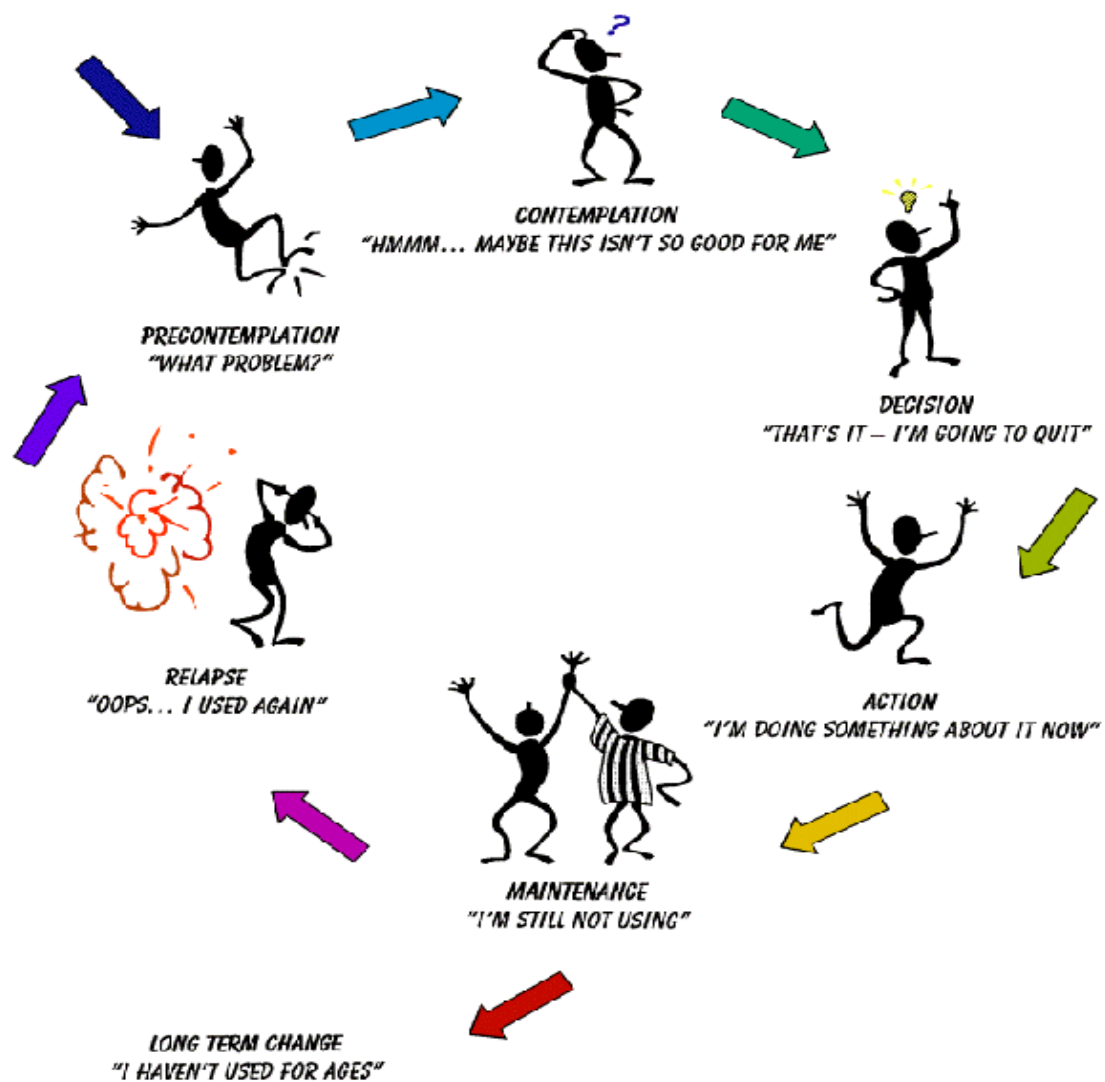
A lot of people go through this cycle several times before they stick at their preferred level of use. Relapse is pretty normal, especially if you still enjoy getting stoned but you don't like the impact on the rest of your life.

Some people feel like they are “back at square one” when they have a relapse. They may even tell themselves it's no good trying to change and that they'll always be a “stoner”. The problem with this kind of thinking is, you then feel bad about yourself. That just gives you one more reason to smoke and forget about it all... does this sound familiar?

Whether you have a relapse or not isn't as important as how you manage it, though. Any relapse is a chance to learn more about how smoking affects you.

Rather than stop trying, it's better to ask yourself "OK, what would I do differently next time?"

This example of the stages of change is for someone trying to quit, but it applies equally to trying to cut down. So, what stage do you think you're in right now?



Planning to make change

People have more success changing when they plan it, rather than give up on impulse or because their dealer wasn't home that night. If you do find yourself accidentally cutting down or giving up, give it a shot anyway – but if it doesn't work, it doesn't mean you can't change.

Decide what your first step will be. For example...

- Not smoke at all
- Delay smoking (eg until 9pm when normally start at 6 pm)
- Smoke less (eg smoke a quarter of a gram instead of half a gram)
- Smoke a joint instead of a bong
- Only have one smoke instead of several
- Other: _____

What day do you plan to start making change?

It may be uncomfortable making change at first, especially if you have been smoking heavily or for a long time. It helps to do something else you enjoy when you might normally be smoking to take your mind off the cravings or discomfort you may feel.

What do you plan to do instead of smoking as you normally would?

- Watch a video or go to the movies
- Go out to dinner
- Have a massage
- Read a book
- Go for a walk or go to the gym
- Visit: _____
- Other: _____

Making change

OK, so you're ready to make some change. What happens now?

Withdrawal

Some people believe cannabis isn't addictive like some other drugs and that you can't be physically dependent on it. While it isn't common for people to feel as physically sick as someone stopping some other drugs, many people find the first week or two after cutting down smoking cannabis can be unpleasant. For some people it's bad enough to go back to smoking. One of the most common reasons people relapse at this stage is not being able to sleep.

Knowing what is happening can help you to ride out the changes, while your body adjusts to having less or no cannabis floating around your system. Withdrawing from cannabis often isn't so much a physical withdrawal as an emotional one. The difficulty with this is it can be hard to tell the difference between withdrawal and your normal emotions. It's normal to get snappy or moody, and you may do some damage to important relationships without realising it's just a side effect of changing cannabis use.

Common things people experience when reducing or ceasing cannabis use:

- Difficulty sleeping
- Vivid and often disturbing dreams
- Mood swings
- Irritability (and generally biting people's heads off)
- Anxiety
- Headaches
- Tiredness
- Physical discomfort, such as sweating, or hot and cold flushes.

Things that can help:

Time The good news is that these symptoms pass, usually in one to two weeks.

Look after yourself Drink plenty of water or juice, eat well, try to get some exercise and get plenty of rest, even if you don't sleep well.

Decrease stimulants Try not to have coffee, tea, cola, sugar or too many cigarettes before bed-time – it will make it harder to sleep.

Ye olde remedies Try the good old “warm milk and a bath” before bed time – if you still can’t sleep, consider relaxing herbal teas or Valerian from a chemist. If you just aren’t getting any sleep at all, you may want to consider asking your doctor about taking a mild sleeping tablet for a short while. However, be very careful about replacing one drug with another – if you think you’re uncomfortable cutting down on cannabis, you don’t want to experience withdrawal from sleeping tablets – it’s really nasty.

Warn others Let people know you might be more moody than usual - whether you tell them why is up to you.

Cravings

Cravings are one of the biggest obstacles in cutting down or quitting cannabis. They cause that urge to smoke, even when you've told yourself you're not going to. You may experience cravings as physical discomfort, agitation or constant thoughts about the drug.

They're a pain in the neck to deal with, but the good news is they pass if you can hang in there long enough. Over time you get fewer cravings and they tend to get weaker and last for a shorter time. But in the first few days or weeks, it sometimes seems like they're never going to go away and you'll go mad if you don't smoke.

It can be useful to think of cravings being like a hungry cat that meows “Feed me, feeeeeed me!” at your door. If you feed the cat, it knows it's on to a good thing and it's guaranteed to come back. If you don't feed it, the cat might try harder to get your attention, but it will eventually lose interest and go try somewhere else. Cravings are much the same - the more you give in to them (and they can seem very convincing), the more they come back, again... and again... and again... If you can just ride them out, they do pass and they do go away.

Here's a few strategies that heaps of people trying to resist cravings have found to be useful. With a bit of trial and error, you should find some ideas that also work for you:

- ❑ Notice when the craving starts – it's the first step in doing something about it.
- ❑ Remind yourself that cravings are a normal part of cutting down and that they will pass with time – the more you give into cravings the stronger they become.
- ❑ Remember that cravings are like a hungry cat – the more you feed it the more the cat comes back. If you don't feed it, the cat eventually stops coming back.
- ❑ Try to find something to distract yourself with - even if you only delay using cannabis.
- ❑ Try to work out when you are more likely to crave cannabis - in certain situations, with particular people, when you feel a certain way - and plan ahead how you will deal with each situation when it comes up.
- ❑ Delay using for an hour, or even five minutes. When the time is up, delay using for another hour, and then another, and so on. It is easier to resist cravings for a manageable period of time than to try to stop "forever". It's all too easy to convince yourself "well, just one more smoke won't hurt" if you tell yourself you'll never ever ever smoke again afterwards.
- ❑ Talk to someone supportive when you start to get cravings.
- ❑ Do something relaxing and enjoyable instead.
- ❑ Have a bath or shower. Or a massage.
- ❑ Go for a walk or run, or do other physical exercise.
- ❑ Visit friends who don't use the substance or won't while you are there.
- ❑ Watch a video or go to the movies.
- ❑ Reward your efforts to cut down, even if you ended up using more than you meant to - it takes time to make change and being hard on yourself will make it more difficult.
- ❑ Talk to friends who have already cut down and find out what worked for them.
- ❑ Talk to friends about how they enjoy themselves or relax.

What else helps you to deal with cravings?

Cutting down

Strategies to cut down are pretty personal – what works for one person may not work for another. Some will work at first but won't be so helpful down the track. It's a good idea to be flexible – over time, you will get better at choosing the right strategy for different situations.

Some people choose to cut down before they quit, to get used to the idea. Other people find, no matter how hard they try, they can't cut down. This is particularly true for people who find it hard to resist the temptation to smoke as much as they can whenever they can. While we would never recommend anyone try and change their cannabis use by willpower alone, you do need some willpower to be able to just cut down rather than quit.

One way to cut down is to change the way you use cannabis. For example, think about changing from bongos to other ways of using cannabis. Here are some common strategies:

Smoke joints

Smoking joints is generally healthier for your lungs than smoking bongos. It also helps to break the association between smoking and the "hit" you get from pulling cones. It's recommended that you roll small joints – eg one paper numbers – and use plain, untreated cardboard for the tip – this cuts down on the extra rubbish you are taking into your lungs apart from the cannabis. Another advantage of smoking joints over bongos is that it just makes it a bit harder to "have another one". If you're too stoned to be bothered rolling another joint, you probably don't need it – but it's just way too easy to smoke another cone.

Use a vaporiser

Vaporisers heat up cannabis enough to release the main active ingredient in cannabis, THC, without burning it. This means you inhale the vapours, rather than breathe in smoke, which has a lot of other stuff in it that does nothing to help your high and isn't good for your lungs. Some bong shops sell them or you can order them over the Internet.

Make leaf butter

Eating cannabis in the form of cookies or cake is better for your body – your lungs in particular. The main disadvantage of eating cannabis is that you are stoned for much longer (and may not want to be) and that it's hard to judge your dose as it usually takes at least an hour before you start to know how strong your dose was. Plenty of folk have gotten way more stoned than they meant to by being impatient and eating more cookies or cake before the first lot started to have an effect.

Don't add tobacco

It's pretty common in Australia to mull up cannabis with tobacco but you might find it harder to cut down the cannabis if it's also a source of nicotine for you. Remember that tobacco and cannabis are both plants and contain heaps of other chemicals that your body has to deal with – putting the two together makes it harder for your body and may cause unexpected interactions.

Buy less at a time

Although buying in bulk might seem like the cheaper option, people often find that the more they have the more they smoke. Try buying less each time to cut down the temptation to just keep on smoking.



Here are some other ideas that have helped people to cut down:

- ❑ Plan your cannabis use.
- ❑ Set limits on the day, time and amount used (eg only after 8 pm).
- ❑ Try to have at least two cannabis free days per week.
- ❑ Delay the first use, and then each use after that.
- ❑ Find something else to do as a distraction from wanting to use more.
- ❑ Arrive later.
- ❑ Leave earlier.
- ❑ Spend time with someone who will support your efforts to cut down.
- ❑ Try to avoid situations where you are likely to use or use a lot.
- ❑ Try to plan what days will be "normal" use and what days will be heavier use.
- ❑ Only prepare a little bit of cannabis at a time, even if you intend to use more.
- ❑ Place the drug in a place that is hard to get to, or give it to someone who is supportive of your efforts to change.
- ❑ Put the cannabis and your smoking gear away between smokes
- ❑ Reduce your tolerance - you will need less.
- ❑ Keep a record of how much you are using and check whether you are meeting your goals.
- ❑ Don't try to keep up with other people - go at your own pace.
- ❑ Check that you really do want a smoke - don't just smoke because it's there
- ❑ Only take as much cash as you need when you go out.
- ❑ Leave your ATM card at home.

What else could you think of trying?

Finding alternatives

Replacing the cannabis

Changing your cannabis use can be hard work, especially if you have been smoking for a long time or smoking large amounts. It can be tempting to try and make up for the time you have spent stoned by turning into some kind of “Super Citizen” – doing household chores, working hard, being responsible, and generally boring yourself silly with other very sensible activities.

While these things have their place, it's essential that you try and replace the cannabis, which is still usually enjoyable in some way, with other things. It's part of being a balanced, healthy human bean.

While you are adjusting to a life without cannabis, or with less, it helps to keep busy. If you have nothing else to do, but are trying not to smoke, it's almost guaranteed you'll start thinking about smoking. Plan something ahead of time – the day or week before - so that when you would normally smoke, you are doing something else to take your mind off cannabis.

So go back to the list of things you like about smoking cannabis in the section “Where does smoking fit into your life?” This list will give you a good idea of what needs cannabis helps you to meet. Chances are, those needs won't go away just because the cannabis does. If you don't find some other way of meeting those needs, it's all too easy to just go back to cannabis.

So what needs do you need to meet in another way?

- Get to sleep at night
- Relax or unwind
- Deal with conflict or stress
- Deal with boredom
- Deal with unpleasant emotions like guilt, anxiety, grief or anger
- Chill with friends
- Feel part of a group
- Get some excitement or take a break from routine.

Anything else you may need to do differently?



Finding longer term goals

If smoking cannabis has been a big part of your life it can be hard at first to know what else is important to you or what you want from life. Consider the following:

What are your strengths?

What do you enjoy?

What values or beliefs are important to you?

What can you picture yourself doing in the future?

What can other people see you doing? *You don't have to agree with them!*

Relaxing

If smoking cannabis has been your main way to relax, it's no wonder it became so important to you - we all need to unwind. Relaxation soothes painful emotions, refreshes our bodies and helps us to think more clearly.

So how else can you relax if you're not smoking?

Massage Cannabis is a very physical drug – so chances are, you'll enjoy a physical form of relaxation and it doesn't get much better than a good massage. (Think it's too expensive? Just how much were you spending on cannabis again?).

Bath, shower or spa Heat is relaxing, especially if you can float around in it. Perfect time to stick the "Do not disturb" sign on the bathroom door.

Exercise Sound strange? A good work-out gets your body and mind working better, releases natural endorphins and chances are you'll sleep much better afterwards.

Laugh Another free dose of endorphins. Check out stand-up comedians, funny films and seek out people who make you laugh – if you're laughing, it's impossible to see your world as being 100% bad.



- Yoga** Stretching, meditation and relaxation all rolled into one. Trust the hippies on this one.
- Veging out** Give yourself permission to do nothing sometimes, or zone out watching telly, playing computer games or cards. If you feel guilty about not getting other stuff done, remind yourself you'll get more done if you take time out to get your energy back.
- Breathing** Deep, slow breathing (about three seconds in and three seconds out) helps our bodies to get the oxygen we need and get rid of the old air. A lot of the symptoms of anxiety are caused by fast and shallow breathing. Try breathing from the bottom of your ribs so your stomach rises up and down rather than your chest.
- Muscle relaxation** We can relax more quickly when we tense our muscles first. How?
- Lie or sit somewhere comfortable and breathe deeply.
 - Tense your arm muscles as if you were showing off your biceps. Hold for seven seconds then release gently for around ten seconds.
 - Now tense up your face, like you've just sucked a lemon. Then relax.
 - Continue with your shoulders and neck.
 - Now your stomach, your bum, your thighs and finally your calves and feet.
 - Tense the muscles hard enough to feel it, but not so hard you do damage. Relax the muscles gently.
 - For a deeper relaxation, tense and relax each part twice before moving on to the next bit.
- Fun stuff** Do something you enjoy. Pleasure and satisfaction can also help us to feel relaxed and positive.

Ask other people how they relax or unwind. They could have some ideas that work for you too.

Finding other ways to spend time

Boredom and uncertainty about what else to do with your time is a common reason for people to smoke. It may be you do other things, but have fallen into the habit of doing them stoned or just not finding other things very satisfying.

Think back to the first few times you tried cannabis. Did you have any fears about whether it might be dangerous? Did you have any doubts about how to use a bong? Were you uncertain about what the unspoken rules of smoking were – like how many tokes to have or how to score? Is it any different now – easier, more familiar, more automatic?

Just as it takes a while to develop a smoking habit, it takes a while to develop new habits, interests and passions.

A new activity may seem strange or unsatisfying at first, but may become more enjoyable after giving it a few goes and getting some practice. Most activities that are really rewarding involve some level of skill or difficulty – think about the first time you tried to ride a bike, drive a car or have sex.

At the back of this booklet, you'll find a list of ways to spend your time. There's things that are quick or long-term, free or need money, can be done alone or with others. A variety of things is more likely to keep your interest. It's unlikely one thing alone will be as powerful an experience as smoking cannabis, as cannabis is a drug that directly affects your central nervous system. You stand to gain a whole range of rewarding experiences you would never have had, if you were still at home smoking cannabis.



Dealing with stress and other emotions

A lot of people find smoking cannabis becomes a way to deal with painful or distressing feelings. It's useful to think of feelings like cravings – they pass if you can ride them out.

Feelings are kind of like uninvited guests – arriving when they feel like it, not when you ask for them. We can't make them go away just because we don't like them. All painful feelings are there for a reason, and it's usually that something in our lives is no longer working for us... or is even hurting us.

However, we can get overwhelmed by feelings and the message can get lost in how painful it is. These suggestions can help to ride out a feeling until it eases or passes – and they always do.

Know your feelings Work out what you are feeling and remind yourself that emotions are just a normal part of being human. If we ignore feelings they just tend to build up until we explode – and that can get pretty messy.

Hang in there Remind yourself the feeling will ease or pass. We can't get "stuck" in an emotion.



Think straight

Be wary of your negative thoughts. Just as you wouldn't believe everything you read in the newspaper, don't believe everything you think. When we are upset, things seem a lot worse than they normally do – but it might not be the most accurate way of thinking about the problem.

Be realistic

You will just wear yourself out trying to change the things you have no control over - like other people's behaviour. Put your energy into changing the things that you do have some control over and trying to accept that other parts of life are just plain difficult at the moment.

Distract yourself

When we are particularly upset, it's hard to think straight or find good solutions, so it can help to go and do something else relaxing or enjoyable for a while and come back to the problem when you feel less stressed.

Relaxation

Do relaxing things as part of your daily routine – we tend to feel less overwhelmed by our emotions when we start off calmer.

You may find you are trying to deal with strong or overwhelming emotions and these strategies aren't enough. It may be a good idea to see a counsellor – your local council or community health centre should be able to tell you what services are available in your area. Otherwise, phone services such as Lifeline have this kind of information (the numbers are in the front of your phone book).



Dealing with other smokers

One of the common problems people face is that changing how much you smoke may mean being in a different headspace from your friends if they smoke too.

Who might be hard to hang out with while you are changing your use? You might need to avoid these people for a while or plan how you will deal with them so you don't put yourself at risk of smoking – eg ask them not to smoke around you or at least not offer you a smoke. If they hassle you about cutting down or quitting, you'd have to wonder how good a friend they really are.

Saying no can be hard when it's offered to you or easily available. Most people find it easier to say no when they've thought about their answer beforehand, and practised it to themselves a few times. These are some ways you can say no:

- No thanks
- I'm driving
- No thanks, doctor's orders
- I have to work tomorrow
- I quit
- Sorry, but if I cough up my lungs once more, I won't have any left
- Not tonight, thanks
- It's never been the same since I was abducted by aliens...
- I've had enough, but thanks anyway
- No thanks, I'm not feeling too good
- I don't enjoy it any more
- I'd rather have a coffee (or whatever)
- I'm cutting down.

If someone continues to insist:

- ❑ No thanks
- ❑ Tempting, but no thanks
- ❑ No, I really don't feel like it
- ❑ I would have thought you would be more supportive
- ❑ If it is a problem for you, I can leave and catch up with you later
- ❑ I'd rather not go into detail, but I really can't because of my health
- ❑ No, but you go right ahead.
- ❑ Hey, I'm still the same person!
- ❑ This is hard enough – please don't make it harder
- ❑ I really would prefer a coffee – I don't mind making it myself
- ❑ Hey, what's the big deal?
- ❑ No, but what about that game of footy last night... (changing the topic).

Whether you need to stay away from friends or not, it can be a good time to try and meet other people who don't smoke cannabis. You may like to catch up with people you used to see.

Maybe you would like to meet new people but aren't sure where to find them. Making small talk with strangers can be hard – how do you know what they're interested in? One of the easiest ways to meet new people is to do some activity, sport, or short course where you have something in common to talk about. By having an activity in common, you already know at least one thing they're interested in and that makes a good starting point for a conversation. You may not meet someone you relate to straight away, but the only way you'll find people you do enjoy talking to is by getting to know a range of different people.

Relapse prevention

Identifying risk times

OK, so you've managed to cut down or quit, what next?

First up, CONGRATULATIONS! It's hard to make change and it takes guts to give it a go - be proud of your effort. The main thing now is how to keep it going. It helps to know when you are most likely to slip up and smoke more than you mean to.

Are any of these situations possible danger times for you?

- Feeling bored
- When I see particular people like _____
- Having spare cash
- Going to parties
- Feeling really painful emotions like guilt, grief, anger or anxiety
- When I start thinking about good times I've had with cannabis in the past
- When it's offered to me
- When my body hurts for some reason - eg injury or illness
- When I want to forget about my problems
- When I feel really good
- When I think I've made a big mistake and feel bad about it
- If I broke up with my partner
- If I lost my job
- I start getting really stressed about stuff
- I start thinking how my tolerance has gone down and how good it might be.

What might be other challenging times for you?

Be prepared

The Scouts were right about this one. Risk times are heaps easier to cope with if you know *how* you plan to cope with them. It never hurts to have a Plan B, in case Plan A doesn't work for some reason.

We might know what situations are risky for us, but we often don't know *when* they will happen. It's hard to think straight when you're in the middle of a high-risk situation – so do the leg work now, while you're feeling more clear headed.

So if you're faced with a risk time, what do you intend to do? The following ideas have been helpful to others in the same situation:

- ❑ Remind yourself why you changed your cannabis use in the first place – the reasons are probably just as relevant now as they were then
- ❑ Leave the situation
- ❑ Talk to someone supportive
- ❑ Plan something relaxing or enjoyable you can do instead of smoking
- ❑ Remind yourself it's not your "last chance to smoke" – there'll be other opportunities if you really want it at some later time
- ❑ Think of what helped with cravings in the past – chances are, whatever worked then will help now, too.

What else could you think of trying?

Coping with a relapse

So you ended up smoking more than you meant to. Don't worry, it's not the end of the world. Plenty of people have a few slip-ups on their way to cutting down or quitting for good. What helps now?

Don't beat yourself up for having a relapse – it's normal and feeling bad about yourself just gives you more reasons to want to smoke and forget your problems.

Don't give up – it doesn't prove you're stuck being a "stoner". It just means you might need to change your plan of attack. The quicker you pick yourself up and try again, the easier it will be. If you use one relapse as a reason to keep smoking, it will probably be harder to start making change later on.

Ask yourself what you would do differently the next time you are in a situation like that. Use this information to make new plans for dealing with risk times. Ask yourself what you would do the same the next time. Chances are some of the things you were doing still work for you – they might just need some fine-tuning.

What next?

Well, now it's time to enjoy your new lifestyle. Watch those risk times. Relax. Pay your bills on time. Have a laugh. Get to know people who you feel good with. Get to know yourself again. Be wary of that sneaky little voice that tells you it's OK, you've got it under control now because it might be wrong. But remember to have some fun.

If you find your cannabis use creeps back up again, just keep on trying to keep it at a level you're satisfied with. Go back through this booklet. If it keeps on being a problem, try seeing a drug and alcohol counsellor. But keep on trying – you're worth the effort.



Things to do

Activity	Enjoy this	Would try it	Not interested
Reading a newspaper, magazine or book	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wearing something that feels good	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Laughing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Playing a sport	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Having a massage	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Being with children or pets	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Making presents for friends	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Doing a craft or art	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Singing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Taking a bath or shower	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Being with friends	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Playing music	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Having a hair cut or a facial	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Going for a drive	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Completing a task you've been meaning to do	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Playing pool, cards or other games	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Planning something good for the future	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Going camping or bushwalking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Shopping or window shopping	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Doing a short course	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Redecorating your room or home	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gardening	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Going to the zoo, park, museum or gallery	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Buying/preparing food you like or haven't tried	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ringing or writing to a friend	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Going to the movies or a concert	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Activity	Enjoy this	Would try it	Not interested
Walking along a beach	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Walking the dog	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Asking for a cuddle	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Going to a restaurant	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Taking a holiday	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Going to a sports event	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Giving time or money to a cause you believe in	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Working on your car, motor bike or bicycle	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Writing stories, poetry, or a diary	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Being with relatives	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dancing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Going on a picnic or having a barbecue	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Going fishing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Taking photographs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Going to see a stand-up comedian	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Playing computer games or surfing the Internet	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Kissing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Being alone	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reminiscing about happy memories	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Getting up early in the morning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Praying	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Doing yoga or meditating	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Having a good night's sleep	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Doing outdoor work or housework	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Going running, swimming or surfing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Riding a bike or going to the gym	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Smiling	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Going to markets, garage sales or op shops	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

So what three things will you try first?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Enjoy!

Use diary

How much & cost	
Feelings after	
Feelings before	
Situation	
Time	
Day	