



DETAILED REPORT

Mind Over
Matter

LIGHT SMOKER | PSYCHOLOGY



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Contents

Age Division

AGE: BELOW 30

[CLICK HERE](#)

AGE: 31 - 60

[CLICK HERE](#)

AGE: 61 ABOVE

[CLICK HERE](#)

Indicators

- Dependency & Cravings
- Smoking & Emotional Regulation
- Triggers
- Cognitive Effects
- Motivation & Willpower
- You v/s a non-smoker

Before we proceed, let's understand what Cognitive Effects are.

Cognitive effects refer to changes or impacts on a person's mental processes like thinking, learning, memory, reasoning, decision-making, and attention, which can be influenced by various factors like brain injury, medication, stress, or a medical condition; essentially, how these mental functions are affected by a particular situation or stimulus.



Cognitive functioning affects how people think and their ability to remember things. Impairment in this area of brain health may cause a decline in how someone responds to their environment mentally and physically.

Cognitive functioning or cognition is about how the brain works and manifests as behavior.

It is an important part of maintaining day-to-day life and brain activities. It governs thoughts, actions, and how people learn and pay attention to things in their environment.

AGE: BELOW 30

DEPENDENCY & CRAVINGS

WHAT IS THIS INDICATOR?

You may not always realize it, but smoking can affect both your conscious and unconscious behaviours. Over time, you can become psychologically dependent on cigarettes.

This happens because nicotine stimulates the brain's dopamine cycle, making you feel good temporarily. As this cycle repeats, you're likely to find yourself craving that relief whenever you feel stressed, anxious, or bored.

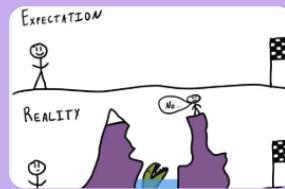


CONTROL OVER SMOKING HABITS

Even low levels of smoking can activate nicotine receptors in your brain, causing changes in dopamine pathways. So, while you might think you're in control and can quit anytime, your brain is already getting rewired with every puff.

MENTAL FATIGUE AND CRAVINGS

- You might notice occasional mental fatigue or cravings. While these might not be severely impacting your daily life yet, they are signs that **nicotine is having an effect**.
- It's crucial to understand that even at this stage, these **seemingly small effects can build up over time**.



Indicator 1

- You're likely between **18 and 30**, and you probably still feel like you have a handle on your smoking. **Your cravings might be manageable**, popping up mostly in specific situations – perhaps when you're **socializing or feeling stressed**.
- It's important to realize that even low levels of smoking can trigger **nicotine receptors in your brain**. This can lead to subtle changes in your **dopamine pathways**, as research from the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) has shown.
- So, even if you think you're "just a social smoker" or "only smoke a few cigarettes a day," your brain is still being affected.

COGNITIVE BIAS: OPTIMISM BIAS

What it Means

This bias makes you think you're less likely to experience negative consequences than others.

In Your Context

"I'll be able to quit whenever I want," underestimating how cravings and dependency can grow stronger over time.

Impact on Behaviour

You are likely to smoke more often during social situations, thinking it won't harm you in the long run.

How to Curb it

Setting small, measurable goals to reduce your intake (e.g., smoking only one cigarette a week) can help prevent your dependency from escalating.

SMOKING & EMOTIONAL REGULATION

WHAT IS THIS INDICATOR?

When you smoke, nicotine floods your brain with dopamine, giving you a fleeting sense of relief. However, this artificial "reward" reinforces emotional suppression instead of fostering healthy coping strategies. Furthermore, deficits in cognitive control (CC)—a brain function crucial for self regulation—are observed in chronic smokers. These deficits impair decision-making and exacerbate dependence on nicotine as a coping tool.

USING CIGARETTES TO MANAGE EMOTIONS: A SLIPPERY SLOPE



A SLIPPERY SLOPE



- At this stage in your life, you might **occasionally find yourself reaching for a cigarette when you're stressed or emotionally uncomfortable**.
- It might feel like smoking helps you "reset," but it's probably **not your main way of coping with feelings yet**.
- However, it's really important to know that young adults in your age group are especially **vulnerable to forming long-term connections** between smoking and how you handle your emotions.

What it Means

This bias makes you think you're less likely to experience negative consequences than others.

In Your Context

You've likely convinced yourself that smoking is a "temporary fix" for stress or emotions and that it doesn't need to be dealt with long-term.

Impact on Behaviour

you build more associations between smoking and emotional relief. The longer you wait to address this behavior, the more ingrained it will become

How to Curb it

Challenge this bias by reading about the long-term health risks, tracking your nicotine intake, and understanding the real impact of smoking.



A 2021 University of California study found that young adults who smoke are 65% more likely to continue smoking into their 30s, citing stress relief as a primary motivator. So, that "just one cigarette" to calm your nerves? It's planting the seeds for a long-term habit

THE LONG-TERM RISK: STICKING WITH IT

- You might notice that you get a **little irritable** when you can't smoke during stressful times, but it's probably something you can handle.
- Even so, every time you smoke when you're emotionally upset, you're strengthening your dependence on nicotine and making it harder to deal with the real reasons behind those emotions.

Indicator 2

TRIGGERS

WHAT IS THIS INDICATOR?

Smoking is often not a standalone behaviour but deeply tied to environmental, sensory, and temporal cues that reinforce dependency. These triggers—such as the smell of tobacco, specific times of the day, or social events—condition your brain to associate smoking with specific scenarios, making it harder to break the habit.

Did you know many professionals claim smoking boosts focus, but nicotine's effects on productivity only last 15–30 minutes? After that, withdrawal sets in, reducing overall efficiency.

THE RISK OF CASUAL HABITS

- Those occasional cigarettes triggered by sensory cues—the smell of tobacco, the sight of a pack—might seem manageable now. But here's the catch: these casual habits can easily turn into regular patterns.
- Research suggests that young adults are 50% more likely to increase how often they smoke if they're regularly exposed to these kinds of environmental or sensory triggers.

So, even if you feel like you're in control now, these triggers can gradually chip away at that control.



Indicator 3

THE POWER OF SOCIAL AND SENSORY CUES

- A 2019 study in Addictive Behaviors found that a significant number of young smokers (38%) identify seeing others smoke in social settings like parties or bars as a major trigger.
- Think about it: are these the situations where you find yourself reaching for a cigarette, even if you don't normally smoke much?

COGNITIVE BIAS: PRESENT BIAS

What it Means

Present bias is a cognitive bias where you overvalue immediate rewards at the expense of future outcomes.

In Your Context

The craving for immediate gratification, whether it's to cope with stress or fit in with peers, could override the consideration of future consequences,

Impact on Behaviour

Your smoking behavior may be sporadic and largely driven by social or environmental cues, such as parties or stressful situations.

How to Curb it

Regularly remind yourself of the long-term health risks and frame your quit attempts as a valuable investment in your future self.

COGNITIVE EFFECTS

WHAT IS THIS INDICATOR?

Smoking's impact on your cognitive functioning extends far beyond occasional forgetfulness or loss of focus. Nicotine, while giving you a temporary "boost," disrupts your brain's neurotransmitter balance, impairing attention, memory, and decision-making over time. This cognitive dissonance often manifests in contradictory behaviours: even though you are fully aware of the harmful effects of smoking, you may continue lighting up.



PROCRASTINATION:

THE SNEAKY SIDE EFFECT



- Even if you consider yourself a "social smoker" or someone who only smokes occasionally, relying on nicotine can increase procrastination. Think about it: are you more likely to put off that difficult task until after you've had a cigarette?
- It's easy to fall into this trap, thinking you'll be more productive afterward. But this can quickly become a habit, and before you know it, you're putting things off more and more.

COGNITIVE BIAS: PRESENT BIAS

What it Means

Present bias refers to the tendency to overvalue immediate rewards at the expense of long-term goals, often leading to impulsive decisions.

In Your Context

In your case, the immediate relief nicotine provides during stressful tasks (like studying or working) is seen as more rewarding.

Impact on Behaviour

While this doesn't yet severely disrupt your cognitive function, it may encourage a cycle where you increasingly depend on smoking to meet your immediate needs.

How to Curb it

Set small, achievable tasks and reward yourself without nicotine. Use techniques like the Pomodoro method.



WHY THIS MATTERS NOW



- The Tobacco-Induced Neurotoxicity of Adolescent Cognitive Development (TINACD) theory suggests that smoking during your younger years, when your brain is still developing, can intensify dependence and lead to cognitive decline, especially when you're stressed or emotional.
- You're reinforcing neural pathways that link productivity with smoking, which can become a hard habit to break later on.

Think smoking helps you focus? Think again. Your brain on nicotine is like a student cramming for an exam with energy drinks – it might seem to work in the short term, but it's a recipe for a crash later.

Indicator 4



MOTIVATION & WILLPOWER

WHAT IS THIS INDICATOR?

Your motivation and willpower directly impact your ability to resist smoking triggers and overcome dependence. Nicotine manipulates your brain's reward system, creating false associations between smoking and productivity, stress relief, or even social acceptance. Over time, you may find your willpower eroding, not just when it comes to quitting but in resisting the subtle cues that lead to smoking.



Think you're just a "social smoker"?

Newsflash: Nicotine starts rewiring your brain faster than you can double-tap an Instagram post. Seven seconds.

THE DANGER OF "STRESS RELIEF"



- You might reach for a cigarette when you're feeling stressed, even if it's just a little bit. And that's where the real danger lies.
- Studies show that young smokers like you are 65% more likely to develop a long-term dependency because of this association between smoking and stress relief.
- That "little bit" of relief you get? It's reinforcing the habit and making it harder to quit down the line.



THE HIDDEN EFFECTS

- Don't think you're immune just because you don't smoke a lot. Even low-frequency smokers like you are 1.5 times more likely to experience heightened irritability than non-smokers.
- So, even if you're not a pack-a-day smoker, those occasional cigarettes are still affecting you, even if you don't realize it.

COGNITIVE BIAS: OPTIMISM BIAS

What it Means

Optimism bias is the tendency to overestimate positive outcomes and underestimate risks.

In Your Context

You might believe that your occasional smoking won't lead to long-term dependency or health problems because you're young and see yourself as "in control."

Impact on Behaviour

This bias reinforces casual smoking by making you dismiss the potential for addiction, leading to increased frequency over time.

How to Curb it

Quantify the financial cost and potential health impact even at low dependency levels to understand how quickly small habits can escalate.

A NON-SMOKER VS YOU

Feature	High Dependency	Low Dependency
<u>Cognitive Function, Impaired</u>	Impaired; doubled dementia risk; struggles with daily tasks	Better; lower dementia risk
<u>Emotional Regulation, Reliant on smoking</u>	Reliant on smoking; suppressed emotions; higher depression	Healthier coping; greater resilience
<u>Physical Health, High risk of illness</u>	High risk of illness; reduced lung capacity; less stamina	Lower risk of illness; better lung function
<u>Social Life, Strained relationships</u>	Strained relationships; potential isolation	Stronger connections; broader social circles
<u>Financial Well-being, Expensive habit</u>	Expensive habit; higher healthcare costs	Saves money; lower healthcare costs
<u>Overall Well-being, Lower quality of life</u>	Lower quality of life; reduced life expectancy	Higher quality of life; longer life expectancy

Indicator 5

Indicator 4

AGE: 31-60

DEPENDENCY & CRAVINGS

WHAT IS THIS INDICATOR?

You may not always realize it, but smoking can affect both your conscious and unconscious behaviours. Over time, you can become psychologically dependent on cigarettes.

This happens because nicotine stimulates the brain's dopamine cycle, making you feel good temporarily. As this cycle repeats, you're likely to find yourself craving that relief whenever you feel stressed, anxious, or bored.

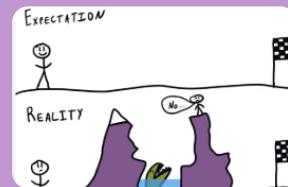
Did You Know?
Research suggests that smokers in the 31-60 age group are 40% more likely to develop chronic dependency compared to younger smokers.

MENTAL FATIGUE AND CRAVINGS



- Your brain has likely started associating smoking with stress relief. It's a vicious cycle: stress leads to cravings, smoking seems to provide relief, reinforcing the link in your brain, and making future cravings even stronger.

This connection between stress and smoking can make quitting feel especially daunting.



CONTROL OVER SMOKING HABITS

- You're likely between 31 and 60, and you might find that the psychological dependency on smoking is becoming more prominent. Cravings are probably more frequent, and you might notice yourself reaching for a cigarette when you're **stressed, bored, or just need a quick break**.
- This isn't just you; research from the CDC (2023) indicates that smokers in this age group are **40% more likely to develop chronic dependency** compared to younger smokers. This means the window of "easy quitting" might be closing, if it hasn't already.

COGNITIVE BIAS: HABITUAL BIAS

What it Means

This bias refers to the tendency to repeat behaviours that are easy or automatic, even when they are not beneficial.

In Your Context

Smoking might feel like an automatic response to stress, especially if it has become part of your routine.

Impact on Behaviour

Over time, you might notice that even minor stressors make you reach for a cigarette without thinking.

How to Curb it

Break the automatic pattern by introducing replacement habits. For example, try deep breathing or sipping water whenever you feel the urge to smoke.

SMOKING & EMOTIONAL REGULATION

WHAT IS THIS INDICATOR?

When you smoke, nicotine floods your brain with dopamine, giving you a fleeting sense of relief. However, this artificial "reward" reinforces emotional suppression instead of fostering healthy coping strategies. Furthermore, deficits in cognitive control (CC)—a brain function crucial for self regulation—are observed in chronic smokers. These deficits impair decision-making and exacerbate dependence on nicotine as a coping tool.



UNDERSTANDING YOUR EMOTIONAL TRIGGERS



- At this stage in life (31-60), you're likely facing increased pressures – work, family, finances.
- These emotional triggers can easily become linked to your smoking.
- You might find yourself reaching for a cigarette as a default response to discomfort, reinforcing the habit as a coping mechanism.



COGNITIVE BIAS: STATUS QUO BIAS

What it Means

This bias leads you to avoid confronting the emotional problems that smoking numbs.

In Your Context

You may resist change and stick to smoking as the default coping mechanism, even if you know it's not the healthiest choice.

Impact on Behaviour

The cycle of smoking as emotional regulation will tighten, and the effort to break out of it may seem daunting.

How to Curb it

Actively seek alternatives to smoking, like exercise, meditation, or therapy.

THE FALSE COMFORT OF NICOTINE

- Nicotine's ability to suppress emotions can create a false sense of detachment from real-life challenges. This might seem helpful in the short term, but it can prevent you from truly confronting and resolving issues, from dealing with health concerns to working through family conflicts.
- You might also experience occasional guilt or shame for using smoking as an emotional crutch.



A Mayo Clinic study found that individuals who diversify their coping mechanisms (like exercise, meditation, or therapy) experience a 30% higher success rate in quitting smoking.

Indicator 1

Indicator 2

TRIGGERS

WHAT IS THIS INDICATOR?

Smoking is often not a standalone behaviour but deeply tied to environmental, sensory, and temporal cues that reinforce dependency. These triggers—such as the smell of tobacco, specific times of the day, or social events—condition your brain to associate smoking with specific scenarios.



58% of smokers aged 31-60 use smoking as a coping mechanism for stress, anxiety, or work pressure. So, that cigarette you reach for after a tough meeting? It's less about enjoying the nicotine and more about your brain desperately trying to self-soothe.

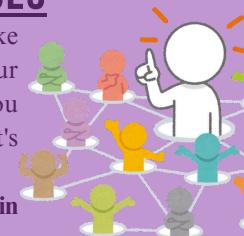


YOUR SMOKING TRIGGERS

- At this stage in your life, your smoking might be linked to **occasional stressors**, like work deadlines or family responsibilities.
- You might not constantly crave cigarettes, but certain times of day, such as **after lunch or during your evening downtime**, could have become associated with smoking.
- These **predictable patterns** can make you feel like you need a cigarette at those specific moments, gradually weaving smoking into your daily routine.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL INFLUENCES

- Smoking areas at work or social circles where others smoke might occasionally trigger your urge to light up. While your dependency on these cues is currently low – meaning you can often **avoid smoking if the situation doesn't allow it** – it's still something to be aware of.
- Lighter smokers often find themselves **smoking more in social situations**, particularly when alcohol is involved.



COGNITIVE BIAS: CONFIRMATION BIAS

What it Means

Present bias is a cognitive bias where you overvalue immediate rewards at the expense of future outcomes.

In Your Context

The craving for immediate gratification, whether it's to cope with stress or fit in with peers, could override the consideration of future consequences,

Impact on Behaviour

Your smoking behavior may be sporadic and largely driven by social or environmental cues, such as parties or stressful situations.

How to Curb it

Regularly remind yourself of the long-term health risks and frame your quit attempts as a valuable investment in your future self.

COGNITIVE EFFECTS

WHAT IS THIS INDICATOR?

Smoking's impact on your cognitive functioning extends far beyond occasional forgetfulness or loss of focus. Nicotine, while giving you a temporary "boost," disrupts your brain's neurotransmitter balance, impairing attention, memory, and decision-making over time. This cognitive dissonance often manifests in contradictory behaviours: even though you are fully aware of the harmful effects of smoking, you may continue lighting up.



THE SCIENCE BEHIND THE FOG



- A 2020 study from the University of Cambridge revealed that **smokers aged 30-60 exhibit 10% slower problem-solving speeds compared to non-smokers**. This isn't just about feeling a little foggy; it's a measurable impact on your cognitive function.
- The study points to nicotine's effects on the **prefrontal cortex**, the area of your brain responsible for decision-making, problem-solving, and working memory. So, even if you're not a heavy smoker, **nicotine is still taking a toll on your cognitive abilities**.

COGNITIVE BIAS: CONFIRMATION BIAS

What it Means

Confirmation bias is the tendency to favor information that confirms your pre-existing beliefs while disregarding evidence that contradicts them.

In Your Context

As a smoker, you may notice cognitive issues like mild forgetfulness or difficulty concentrating but might ignore the role of smoking.

Impact on Behaviour

As cognitive decline progresses, confirmation bias may prevent you from seeking professional help or cutting back on smoking.

How to Curb it

Challenge your assumptions by tracking your cognitive function over time and recognizing patterns between smoking and lapses in focus or memory.



THE ILLUSION OF "CLEARING YOUR MIND"

- You might rely on smoking to help you "clear your mind" when you're **feeling stressed or overwhelmed**. While this might seem to provide a temporary benefit, it could actually be **hindering your long-term cognitive resilience**.
- Instead of truly addressing the **underlying issues**, you're using nicotine as a crutch, which can prevent you from developing healthier coping mechanisms and **strengthening your mental focus**.



A 2020 University of Cambridge study found that smokers aged 30-60 exhibit 10% slower problem-solving speeds than their non-smoking peers. This reflects nicotine's impact on the prefrontal cortex

Indicator 3

Indicator 4

MOTIVATION & WILLPOWER

WHAT IS THIS INDICATOR?

Your motivation and willpower directly impact your ability to resist smoking triggers and overcome dependence. Nicotine manipulates your brain's reward system, creating false associations between smoking and productivity, stress relief, or even social acceptance. Over time, you may find your willpower eroding, not just when it comes to quitting but in resisting the subtle cues that lead to smoking.

Your brain on nicotine is like a tiny, demanding boss. It whispers sweet lies about "focus" and "stress relief," but really, it just wants its next fix.



IS NICOTINE HIJACKING YOUR

PRIORITIES?

- The problem is, this reliance on smoking can start to blur the lines between **genuine productivity** and **nicotine-induced breaks**. You might feel like you need a cigarette to tackle a difficult task, but is that really true?
- It's easy to fall into the **trap of thinking** smoking helps you focus, but it can actually become a distraction, making it harder to **separate meaningful activities** from your smoking habit. Nicotine starts to weave itself into your sense of accomplishment, which can be a dangerous cycle.



THE CRUTCH YOU LEAN ON

- Let's be honest, life between 31 and 60 can be stressful. Work pressures, family responsibilities, personal relationships – it all adds up. For you, smoking might have become a go-to coping mechanism, especially during emotionally charged situations.
- Think about it: when you're facing a tough challenge at work or dealing with a disagreement at home, do you find yourself reaching for a cigarette? It's easy to feel like smoking gives you a moment to breathe, a sense of focus, or a feeling of calm.

COGNITIVE BIAS: STATUS QUO BIAS

What it Means

Status quo bias is the preference for maintaining your current habits over making changes.

In Your Context

Smoking might feel like a comfortable, established part of your routine, making you reluctant to disrupt it.

Impact on Behaviour

This bias can make you ignore early signs of dependency or health concerns, pushing you further toward reliance on nicotine as a stress-management tool.

How to Curb it

Reflect on the long-term consequences of maintaining the status quo. Identify alternative routines to replace smoking and ease the transition.

A NON-SMOKER VS YOU

Feature	High Dependency	Low Dependency
<u>Cognitive Function, Impaired</u>	Impaired; doubled dementia risk; struggles with daily tasks	Better; lower dementia risk
<u>Emotional Regulation, Reliant on smoking</u>	Reliant on smoking; suppressed emotions; higher depression	Healthier coping; greater resilience
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<u>Overall Well-being, Lower quality of life</u>	Lower quality of life; reduced life expectancy	Higher quality of life; longer life expectancy

Indicator 5

Indicator 4

AGE: 60 & ABOVE

DEPENDENCY & CRAVINGS

WHAT IS THIS INDICATOR?

You may not always realize it, but smoking can affect both your conscious and unconscious behaviours. Over time, you can become psychologically dependent on cigarettes.

This happens because nicotine stimulates the brain's dopamine cycle, making you feel good temporarily. As this cycle repeats, you're likely to find yourself craving that relief whenever you feel stressed, anxious, or bored.

60% of smokers aged 60 and above report stronger withdrawal symptoms than younger age groups. So, that fear of "feeling awful" when you quit? It's real, and your brain is playing tricks on you



MENTAL FATIGUE AND CRAVINGS

- You might find yourself reaching for a cigarette **out of habit** or as a way to fill time, even if you don't have a **strong physical craving**.

When you do try to cut back or quit, you might notice **increased irritability, agitation, or mental exhaustion**. These are signs that your brain has become accustomed to the **presence of nicotine, even at low levels**, and is reacting to its absence.



CONTROL OVER SMOKING HABITS

- At this stage of life, cigarettes might have become deeply ingrained in your routine. They might be your companion during quiet moments, a way to manage stress, or even something you do out of habit or boredom.
- Even if you're not smoking large quantities, the psychological connection to cigarettes can be quite strong. This means that even though you might not be experiencing intense physical withdrawal, the habit of smoking can be difficult to break.

COGNITIVE BIAS: LOSS AVERSION

What it Means

People prefer to avoid losses rather than achieve equivalent gains.

In Your Context

You may fear the discomfort of withdrawal symptoms more than you value the benefits of quitting, leading you to continue smoking despite its negative effects.

Impact on Behaviour

This could make quitting seem impossible, reinforcing the habit over time.

How to Curb it

Focus on the benefits of quitting, such as improved lung capacity and reduced healthcare costs. Tracking these benefits can shift your focus away from the perceived losses.

SMOKING & EMOTIONAL REGULATION

WHAT IS THIS INDICATOR?

When you smoke, nicotine floods your brain with dopamine, giving you a fleeting sense of relief. However, this artificial "reward" reinforces emotional suppression instead of fostering healthy coping strategies. Furthermore, deficits in cognitive control (CC)—a brain function crucial for self regulation—are observed in chronic smokers. These deficits impair decision-making and exacerbate dependence on nicotine as a coping tool.



THE IMPACT ON YOUR EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING



- The National Institute on Aging has reported that older adults can experience higher levels of emotional suppression, which, in a significant number of cases (around 40%), can lead to feelings of isolation and regret.
- You might find it harder to confront emotional problems directly, choosing instead to use smoking as a way to "escape" from difficulties such as chronic health issues, financial worries, or feelings of loneliness.

COGNITIVE BIAS: SUNK COST FALLACY

What it Means

You may continue smoking because you feel that you've already invested so much time and effort into it that quitting now would be a waste.

In Your Context

You may have smoked for decades, leading you to believe that quitting now won't reverse the years of damage done.

Impact on Behaviour

The more entrenched this thinking becomes, the harder it will be to quit. The cost of quitting feels too high compared to the perceived rewards of continuing.

How to Curb it

Recognize that the past doesn't determine your future. Each day you smoke less is a step toward reclaiming your health.

HOW SMOKING MAY HAVE BECOME ENTRENCHED IN YOUR LIFE



So, that cigarette you reach for when you're feeling down? It's not actually helping you process those emotions; it's likely making them worse in the long run. And while you might think "it's too late to quit," research shows that smokers over 60 who do quit experience a 20% improvement in life expectancy.

Indicator 1

Indicator 2

TRIGGERS

WHAT IS THIS INDICATOR?

Smoking is often not a standalone behaviour but deeply tied to environmental, sensory, and temporal cues that reinforce dependency. These triggers—such as the smell of tobacco, specific times of the day, or social events—condition your brain to associate smoking with specific scenarios, making it harder to break the habit.

Even if you're not a heavy smoker, those occasional cigarettes tied to memories and routines can still be harmful. That "just one" while reminiscing? It's reinforcing a decades-long habit and increasing your risk of health problems.

ENVIRONMENTAL CUES

Your environment plays a big role too. Do you have any **old ashtrays lying** around, maybe tucked away in a drawer? Or perhaps a **lighter** you haven't used in years?

- Seeing these objects can be a **powerful trigger**, even if you don't actively smoke much anymore. And what about smells?
- Maybe the scent of a **certain type of tobacco** (even if it's just from someone else) brings back a flood of memories and cravings.

NOSTALGIA AND REFLECTION: PULL OF THE PAST

- Sometimes, those memories can be powerful, and they might be linked to smoking. Think about it: is it when you're flipping through old photo albums, remembering good times with friends (who maybe also smoked), that you **suddenly crave a cigarette?**
- Or perhaps it's during quiet **moments of reflection**, when you're thinking about loved ones who are no longer with you, that the **urge hits?**



COGNITIVE BIAS: STATUS QUO BIAS

What it Means

Status quo bias is the preference for the current state of affairs and the tendency to resist change.

In Your Context

You may have been smoking for decades, and despite the awareness of health risks, you feel that quitting would be too difficult.

Impact on Behaviour

If you continue to resist quitting due to status quo bias, you might face more severe health complications, and quitting could feel even more daunting.

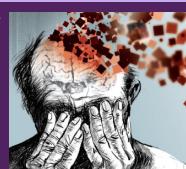
How to Curb it

Focus on the small, positive changes you've made throughout your life and apply that same determination to quitting.

COGNITIVE EFFECTS

WHAT IS THIS INDICATOR?

Smoking's impact on your cognitive functioning extends far beyond occasional forgetfulness or loss of focus. Nicotine, while giving you a temporary "boost," disrupts your brain's neurotransmitter balance, impairing attention, memory, and decision-making over time. This cognitive dissonance often manifests in contradictory behaviours: even though you are fully aware of the harmful effects of smoking, you may continue lighting up.



MEMORY LAPSES: MORE THAN JUST "SENIOR MOMENTS"?

Let's face it, at this age, we all have those little memory slips – forgetting a name, misplacing our keys, **losing track of time**. These can be a normal part of aging. However, even if you're a "low dependency" smoker, it's important to know that smoking can **worsen these age-related cognitive changes**. It can actually **hinder your brain's ability to adapt and form new connections** (what scientists call **neural plasticity**).



COGNITIVE BIAS: STATUS QUO BIAS

What it Means

Status quo bias is the tendency to prefer things to remain the same rather than change, even when change could be beneficial.

In Your Context

This bias reinforces the idea that smoking is simply part of who you are, and quitting won't reverse damage.

Impact on Behaviour

You might feel stuck in a routine, continuing to smoke despite growing awareness of its harmful cognitive effects. This bias may also contribute to social withdrawal.

How to Curb it

Set long-term goals for improving brain health and recognize that it's never too late to reduce smoking's impact.

THE INCREASED RISK OF COGNITIVE IMPAIRMENT



The National Institute on Aging (2023) found that smokers aged 60+ have a 30% greater risk of mild cognitive impairment compared to non-smokers.

- The National Institute on Aging (2023) has some sobering news: you're at a 30% greater risk of **mild cognitive impairment** compared to someone who doesn't smoke. Think about what that means in your daily life.
- Those little **memory lapses** might become more frequent, making everyday tasks, like managing your finances, **remembering appointments**, or even following conversations, more challenging.



Indicator 3

Indicator 4

MOTIVATION & WILLPOWER

WHAT IS THIS INDICATOR?

Smoking is often not a standalone behaviour but deeply tied to environmental, sensory, and temporal cues that reinforce dependency. These triggers—such as the smell of tobacco, specific times of the day, or social events—condition your brain to associate smoking with specific scenarios, making it harder to break the habit.

That cigarette with your coffee? It's less about the nicotine and more about your brain's routine. It's like a tiny, nicotine-addicted barista in your head, shouting "COFFEE AND A CIGARETTE!"

THE PULL OF HABIT AND ROUTINE

- Let's face it: at this stage of life, smoking might feel like it's woven into the fabric of your daily routine.
- It's become so automatic that you probably don't even think about it before lighting up. Is it tied to specific activities?
- Perhaps it's that cigarette with your morning newspaper, the one you enjoy while watching TV, or the one you reach for when you're simply reflecting on life's ups and downs.

These aren't just random acts of smoking; they're deeply ingrained habits.



Indicator 5

THE EMOTIONAL BARRIERS TO QUITTING

- The National Institute on Aging has some interesting findings that shed light on this. They discovered that a significant number of smokers in your age group (55%, in fact) cite "psychological inertia" as a major obstacle to quitting. In simpler terms, you might feel stuck in your ways, comfortable with the familiar routine of smoking.
- Another 35% report fearing the loss of their "emotional safety net" if they give up cigarettes.
- This speaks to the fact that smoking, for many, has become a coping mechanism, a way to deal with stress, loneliness, or other difficult emotions.

COGNITIVE BIAS: ENDOWMENT EFFECT

What it Means

The endowment effect occurs when you overvalue what you already own or experience simply because it's yours.

In Your Context

You may view smoking as an essential part of your daily rituals, making it difficult to imagine life without it.

Impact on Behaviour

This attachment to the habit may prevent you from considering quitting, even when health issues arise.

How to Curb it

Focus on what you could gain by quitting, such as improved health and financial savings. Keeping a daily log of the positive changes can help shift your perception of value.

A NON-SMOKER V/S YOU

Feature	High Dependency	Low Dependency
<u>Cognitive Function, Impaired</u>	Impaired; doubled dementia risk; struggles with daily tasks	Better; lower dementia risk
<u>Emotional Regulation, Reliant on smoking</u>	Reliant on smoking; suppressed emotions; higher depression	Healthier coping; greater resilience
<u>Physical Health, High risk of illness</u>	High risk of illness; reduced lung capacity; less stamina	Lower risk of illness; better lung function
<u>Social Life, Strained relationships</u>	Strained relationships; potential isolation	Stronger connections; broader social circles
<u>Financial Well-being, Expensive habit</u>	Expensive habit; higher healthcare costs	Saves money; lower healthcare costs
<u>Overall Well-being, Lower quality of life</u>	Lower quality of life; reduced life expectancy	Higher quality of life; longer life expectancy