



# DETAILED REPORT

Mind Over  
Matter

INTERMITTENT SMOKER | PSYCHOLOGY



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## Indicators

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- Triggers
- Cognitive Effects
- Motivation & Willpower
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# 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.

## CRAVINGS: BEYOND THE OCCASIONAL URGE

- Those cravings you're experiencing are no longer just fleeting thoughts. They're becoming more frequent, persistent, and harder to dismiss.
- You might find yourself anticipating your next cigarette, planning your day around smoke breaks, or feeling a growing unease when you're in situations where you can't smoke.
- Specific triggers are likely emerging: stress, socializing (especially where others smoke), meals, alcohol consumption, or even boredom.

**!** Because your brain is still developing at this age, you're at a 60% higher risk of becoming permanently dependent on nicotine compared to older age groups (source: WHO, 2023). That means those cravings you're experiencing now could easily become a lifelong struggle.

## COGNITIVE BIAS: IMMEDIATE GRATIFICATION

### What it Means

This bias leads people to prioritize immediate rewards over long-term benefits, often at the expense of future well-being.

### In Your Context

Smoking provides an instant feeling of relief or pleasure, making it harder to consider the long-term health risks of dependency.



### Impact on Behaviour

You might prioritize smoking over healthier stress-management options like exercise or meditation, reinforcing the cycle of dependency.

### How to Curb it

Delay smoking by at least 10 minutes when cravings strike. Use this time to engage in a different activity.



Indicator 1

## DAILY IMPULSIVITY

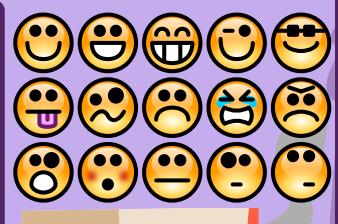
- Mental fatigue and difficulty concentrating are common, especially when cravings are strong. You might find it harder to focus on tasks, leading to decreased productivity at work or school. Nicotine's influence on your brain's reward system also contributes to increased impulsivity.
- You might find yourself making rash decisions, particularly regarding smoking, such as lighting up without thinking, exceeding your self-imposed limits, or prioritizing smoking over other responsibilities.

## 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.



## COGNITIVE BIAS: PROJECTION BIAS

### What it Means

You might assume that your emotional response to smoking—like relief from stress—is how you will always feel, projecting that sense of comfort into the future.



### In Your Context

You likely justify your smoking by assuming that it will always be an easy solution for emotional discomfort, leading you to rely on it more heavily.



Young smokers with moderate dependency take an average of 10 additional smoking breaks during stressful days, according to a 2022 WHO report. This constant interruption significantly impacts focus and productivity.

### Impact on Behaviour

Over time, this bias will prevent you from recognizing the diminishing returns on smoking's effectiveness in managing stress,

### How to Curb it

Use mindfulness techniques to break the immediate association between smoking and emotional relief.

## THE REINFORCEMENT LOOP OF DEPENDENCY

- You're particularly vulnerable to what's called a "reinforcement loop." Nicotine withdrawal can actually intensify emotional distress, making you crave a cigarette even more.
- This creates a vicious cycle: you feel stressed, you smoke to relieve the stress, the withdrawal makes you feel more stressed, and so on. This pattern deepens your dependency and makes it much harder to break free.



Indicator 2

## EMOTIONAL SUPPRESSION AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

- Smoking can become a way to suppress deeper emotions like anxiety, anger, or sadness. Instead of addressing the root causes of these feelings, you might be using cigarettes as a temporary escape.
- This emotional bypassing isn't healthy. It can lead to heightened irritability, especially when you're in situations where you can't smoke. The inability to regulate your emotions effectively, combined with the reduced cognitive control associated with smoking, can contribute to other risky behaviors.

# 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.



## SENSORY OVERLOAD: THE TRIGGERS

- Those sensory cues are like little **smoke alarms** going off in your brain. The smell of someone else's cigarette, the sight of a lighter flicking, even the feel of a cigarette pack in your pocket (even if it's empty) can trigger an almost **Pavlovian response**.
- These triggers are powerful because they **bypass your conscious thought**; they tap directly into those **ingrained associations** between the senses and the act of smoking.

A 2019 study in *Addictive Behaviors* found that 38% of young smokers reported that seeing others smoke in social situations or at events like parties or bars was a key trigger for their smoking.

## COGNITIVE BIAS: SOCIAL PROOF BIAS

### What it Means

Social proof bias is the tendency to do something because others are doing it, particularly in uncertain situations.

### In Your Context

Social situations, especially parties or outings, may create strong environmental cues to engage in smoking.



### Impact on Behaviour

As your environment encourages smoking, you've built habits around it. You might have found yourself lighting up without much thought, especially in social settings.

### How to Curb it

Try to distance yourself from smoking-heavy environments, or encourage healthier activities in social settings.

## THE SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL TRAP

- While advice from doctors might plant the seed for quitting, your **social and environmental surroundings** can quickly smother it. Being around friends who smoke, constantly seeing smoking in your favorite hangouts, and the easy availability of cigarettes all contribute to the challenge. It's a constant **uphill battle against these external pressures**.
- Big exam coming up? Family drama? Party with friends? These events, both stressful and celebratory, can act as powerful emotional triggers. **Your brain has learned to associate smoking with coping, relaxing, or even just "having a good time."**

# 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 due to a perceived inability to function without nicotine.



## COGNITIVE BIAS: ANCHORING BIAS

### What it Means

Anchoring bias occurs when you rely too heavily on the first piece of information encountered (the "anchor") when making decisions.

### In Your Context

If you've come to rely on smoking to "clear your mind" before focusing on important tasks, this becomes your anchor.



### Impact on Behaviour

Your dependence on smoking as the go-to solution for focus may lead to more frequent smoking breaks, further impairing productivity.



### How to Curb it

Introduce new cognitive tools, like taking deep breaths or using mindfulness exercises, as anchors to manage stress and increase focus.

The World Health Organization (2022) has found that young smokers in this age group score, on average, 25% lower on standardized cognitive tests. This data underscores the significant impact of nicotine on developing brains.

## THE IMPACT ON PERFORMANCE AND OPPORTUNITIES

- This difficulty concentrating can lead to procrastination, missed deadlines, and a general feeling of being overwhelmed. You might find yourself putting off important tasks, making careless mistakes, or feeling less confident in your abilities. These cognitive effects can impact your academic performance, your career prospects, and your overall sense of self-efficacy.



## CONCENTRATION CHALLENGES

- You're likely experiencing more than just occasional difficulty focusing. Concentration is becoming a consistent challenge, especially in high-pressure situations like exams, job interviews, or presentations.
- Even seemingly simple tasks, like writing an email, completing a routine chore, or just having a focused conversation, can feel surprisingly overwhelming when you can't smoke. It's not just a matter of willpower; it's a direct result of nicotine's impact on your brain.

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.

## NICOTINE'S INFLUENCE ON YOUR BEHAVIOR

- At this stage, nicotine might be playing a larger role in shaping your behavior than you realize. When you're feeling overwhelmed – whether it's academic pressure, relationship issues, or family expectations – you might automatically turn to smoking as a way to cope.
- While it might offer a temporary sense of relief, it's crucial to understand that this reliance on nicotine can actually hinder your ability to address the root causes of your stress.

*Research indicates you're 2.2 times more likely to experience emotional dysregulation compared to your non-smoking peers, especially during emotionally charged events. This means you might find it harder to manage your emotions effectively, leading to increased reliance on smoking as a crutch.*

## COGNITIVE BIAS: PRESENT BIAS

### What it Means

Present bias is the tendency to prioritize immediate rewards over long-term benefits.

### In Your Context

You might prioritize the immediate relaxation smoking provides, disregarding the long-term consequences of dependency.



### Impact on Behaviour

This bias strengthens the emotional association between stress relief and smoking, increasing your reliance.



### How to Curb it

Set small, achievable goals for reducing smoking. Use apps or reminders to track your progress, keeping the long-term benefits (like better health) front of mind.

## WITHDRAWAL AND MOTIVATION: FEELING TRAPPED

- You might also notice increased irritability and decreased motivation during nicotine withdrawal. This makes quitting even harder, as the discomfort of withdrawal reinforces the perceived need for cigarettes to manage your mood. The subconscious connection between smoking and emotional coping amplifies these struggles, creating a feeling of being trapped in the addiction.
- The short-term relief nicotine provides can mask underlying emotional issues, preventing you from developing healthy coping mechanisms.

## 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

**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.

## IMPACT ON PRODUCTIVITY

- This constant cycle of craving and reward-seeking is likely impacting your productivity. Studies have shown that individuals in this age group can lose up to 20% of their productivity due to cravings and related distractions.
- Think about it: how much time do you spend each day thinking about your next cigarette, taking smoke breaks, or feeling mentally foggy from nicotine withdrawal?

**Your brain on nicotine is like a hamster on a wheel. It's constantly chasing that dopamine hit, but it never actually gets anywhere. That "stress relief" you feel? It's just the temporary satisfaction of a craving.**

## THE DOPAMINE CYCLE: A VICIOUS CIRCLE

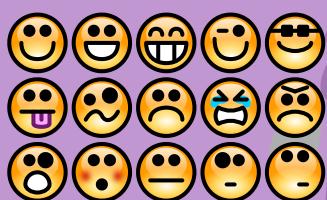
- Your brain's dopamine cycle is now in full swing. Every time you light up, you're triggering a release of dopamine, the "feel-good" neurotransmitter. This reinforces the connection between smoking and pleasure, creating a powerful feedback loop that drives you to seek that reward again and again.
- It's a vicious circle: the more you smoke, the more your brain craves that dopamine hit, and the harder it becomes to resist the urge.

## 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.



## COGNITIVE BIAS: ANCHORING BIAS

### What it Means

You may fixate on the idea that smoking has always been your way to handle stress, so you overestimate its benefits and underestimate its harm.



### In Your Context

Smoking has become your primary coping tool over the years, and you've anchored your emotional well-being to it.



### Impact on Behaviour

The longer you rely on smoking, the more deeply ingrained this bias becomes, making it more difficult to replace smoking with healthier coping mechanisms.

### How to Curb it

Actively challenge the belief that smoking is a necessary part of handling stress. Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) has shown to reduce smoking rates by 40%.

*Adults aged 31-60 who smoke to regulate emotions are 30% more likely to report strained personal relationships compared to non-smoking peers (University of Michigan Addiction Research Center).*

## THE STUNTED EMOTIONAL GROWTH

- The problem with using smoking as an emotional crutch is that it prevents you from developing healthy emotional regulation skills. Instead of confronting and processing your feelings, you're masking them with nicotine.
- This can lead to a cycle of emotional suppression, hindering your ability to mature emotionally and build resilience.



## THE IMPACT ON RELATIONSHIPS AND CAREER

- Research from the University of Michigan's Addiction Research Center has shown that adults in this age group who use smoking to regulate emotions are 30% more likely to report strained personal relationships compared to their non-smoking peers. This is likely due to the emotional suppression and irritability that can result from nicotine use and withdrawal.
- Furthermore, your tendency to suppress emotions can negatively impact your career. It can lead to heightened irritability, especially when you're in situations where you can't smoke. The inability to regulate your emotions effectively, combined with the reduced cognitive control associated with smoking, can contribute to other risky behaviors.

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.



## YOUR DESIGNATED SMOKING ZONES

- At this stage, your smoking is likely tied to specific locations and environments. Think about it: the office smoking area, that favorite spot on your porch where you relax in the evenings, or even stressful family gatherings. These places have become associated with smoking in your mind, making it harder to resist the urge when you're there. It's not just the nicotine; it's the **context**.

*Your brain on environmental smoking triggers is like a dog returning to its favorite spot to bury a bone. Those specific locations and routines have become so strongly associated with smoking that your brain automatically expects nicotine when you're there.*

### COGNITIVE BIAS: ANCHORING BIAS

#### What it Means

Anchoring bias occurs when you rely too heavily on the first piece of information you encounter, even if it's irrelevant or outdated.



#### In Your Context

You may have anchored your smoking habit to specific times, such as after meals or when you're feeling stressed.



#### Impact on Behaviour

Your routine and smoking behavior may have become predictable, and any change feels like a challenge.



#### How to Curb it

Break the associations by finding new, healthier habits or rituals to replace smoking during these times. Focus on the rewards you'll gain from these new habits.

Indicator 3

## INFLUENCE OF ALCOHOL & NEGATIVE EMOTIONS

- Research has identified several key triggers that can significantly increase your urge to smoke. Alcohol consumption lowers inhibitions and weakens your resolve. The presence of others smoking normalizes the behavior and reinforces the social aspect of smoking. And perhaps most significantly, negative emotions, such as stress, anxiety, or frustration, can trigger a strong craving as you seek the familiar comfort of nicotine.
- These combined triggers can easily lead to a lapse back into regular smoking, even if you've been trying to cut back.

# 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 due to a perceived inability to function without nicotine.

### COGNITIVE BIAS: OVERCONFIDENCE BIAS

#### What it Means

Overconfidence bias refers to the tendency to overestimate your own abilities or knowledge, leading to suboptimal decisions and behaviors.



#### In Your Context

In your case, you may believe you can "handle" smoking's cognitive effects without it negatively affecting your work or personal life.



*Research published in the Journal of Occupational Health (2021) has shown that mid-career professionals with moderate nicotine dependency report 35% higher rates of workplace burnout. This increased risk is directly linked to the impaired focus and decision-making abilities caused by nicotine use and withdrawal.*

#### Impact on Behaviour

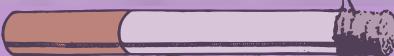
Overconfidence may lead to a false sense of control, causing you to ignore the warning signs of cognitive decline until it becomes more difficult to reverse.

#### How to Curb it

Remain aware of your cognitive limitations, and consult with a healthcare provider if you notice worsening symptoms.

## THE IMPACT ON WORK QUALITY AND OUTPUT

- This difficulty concentrating can lead to procrastination, missed deadlines, and a general feeling of being overwhelmed.
- You might find yourself putting off important tasks, making careless mistakes, or feeling less confident in your abilities.
- These cognitive effects can impact your academic performance, your career prospects, and your overall sense of self-efficacy.



Indicator 4

## DEPENDENCE ON NICOTINE FOR PRODUCTIVITY

- At this stage, you might find it increasingly difficult to maintain productivity without frequent smoke breaks. Tasks that require sustained attention, creative thinking, or complex problem-solving can feel overwhelming. You might rely on nicotine as a crutch to get through these tasks, believing it enhances your focus and concentration.
- Your brain on nicotine is like a computer running on low battery. It might work for short bursts, but it's constantly lagging, crashing, and in desperate need of a recharge (aka another cigarette).

# 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.

### DIMINISHED WILLPOWER: THE CYCLE OF REINFORCEMENT

- Your willpower to resist smoking likely feels significantly weaker. This isn't a personal failing; it's a direct consequence of the repeated reinforcement of smoking as a stress reliever. Every time you use a cigarette to cope, that neural pathway is strengthened, making it harder to choose healthier alternatives.
- Faced with stress, difficult emotions, or challenging situations, lighting a cigarette has become an automatic, almost reflexive response.

*A 2022 longitudinal study published in the Journal of Clinical Psychology revealed that adults in this age group who smoke are 30% more likely to report increased procrastination and indecision in both their personal and professional lives compared to non-smokers.*

### COGNITIVE BIAS: AVAILABILITY HEURISTIC

#### What it Means

The availability heuristic is the tendency to overestimate the importance of information that is readily available.

#### In Your Context

Seeing others around you smoke or recalling moments when smoking helped during stress may make quitting feel unnecessary.

#### Impact on Behaviour

This bias can make you rationalize your habit, leading to increased consumption.

#### How to Curb it

Counteract this bias by surrounding yourself with positive examples of non-smokers and reading success stories about quitting.

### UNDERMINED MOTIVATION FOR HEALTHIER COPING STRATEGIES

- The reliance on smoking as an emotional crutch also undermines your motivation to explore and adopt healthier coping mechanisms. Why would you choose the effort of exercise, meditation, or therapy when you have a readily available (and seemingly easier) solution in the form of a cigarette?
- This creates a self-perpetuating cycle where smoking becomes the default, hindering your emotional growth and well-being.

## A NON-SMOKER V/S YOU

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

**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.

## THE INTENSITY OF WITHDRAWAL

- Withdrawal symptoms can be particularly challenging to manage at this age. When you attempt to reduce or quit smoking, you may experience significant agitation, restlessness, irritability, difficulty concentrating, and even changes in mood.
- These symptoms aren't just unpleasant; they can be disruptive to your daily life and make it incredibly difficult to stick to a quit plan.

### COGNITIVE BIAS: SUNK COST FALLACY

#### What it Means

This bias occurs when individuals continue a harmful behaviour because they've already invested time, money or effort into it.

#### In Your Context

You might think, "I've been smoking for decades; quitting now won't undo the damage," which discourages attempts to quit.

#### Impact on Behaviour

This mindset could keep you stuck in the cycle of smoking, despite its detrimental effects on your health and quality of life.

#### How to Curb it

Reframe quitting as a way to improve your future rather than undo the past. Focus on achievable milestones, such as reducing daily cigarette consumption by 10%, and celebrate each success.



*Research from the National Library of Medicine (2022) indicates that smokers aged 60 and above are 70% more likely to experience severe withdrawal symptoms compared to younger smokers.*

## AUTOMATIC SMOKING AND DIMINISHED FOCUS

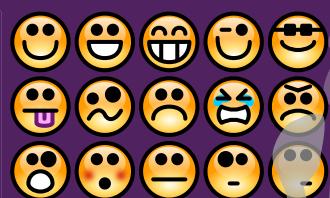
- Smoking might feel like an automatic behavior, something you do without conscious thought. It's become so ingrained in your routine that you may light up cigarettes without even realizing it.
- This automatic nature of smoking can significantly diminish your ability to focus on non-smoking-related tasks. Your attention may be constantly drawn back to thoughts of cigarettes, making it hard to concentrate on other activities, even those you enjoy.

## 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.



### COGNITIVE BIAS: CONFIRMATION BIAS

#### What it Means

You may selectively focus on information that supports the belief that smoking is your only option for emotional regulation, while ignoring evidence of its harm.

#### In Your Context

You might have encountered health warnings or advice to quit but have chosen to focus on the idea that smoking helps manage emotional pain/stress.

#### Impact on Behaviour

Confirmation bias could make it increasingly difficult to consider quitting smoking seriously.

#### How to Curb it

Actively seek out and focus on health stories of people who quit smoking later in life.

*Your brain on nicotine is like a house with faulty wiring. It might seem to provide temporary power (emotional regulation), but it's actually causing short circuits (emotional outbursts and detachment) and increasing the risk of a complete blackout (depression).*

## EMOTIONAL OUTBURSTS AND DETACHMENT

- You might experience more frequent emotional outbursts, perhaps triggered by seemingly minor events. Conversely, you could also experience periods of detachment, feeling disconnected from your own emotions and the world around you.
- These fluctuations in emotional expression are often exacerbated during nicotine withdrawal, further highlighting the extent of your dependency.



## INCREASED RISK OF DEPRESSION

- The National Centre for Biotechnology Information has found that smokers over 60 with moderate emotional reliance on nicotine report 40% higher rates of depressive episodes.
- This increased vulnerability to depression is likely due to the fact that smoking masks underlying emotional issues, preventing you from addressing them in healthy ways.
- The unresolved emotional baggage accumulates over time, contributing to feelings of sadness, hopelessness, and despair.

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.

### SENSORY REMINDERS

- Sensory triggers continue to play a significant role. The smell of tobacco, even if it's just a faint whiff, can evoke powerful cravings.
- Visual cues, like seeing an old ashtray or a familiar lighter, can also trigger a strong urge to smoke, reminding you of past routines and reinforcing the association between these objects and the act of smoking.

*Your brain on smoking at this age is like a well-worn armchair. It's comfortable, familiar, and you might think you can't live without it. But just like that old armchair, it's probably not doing you any favors in the long run.*

### TEMPORAL CUES

- Specific times of day or activities, such as your evening reflection, while reading the newspaper, or after a meal, have likely become strongly linked to smoking. These temporal cues create a comfortable routine, where smoking feels like an integral part of your day.
- This ingrained habit can make the prospect of quitting seem overwhelming, as it involves disrupting not just a physical addiction but also a deeply ingrained daily rhythm.

## 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 due to a perceived inability to function without nicotine.

### COGNITIVE BIAS: AVAILABILITY HEURISTIC

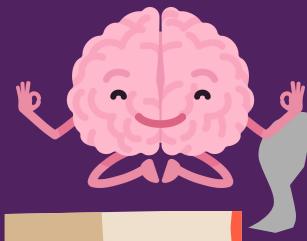
What it Means  
The availability heuristic refers to the tendency to rely on immediate examples that come to mind when making decisions, often based on personal experience recent events.

In Your Context  
If you have seen others in your social circle continue smoking despite cognitive issues, you might believe that this is normal or acceptable.

Impact on Behaviour  
You may feel reassured by seeing others in similar situations, which could reduce the urgency to address your cognitive decline or quit smoking.

How to Curb it  
Seek out stories of individuals who successfully quit smoking at your age and the cognitive improvements they experienced.

*Older smokers with moderate cognitive dependency are 50% more likely to experience social withdrawal due to embarrassment about memory lapses (National Centre for Biotechnology Information, 2021).*



### EXACERBATING THE DECLINE

- While some cognitive decline is a natural part of aging, smoking significantly contributes to the problem. Nicotine and other chemicals in cigarettes damage blood vessels, reducing blood flow to the brain and accelerating cognitive decline.
- This can manifest in various ways, including memory problems, difficulty concentrating, and slowed processing speed.
- This cognitive decline can significantly impact your daily life. Forgetting appointments, misplacing items, or struggling to keep up with conversations can lead to frustration and a sense of losing control.

### COGNITIVE CHALLENGES



- You might be noticing that everyday tasks are becoming more challenging. Things that used to be automatic, like remembering your medication schedule, following conversations, or even just focusing on a book or TV show, now require a conscious effort. These aren't just "senior moments"; they're potential signs of moderate cognitive decline, which can be exacerbated by smoking.
- The fear of making mistakes or feeling "out of it" can lead to isolation and a decreased quality of life. It's a vicious cycle: cognitive decline makes socializing harder, which leads to isolation, which can further worsen cognitive decline.

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.



### WANTING TO QUIT VS. NEEDING TO SMOKE

- At this stage, your relationship with smoking is likely complex. You probably recognize the health risks and may even want to quit, but the dependency is strong enough that the idea of going without cigarettes feels daunting.
- It's a constant internal struggle, a tug-of-war between your desire for a healthier future and the perceived need for nicotine in your daily life.

**!**  
Research published in *Ageing & Mental Health* (2021) has revealed that older smokers with moderate dependence have a 40% higher likelihood of experiencing emotional detachment and diminished motivation to engage in social or familial activities.

### COGNITIVE BIAS: CONFIRMATION BIAS

#### What it Means

Confirmation bias is the tendency to seek out information that supports your existing beliefs while ignoring contradictory evidence.

#### In Your Context

You might focus on anecdotal evidence (e.g., "My friend smoked all his life and lived till 90") to justify continued smoking.

#### Impact on Behaviour

This bias discourages change by reinforcing your current behavior.

#### How to Curb it

Broaden your information sources. Consult credible health professionals or read research-backed data on the benefits of quitting at any age.



### THE POWER OF TRIGGERS: MORE THAN JUST CRAVINGS

- Specific triggers, beyond just the physical craving, are likely deeply ingrained. A familiar smell (like a certain type of coffee), a particular sound (perhaps a favorite song), or even the simple act of sitting in your favorite chair can instantly trigger the urge to smoke.
- These aren't just cravings; they're deeply ingrained associations between your environment, routines, and the act of smoking.

## 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