



DETAILED REPORT

Mind Over
Matter

HEAVY SMOKER | PSYCHOLOGY



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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.

A 2023 JAMA study found that young adults (18-30) who smoke heavily are 45% more likely to experience anxiety and 30% more likely to face social isolation.

CRAVINGS: A CONSTANT COMPANION

- Smoking isn't just something you do anymore; it's become a central part of your life. Cravings are frequent, intense, and often feel overwhelming. They're not just a minor annoyance; they're a driving force behind your actions. You likely find yourself thinking about cigarettes constantly, anticipating your next smoke break, and even feeling anxious when you can't smoke.
- Stress, boredom, social situations, even just needing a moment to yourself – they all trigger the urge to smoke. It's not a conscious decision anymore; it's a reflex.



COGNITIVE BIAS: OPTIMISM BIAS

What it Means

Optimism bias leads individuals to believe they are less likely than others to experience negative outcomes.



Impact on Behaviour

This belief can cause you to delay quitting, underestimating the long term damage of heavy smoking.

In Your Context

You might think, "I'm young, I can quit anytime, and smoking won't harm me like it does others."

How to Curb it

Actively remind yourself of smoking-related risks by reviewing evidence, such as case studies of young smokers facing severe health issues.

INCREASED RISK OF ANXIETY AND SOCIAL ISOLATION

- The anxiety might stem from the constant cycle of craving and withdrawal, while the social isolation could be a result of avoiding non-smoking environments or feeling judged for your smoking habit.
- This constant preoccupation with smoking significantly impacts your productivity. You might find yourself sacrificing other tasks, neglecting responsibilities, or even avoiding situations where you can't smoke.
- It's not just about the time spent smoking; it's the mental energy consumed by the cravings and the planning required to ensure you have access to cigarettes.

SMOKING & EMOTIONAL REGULATION

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).



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 CRIPPLING IMPACT ON EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

This reliance on smoking as an emotional regulator has a severe impact on your emotional development. You're at double the risk of developing long-term emotional dysregulation, which can manifest in a variety of ways: impulsive decisions you later regret, unpredictable mood swings that strain relationships, and a general inability to effectively address the root causes of your emotional distress, be it academic struggles, relationship problems, or deeper personal issues.

AVOIDANCE AND DISTRESS

- Smoking can create a dangerous illusion of control, allowing you to avoid confronting difficult emotions and situations.
- It can overshadow your awareness of serious problems, like a deteriorating relationship or declining academic performance, because you're so focused on managing your immediate cravings and emotional discomfort through smoking.
- Simultaneously, the irritability and mood swings caused by nicotine withdrawal can actually exacerbate your emotional outbursts, creating a vicious cycle of dependency and distress.
- The very thing you're using to cope is actually making things worse.



COGNITIVE BIAS: RECENTY BIAS

What it Means

You tend to overvalue recent experiences with smoking as the most effective emotional regulation tool, forgetting the long-term consequences.

Impact on Behaviour

This bias could lead to continuous reinforcement of smoking as the only solution, worsening your dependency and making it harder to see other paths to emotional relief.

In Your Context

In times of stress or anxiety, you may think that smoking offers immediate relief, discounting how it worsens your emotional health over time.



How to Curb it

Start tracking your emotional responses before and after smoking to recognize the true long-term effects.

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.

Research indicates that a significant portion of young adult smokers (60%, especially in stressful or social situations) automatically reach for a cigarette when exposed to certain triggers. This automatic behavior is a hallmark of deep dependency.

HABIT SOLIDIFICATION: DOUBLING DOWN ON ADDICTION



- Young adults in this age group are at double the risk of solidifying these smoking behaviors into lifelong habits, particularly when strong environmental or social cues are regularly present. This means that the longer you continue this pattern of triggered smoking, the harder it will be to break free in the future.
- The neural pathways connecting these triggers to the act of smoking are becoming deeply ingrained, making quitting a formidable challenge.



COGNITIVE BIAS: OPTIMISM BIAS

What it Means

Optimism bias is the tendency to believe that you're less likely to experience negative events compared to others.



Impact on Behaviour

Your smoking behavior might be increasingly automatic, with the optimism bias allowing you to ignore the risks, believing you can stop at any time.

In Your Context

You may convince yourself that smoking won't have a major impact on your health, or that you can quit anytime without serious consequences.

How to Curb it

Acknowledge that no one is immune to the consequences of smoking. Focus on the real health risks and the benefits of quitting sooner rather than later.

CIGARETTES AS YOUR EMOTIONAL REFLEX

- Whether it's celebrating a win, commiserating over a loss, or just dealing with the daily grind, cigarettes have become your default emotional response.
- Stress, joy, sadness, boredom – any emotional state can trigger the urge to smoke. This isn't just about enjoying a cigarette; it's about using nicotine to manage your feelings, creating a dangerous cycle of dependency.
- Specific times of day, like that morning cigarette with coffee, the smoke break after class, or the cigarette before bed, have become ritualistic. These temporal cues create a sense of incompleteness without smoking.

COGNITIVE EFFECTS

Indicator 3

Your brain on nicotine is like a computer running on low battery. It might function for a little while, but it's constantly lagging, crashing, and making it nearly impossible to complete even basic tasks without a "recharge" (aka another cigarette).



THE PROCASTINATION TRAP

Indicator 4

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.

WORKING MEMORY AND INFORMATION PROCESSING

- The cognitive decline extends beyond procrastination. Research indicates that frequent smoking during adolescence, a period of crucial brain development, can lead to measurable deficits in working memory and information processing.
- Studies have shown that young smokers can score up to 8% lower on cognitive tests, with the degree of decline directly related to how early they started smoking. This means that the earlier you started, the more significant the potential impact on your cognitive abilities.

COGNITIVE BIAS: OPTIMISM BIAS

What it Means

Optimism bias refers to the tendency to believe that you are less likely to experience negative outcomes compared to others.

Impact on Behaviour

Optimism bias may cause you to delay taking action to reduce smoking, as you don't believe you will experience the same consequences as other smokers.

In Your Context

Despite experiencing significant cognitive impairments, you may still feel that your case is different or that you will not suffer long-term cognitive damage, thinking that quitting can be postponed or isn't urgently necessary.

How to Curb it

Confront the reality of your smoking-related cognitive decline through regular self-assessment, professional guidance, and a commitment to healthier habits. Focus on the long-term cognitive benefits of quitting.

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.



SMOKING OVERSHADOWING ASPIRATIONS



- Smoking may begin to overshadow even your most meaningful aspirations. The dependency creates a cycle where it fuels emotional suppression, and that suppressed emotion, in turn, fuels further dependency. The fear of withdrawal symptoms, the anxiety associated with quitting, and the perceived loss of your primary coping mechanism can make the prospect of quitting feel overwhelming and impossible.
- Your willpower is constantly being challenged, not just by the physical cravings, but also by the emotional and psychological weight of the addiction.

COGNITIVE BIAS: HYPERBOLIC DISCOUNTING

What it Means

Hyperbolic discounting is the tendency to prefer smaller, immediate rewards over larger, delayed rewards.



Impact on Behaviour

This bias makes quitting feel impossible, locking you into a cycle of dependency. Smokers in this bracket are 2x more likely to delay quit attempts despite desiring change.

In Your Context

The immediate "fix" of smoking overshadows the significant long-term health and emotional benefits of quitting.

How to Curb it

Break the quitting process into smaller steps. Reward yourself for each milestone to make the long-term goal more achievable.



AUTOMATIC EMOTIONAL RESPONSE



Indicator 5

- At this stage, resisting the urge to smoke, especially during emotionally challenging situations, likely feels incredibly difficult.
- Smoking has become your default reaction to stress, setbacks, or emotional discomfort. It's not a conscious choice anymore; it's an automatic response, a reflex you may feel powerless to control.
- The constant struggle with cravings and the need to smoke can drain your energy, focus, and drive, making it hard to prioritize anything beyond satisfying your immediate nicotine needs.

A NON-SMOKER V/S YOU

Feature	High Dependency	Low Dependency
<u>Cognitive Function, Impaired</u>	Generally good; occasional mental fatigue/cravings	Good cognitive function
<u>Emotional Regulation, Reliant on smoking</u>	May use smoking for stress relief; risk of dependency	Healthier coping mechanisms; less reliant on substances
<u>Physical Health, High risk of illness</u>	Potential long-term risks; generally good health	Good health; lower risk of future illness
<u>Social Life, Strained relationships</u>	Social smoking common; peer influence a factor	Less influenced by smoking peers
<u>Financial Well-being, Expensive habit</u>	Low cost of cigarettes	Saves money on cigarettes
<u>Overall Well-being, Lower quality of life</u>	Potential for increasing dependency; some impact on QoL	Good quality of life; less risk of addiction

Young smokers with high nicotine dependency have a two-fold increased risk of developing chronic anxiety, which can significantly impair their motivation to pursue long-term goals



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.



The World Health Organization (WHO, 2022) estimates that smokers at this level of dependency can spend 10-15% of their income on cigarettes.

IMPACT ON RELATIONSHIPS



- Your constant reliance on smoking can strain personal relationships. The irritability and restlessness associated with nicotine withdrawal can make it difficult to interact positively with loved ones.
- Similarly, workplace productivity can suffer. Frequent smoke breaks, difficulty concentrating, and the general impact of nicotine on cognitive function can all contribute to decreased performance.
- Your brain on nicotine is like a hostage negotiator dealing with a demanding captor. Those cravings? They're the captor making demands, and your brain is desperately trying to appease them with another cigarette.

COGNITIVE BIAS: CONFIRMATION BIAS

What it Means

This bias leads individuals to focus on information that supports their current beliefs while ignoring contradictory evidence.



Impact on Behaviour

This could reinforce your smoking habit, making it harder to acknowledge the need for change.

In Your Context

You might seek out stories of long-time smokers who are still healthy or dismiss information about the health risks of smoking.

How to Curb it

Diversify the information you consume by actively seeking stories of successful quitters and the positive outcomes of quitting.

DEFAULT COPING MECHANISM

At this stage, smoking has become your go-to response to stress, negative emotions, boredom, or even just the simple passage of time. It's not just something you do; it's how you navigate the challenges of daily life.

- This reliance on smoking as a coping mechanism can hinder your ability to develop healthier and more effective ways of managing emotions.
- The intensity of cravings and withdrawal symptoms makes the prospect of quitting feel overwhelming.
- The physical and psychological dependency is strong, and the thought of breaking free from the grip of nicotine can seem like an insurmountable challenge.

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.

WORK AND RELATIONSHIPS

- The American Heart Association reports that smokers aged 30-60 with high emotional dependency are 50% more likely to experience workplace conflicts. This is likely due to the irritability and impaired decision-making that can result from both nicotine use and withdrawal.
- Your emotional reliance on smoking can also strain personal relationships, as your suppressed emotions and potential mood swings create distance and conflict.

Your brain on nicotine when you're stressed is like a broken thermostat. It thinks it's regulating your emotions, but it's actually just masking them with smoke, leading to a build-up of unresolved issues and potentially damaging your career and relationships.

NO SMOKING



NICOTINE AS YOUR CONSTANT

EMOTIONAL SHIELD

- At this stage, smoking has likely become your primary, almost automatic response to any negative emotion. Stress, anger, sadness, frustration – it all gets met with a cigarette.
- This constant reliance on nicotine creates a barrier between you and your feelings, preventing you from developing healthy coping mechanisms.
- By constantly suppressing emotions with cigarettes, you're avoiding the deeper personal issues that need to be addressed.

COGNITIVE BIAS: AVAILABILITY HEURISTIC

What it Means

You may rely on the most readily available information—your immediate feelings of relief after smoking—to determine that it's the best way to cope.



Impact on Behaviour

Over time, this bias will cause you to rely on smoking more frequently, overlooking the long-term negative impacts.

In Your Context

You might ignore the broader consequences of smoking (health, relationships, career) and focus solely on the short-term relief it provides in stressful situations.

How to Curb it

Focus on the long-term consequences of smoking. Creating a list of the health impacts and reviewing it when you're tempted to smoke can significantly reduce smoking frequency.

Indicator 1

Indicator 2

TRIGGERS



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.

UBIQUITOUS TRIGGERS: SMOKING IS EVERYWHERE



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.



COGNITIVE BIAS: LOSS AVERSION

What it Means

Loss aversion is the tendency to prefer avoiding losses rather than acquiring equivalent gains.

In Your Context

You may feel that quitting smoking would lead to a loss of comfort, relaxation, or stress relief, making it harder to give up the habit despite knowing the health risks.

Impact on Behaviour

You may have become heavily dependent on smoking as a way to cope with stress or mark certain times of day

How to Curb it

Reframe the loss of smoking as a gain—gaining better health, more energy, and improved well-being. Focus on the long-term rewards of quitting rather than the temporary comfort smoking provides.



COMBINED TRIGGERS: THE AMPLIFIED URGE



- Certain combinations of triggers can significantly amplify your urge to smoke. Alcohol consumption, for example, combined with social pressures in environments where smoking is prevalent, can create an almost irresistible compulsion.
- Even seemingly innocuous triggers, like evening hours or specific social interactions, can become deeply associated with smoking. Research indicates that lighter smokers in this age group are particularly susceptible to alcohol and evening hours as triggers.

COGNITIVE EFFECTS



Smokers aged 31-60 with high nicotine dependency have a 60% higher risk of professional stagnation due to cognitive impairments (American Journal of Psychiatry, 2020).



BEYOND THE OCCASIONAL LAPSE

- At this stage of high dependency, cognitive issues are no longer just occasional annoyances; they're significantly impacting your daily life.
- Severe brain fog makes it difficult to think clearly and process information effectively.
- Frequent forgetfulness is likely interfering with your work, your relationships, and your ability to manage daily tasks. Prioritizing tasks and making sound decisions feels overwhelming, especially without a cigarette.
- It's not just about feeling a little "off"; it's about a noticeable decline in your cognitive abilities.
- The brain fog, forgetfulness, and difficulty prioritizing that you're experiencing are directly impacting your ability to succeed professionally.



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.

ACCELERATED MEMORY DECLINE



- A longitudinal study has shown that middle-aged smokers who consume more than 20 cigarettes daily experience accelerated memory decline. This isn't just a normal part of aging; it's a direct result of nicotine's impact on your brain.
- The cognitive impairments you're experiencing now are likely to worsen over time, affecting your long-term cognitive health and potentially increasing your risk of more serious cognitive decline later in life.

COGNITIVE BIAS: BANDWAGON EFFECT

What it Means

The bandwagon effect is a cognitive bias that occurs when people align their beliefs or behaviors with the majority, often due to social pressure.



Impact on Behaviour

You may feel socially pressured to continue smoking, believing it is normal or even necessary for stress relief. This bias can contribute to maintaining your smoking behavior, worsening cognitive function over time.

In Your Context

If smoking is prevalent in your workplace or social group, you may continue smoking simply because others around you do, despite experiencing cognitive decline.

How to Curb it

Surround yourself with individuals who support your decision to quit. Find a community or support group where smoking cessation is a shared goal, breaking the influence of social smoking habits.

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 high nicotine dependency is like a puppet on a string. It might think it's in control, but it's actually the nicotine pulling the strings, dictating your emotions, your priorities, and even your relationships.



ERODED WILLPOWER: NICOTINE IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT

- Your willpower might feel completely depleted. It's not just about resisting the urge to smoke; it's about nicotine influencing your decisions across the board. From how you respond to challenges at work to how you prioritize your to-do list, nicotine is subtly dictating your actions and shaping your life.
- A 2022 survey by the American Lung Association found that 60% of adults aged 31-60 with high nicotine dependency avoid emotionally charged conversations to avoid stress-induced cravings.
- It's become your default response to stress, anxiety, or any uncomfortable feeling.

COGNITIVE BIAS: SUNK COST FALLACY

What it Means

The sunk cost fallacy is the tendency to continue a behavior because of previously invested time, money, or effort.



In Your Context

You may feel that quitting smoking now would waste all the years you've "invested" in the habit.

Impact on Behaviour

This fallacy traps you in dependency. A study found that 50% of smokers aged 31–60 delay quitting due to fear of regret or loss.

How to Curb it

Reframe quitting as an opportunity to reclaim time and health, rather than as a loss of past experiences. Focus on future benefits instead of sunk costs.

THE HIDDEN COST OF DEPENDENCY

- This dependence on smoking for emotional regulation can lead to neglect in other crucial areas of your life. Career goals might take a backseat to satisfying cravings.
- Meaningful relationships can suffer as you prioritize smoking over open and honest communication.
- The addiction can subtly erode your motivation and willpower, not just when it comes to smoking, but in other aspects of your life as well.
- This reliance on nicotine, however, is a false sense of control. While it might seem like you're managing your emotions, you're actually becoming increasingly controlled by the addiction.

A NON-SMOKER UNDER THIS INDICATOR

Feature	High Dependency	Low Dependency
<u>Cognitive Function, Impaired</u>	Occasional lapses in focus/memory; slower problem-solving	Generally good; may have age-related changes
<u>Emotional Regulation, Reliant on smoking</u>	Uses smoking as coping mechanism; some emotional issues	Healthier coping; better emotional control
<u>Physical Health, High risk of illness</u>	Increased risk of health problems; some impact on stamina	Lower risk of illness; generally good stamina
<u>Social Life, Strained relationships</u>	Social smoking common; some peer influence	Less influenced by smoking peers
<u>Financial Well-being, Expensive habit</u>	Moderate cost of cigarettes	Saves money on cigarettes
<u>Overall Well-being, Lower quality of life</u>	Potential for increasing dependency; some impact on QoL	Generally good quality of life

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.

Heavy smokers aged 60+ experience a 60% increase in cognitive decline rates compared to non-smokers (National Institute on Aging, 2023).

SMOKING AS A COMPLICATION: BEYOND HABIT



- At this stage, smoking likely feels less like a choice and more like an absolute necessity. It's not just something you do; it's something you have to do.
- The cravings are likely intense and pervasive, dominating your thoughts and actions. Reaching for a cigarette might feel like an automatic response to any form of stress, discomfort, or even just a moment of quiet.
- The lines between wanting a cigarette and needing one have likely blurred.

COGNITIVE BIAS: STATUS QUO BIAS

What it Means

This bias leads individuals to prefer the current state of affairs, avoiding change even when it is beneficial.



In Your Context

You might think, "I've smoked for decades; there's no point in changing now," which perpetuates the habit.

Impact on Behaviour

This can keep you from attempting to quit, as the effort required to change feels overwhelming compared to continuing your current routine.

How to Curb it

Break the cycle by taking small, manageable steps, such as reducing your daily cigarette count by one each week.

PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL BATTLE

- These cravings aren't just mental urges; they're likely accompanied by physical symptoms. You might experience restlessness, irritability, difficulty concentrating, anxiety, or even physical discomfort when you try to go without a cigarette.
- This isn't just a "bad habit"; it's a full-blown addiction with both psychological and physiological components. The cycle of dependency is deeply ingrained, and the thought of breaking free can feel overwhelming.
- The withdrawal symptoms you experience when you try to quit are a testament to the powerful hold that nicotine has on your brain.

SMOKING & EMOTIONAL REGULATION

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).

NO SMOKING



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.

DEPENDENCY AND ISOLATION

- This reliance on smoking creates a vicious cycle. You might experience heightened irritability and emotional suppression, leading to feelings of isolation and detachment. It's as if smoking has built a wall between you and your emotions, preventing you from truly connecting with yourself and others.
- The withdrawal symptoms you experience when you try to quit (or even go a few hours without a cigarette) might be so intense that quitting feels impossible. Heightened anxiety, restlessness, and difficulty concentrating can make even simple daily tasks feel overwhelming.

COGNITIVE DECLINE AND EMOTIONAL IMPAIRMENT



- Research indicates that older adults who smoke experience higher rates of emotional detachment and isolation, which is further complicated by age-related declines in cognitive function.
- Chronic nicotine exposure contributes significantly to these declines, impairing your brain's ability to process emotions effectively.
- This means that not only are you using smoking to avoid emotions, but nicotine is also actively hindering your brain's capacity to understand and manage them.

COGNITIVE BIAS: ENDOWMENT EFFECT

What it Means

You may value smoking more because it's something you've owned and relied on for years, making it feel like an irreplaceable part of your life.



In Your Context

Smoking has become a fixture of your emotional coping strategy, and quitting feels like you're losing something valuable, even though it's harming you.

Impact on Behaviour

The longer you maintain this belief, the more entrenched your smoking habit becomes, making quitting seem increasingly difficult.

How to Curb it

Challenge the thought that smoking is irreplaceable by exploring alternative ways to cope. Studies indicate that seniors who engage in emotional substitution, like art or social activities, experience a 15% higher success rate i

Indicator 1

Indicator 2

TRIGGERS



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.



A Tobacco Control study found a 73% chance that smokers aged 60+ with high dependency automatically start smoking based on temporal and environmental cues.

People who don't trigger smoking are a breath of fresh air.

!!! EVERY OCCASION CALLS FOR A CIGARETTE

- Event-driven smoking is no longer tied to just major life events. Every event, whether significant or trivial, has become a reason to smoke.
- From finishing a meal to watching a particular TV show, from a phone call with a friend to simply taking a break, smoking has become inextricably linked to your daily activities. It's not just about the nicotine; it's about the ritual, the routine, and the ingrained association between specific events and the act of smoking.

COGNITIVE BIAS: ENDOWMENT EFFECT

What it Means

The endowment effect is the cognitive bias where people place a higher value on things they own than on things they don't.



In Your Context

After years of smoking, you might have developed a sense of ownership over the habit, seeing it as part of your identity.

Impact on Behaviour

The longer you've smoked, the more deeply ingrained the habit has become. This bias makes it emotionally difficult to quit, even if you're aware of the risks.

How to Curb it

Challenge your attachment to the habit by focusing on the value of a healthier lifestyle and the freedom that comes with quitting.

THE DAY REVOLVES AROUND CIGARETTES

- Temporal triggers dictate the rhythm of your day. Specific times—morning coffee, mid-morning break, after lunch, evening relaxation—are all associated with smoking.
- It's nearly impossible to imagine a day without cigarettes; the day itself is structured around them.
- This creates a powerful sense of dependency, where smoking becomes an automatic, almost unconscious response to the passage of time.
- Studies also show that many highly dependent smokers in this age group report feelings of regret, acknowledging the negative impact of smoking on their health and well-being.

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.



THE MISSED OPPORTUNITY

- While cognitive decline may seem inevitable at this age, it's important to understand that earlier intervention is key. Numerous longitudinal studies on middle-aged participants have demonstrated that quitting smoking during midlife—rather than later—can significantly delay or even prevent the onset of cognitive decline and dementia.
- While quitting at any age offers benefits, the earlier you quit, the greater the potential for preserving cognitive function.

DOMINATING COGNITIVE



COGNITIVE BIAS: SELF-SERVING BIAS

What it Means

Self-serving bias is the tendency to attribute positive outcomes to your own actions and negative outcomes to external factors.

In Your Context

You may blame external factors (e.g., stress or genetics) for your cognitive decline, while minimizing or ignoring the role smoking plays in exacerbating these issues.

IMPAIRMENT: A DAILY STRUGGLE

- At this stage, cognitive impairment might be a significant factor in your daily life.
- Simple tasks that once seemed effortless, like balancing your checkbook, remembering appointments, or recalling family events, can become frustrating challenges.
- You may experience difficulty focusing, concentrating, or processing information, leaving you feeling mentally foggy and overwhelmed.
- Your brain on long-term smoking is like a library with a leaky roof. The information is still there, but it's getting harder and harder to access.

Impact on Behaviour

This bias could lead to a sense of helplessness or avoidance, where you don't take responsibility for your smoking and its cognitive impacts. It may prevent you from recognizing the need for change and seeking professional help.

How to Curb it

Acknowledge that your smoking habits play a role in your cognitive health and commit to reducing or quitting. Reflect on the long-term consequences and embrace a proactive approach to improving your cognitive function.

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 long-term smoking is like a hostage negotiator dealing with a nicotine-addicted terrorist (which is also your brain). It's constantly trying to appease the cravings to avoid a meltdown, leaving you feeling trapped and exhausted.

Indicator 5

THE FEAR OF LOSING CONTROL

- The prospect of quitting can feel daunting, even terrifying. You might fear the intense discomfort of nicotine withdrawal and worry about losing your sense of control over your emotions.
- This fear can be a powerful barrier to change, even if you know that quitting is the best thing for your health.
- Chronic smokers over 60 experience a 30% higher incidence of depressive episodes (NIH).

COGNITIVE BIAS: LOSS AVERSION

What it Means

Loss aversion is the tendency to fear losses more than valuing equivalent gains.



In Your Context

You might fear losing the comfort or stability that smoking brings, making quitting seem like a daunting change.

Impact on Behaviour

This bias amplifies resistance to quitting. Research shows that older smokers who fear losing routine comforts are 30% less likely to quit.

How to Curb it

Highlight the gains of quitting, such as improved quality of life and emotional well-being. Visualize the positive changes in daily routines post-smoking cessation.

INCREASED RISK OF DEPRESSION AND COGNITIVE DECLINE

- The National Institutes of Health (NIH) has found that chronic smokers over 60 experience a 30% higher incidence of depressive episodes.
- This is likely due to the combination of emotional suppression caused by nicotine and the persistent decline in cognitive control.
- As your cognitive function decreases, your ability to self-regulate emotions is further impaired, creating a vicious cycle. It's not just a habit anymore; it's your primary way of managing stress, anxiety, sadness, or even boredom.

A NON-SMOKER UNDER THIS INDICATOR

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