



# FOREVER *FREE™ for Baby and Me*

A Guide To Remaining Smoke Free



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Booklet 7: Smoking, Stress & Mood

# **Booklet 7: Smoking, Stress & Mood**

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*This is Booklet 7 in the Forever Free for Baby and Me series. This booklet covers the link between stress, mood, and smoking. It focuses on why stress and negative moods can make you want to smoke. It also lists some ways to deal with stress.*

## What Causes Stress?

Stress is what we have when life gives us challenges. There are many ways that we may be challenged. Perhaps we have to change the way we live (like when we have a baby or get a new job). Perhaps we have to solve a problem (like finding ways to pay bills). Perhaps we have to get a task done in a short amount of time (like getting the house cleaned before company comes over). Perhaps we have to make a hard choice (like deciding whether or not to return to work). When we are challenged, we may have stress. These challenges are called *stressors*.

Stressors come in all shapes and forms. **Major life events** that happen to us are one type of stressor. **Daily hassles** are another type. The list below shows some types of major life events that most people would find stressful.



### SOME MAJOR LIFE EVENTS

Death of a family member.

Marriage.

Pregnancy.

Bankruptcy.

Birth of child.

Fired from job.

Lawsuit.

Miscarriage or stillbirth.

Divorce.

Serious illness, injury or accident.

Demotion.

Prenatal complications.

Poor grades.

Fights with boss.

Move to a new place.

Menopause.

Retirement.

Child leaves home.

Partner is not faithful.

Note that "good" events, such as marriage, pregnancy, and a new baby can also be stressful, because people need to adjust to something new. They may need to manage their time in different ways or get used to taking care of the needs of someone else.

***"Even happy events can be stressful."***

But you don't have to have any of these major life events in order to have stress. Life is full of daily hassles that cause stress. **Daily hassles** are those things that happen on a regular basis. The list below shows a few examples of these. In the blank lines at the end, fill in some of the "hassles" in your life.



### **SOME DAILY HASSLES**

- Minor money problems (an overdue bill).**
- Car trouble.**
- Loud or fussy children.**
- Rude people.**
- Fights with partner.**
- Traffic jams.**
- Sick baby.**
- Bad weather.**
- Home repairs.**
- Finding childcare.**
- Housework.**

**Add your own daily hassles:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

**In the long run, these daily hassles cause more stress than the major life events.**

## **What is Stress?**

What do you feel like when you are under stress? You may feel overwhelmed. You may feel tense or tired. Perhaps you find that your heart beats faster and you sweat more. You may get an upset stomach or a headache. As you worry about the stressor, you may start to feel anxious or depressed. As the stressor keeps on going, you may want to find some way of getting away from it. Smokers or ex-smokers may begin to have an urge for a cigarette.

People differ in how often they deal with stress, and how they react to it. Some people have more stress in their lives than others. Some people also react more to stress than others do. And some people are better than others at dealing or coping with stress once it starts.

People who have trouble dealing with stress often have strong emotional reactions to stress. Their mood is easily affected by events in their lives. They may be more likely to feel sad and anxious in response to events. In some people, their moods are so serious that they suffer from depression and anxiety. (Not all depression and anxiety are caused by stressful events, but stress does make it worse).

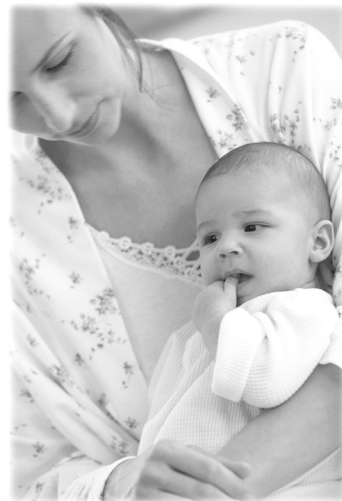


## How is Stress Related to Pregnancy and Motherhood?

Many women report feeling sad or depressed during pregnancy or in the months after they have a baby. New mothers may find it hard to admit feeling unhappy during this time. However, these feelings are not unusual and they can be treated. Some research suggests that these times of negative mood may be caused by the hormonal changes during pregnancy and after delivery as well as the extra stress that comes with a major life change. Many women may suffer with these feelings and not ask for help. Sometimes, these symptoms may be overlooked or ignored because they are similar to other changes of the pregnancy and postpartum periods.

Having "baby blues," also known as postpartum blues, is very common. Research shows that between 50% and 85% of women will have mild symptoms such as mood swings, crying, and fatigue (tiredness) in the first weeks after giving birth. These symptoms usually go away with a little rest and support. Most women may not need treatment.

Postpartum depression is more intense than the baby blues and the symptoms last longer than a few weeks. Research suggests that about 10% to 15% of new mothers suffer from this sort of mood problem. Symptoms may include exhaustion (extreme tiredness), feeling sadness or hopeless, changes in appetite, sleep problems, anxiety (feeling tense or fearful), unexplained crying, poor concentration, and feeling unable to cope with daily tasks. Please remember that these symptoms are usually temporary and they can be treated with professional help. **If you have these symptoms, please talk with your doctor.**



Even if you are not having some of these more serious feelings or symptoms, you may still be dealing with a great deal of stress. Life as a new mom is stressful! Caring for a baby brings a large number of new stressors to your life such as money worries, getting little sleep (or none), changing dirty diapers, soothing a crying baby, feeding and bathing, dealing with changes in your own body, finding day care, returning to work, finding time for your relationships – to name just a few! Now is an important time to find healthy ways to relieve your stress.

## How is Stress Related to Smoking?

People who have a lot of stress tend to have a harder time quitting smoking. This is also true for people who are prone to negative moods, such as sadness and anxiety. We also know that when ex-smokers start smoking again, they often have their first cigarette in response to stress or strong emotions (see box below). People who suffer from depression are twice as likely as others to be smokers. They also have a harder time quitting and staying quit.

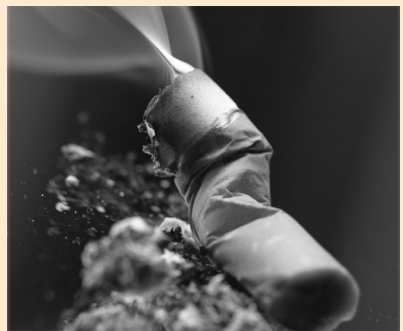
Why is this? Think back to when you were a smoker. When you had stress or frustration, what did you do? When you were feeling down or bored, what did you do? When you were nervous, what did you do? Chances are that you smoked. Most smokers learn to use cigarettes as a way to deal with stress.

### What Leads Up to a Cigarette?

What leads ex-smokers to have their first cigarette? We followed a group of ex-smokers after they quit, and then asked them if and when they had a cigarette. Here is what the ex-smokers told us about what events led up to that cigarette.

<u>Event</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Unpleasant Mood	70%
Drinking Alcohol	47%
Happy Mood	24%
Eating	12%
Offered Cigarette	2%

You can see that the most common event that led to smoking was being in a negative mood, such as feeling sad, angry, tense, or bored.



## Why Do Smokers Deal with Stress by Smoking?

Studies show that smokers learn that cigarettes relieve the unpleasant feelings that are caused by nicotine withdrawal. That is, cigarettes relieve the stress that they (the cigarettes) caused in the first place. Because of this, smokers come to believe that cigarettes will get rid of all types of stress – but they really do not.

Aside from this chemical reason, some women smoke during stress for other reasons. Many women use the act of lighting and smoking a cigarette as a "time out" from thinking about or dealing with stress. Like any activity, smoking might distract a person from her troubles. For example, many ex-smoking mothers reported that smoking had been their one brief escape from their daily hassles. One woman said, "*I felt cheated when I had not taken time for myself and smoking was the way that I did that.*" Because smoking is often a social activity, women often feel that lighting a cigarette gives them feelings of group support.

## So, Why Not Smoke When Stressed?

**There are many problems with using cigarettes as a way to cope with stress or other unpleasant feelings:**

- ◆ The relief only lasts a short time. Soon your stress will return and you will want to smoke another cigarette.
- ◆ Smoking does not solve your problem; it only hides it. The cause of your problem remains.
- ◆ Smoking is not a healthy way to deal with stress. The stress probably will not kill you, but the smoking may. (See *Booklet 4: Smoking & Health*.)
- ◆ Smoking actually causes more stress than it relieves. We worked with one new mother who stated, "*Emotionally I am not happy and it stresses me more that I smoke.*" Also, many studies show that stress levels go down after quitting smoking.
- ◆ After you quit smoking, you may have trouble at first dealing with stress and bad moods. If smoking was your main way of coping with stress, you will need to find new, better ways after you quit. (Many positive alternatives to smoking are provided in *Booklet 8: Lifestyle Balance*.)



## Better Ways to Deal with Stress and Negative Moods

Many women are able to deal with stress and negative moods without smoking or using other drugs or alcohol. How do they do it?

### 1. Deal with the Problem

One good way to cope with life's stressors is to try to deal directly with the problem facing you. Look at the source of the problem. Think about ways to solve it. Remember that one option may be to accept an offer of help from someone else. Then, act on the problem.

*Tiffany had quit smoking 10 months earlier. Eight weeks after giving birth, Tiffany returned to her job. A few mornings later, Tiffany noticed that the baby was sick and had a fever. She knew that she could not take a sick baby to the day care center, but she was also worried about making a bad impression with her boss by taking the day off. That day, Tiffany felt very stressed and anxious. She thought about having a cigarette, which is how she used to calm herself down. Instead, she thought about how she could solve the problems. First, Tiffany called into work and told her boss that she would be late. Next, she thought of one of her neighbors who was a stay-at-home mom and she called her to ask for help. Her neighbor agreed to watch the baby and Tiffany offered to babysit in return the next weekend. Next, she drove into work. She explained the situation to her boss and offered to work late to make up for the missed time. This was not an ideal answer, but it did allow her to find care for her baby and get back to work. She was pleased with herself because she solved the problem without smoking!*



**Name one problem that you have recently faced. Then list possible ways to deal with that problem (without smoking).**

PROBLEM: \_\_\_\_\_

WAYS TO DEAL WITH IT: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## 2. Do Other Activities

Take a much needed break! There are other things besides smoking that can reduce stress. These include: reading, exercising, taking a bubble bath, deep breathing, praying, meditating, holding your sleeping baby, or taking a walk. All of these can take your mind off a stressful situation. They also can improve your mood. Just think of all of the money you can save by not smoking – between \$1500 and \$2000 per year for many ex-smokers. Perhaps this money could go towards a fun or relaxing activity (e.g., massage, manicure, movie, babysitter).

*Anita was one of those smokers who lit a cigarette when something the least bit stressful happened. After she quit, she had urges to smoke when she felt stressed, like when she felt that her husband was not helping her enough with the new baby. She quickly found that she needed to come up with something that helped her feel the way she did when she smoked. She started doing deep breathing exercises. The deep breathing was like smoking, and it also let her body relax. When she felt tense, she would close her mouth, relax her shoulders, and inhale deeply while counting to eight. Then she would hold her breath for four seconds. Next, she would exhale slowly while counting to eight again. Anita found that if she repeated these steps five times she would feel a release of stress and tension. It worked at least as well as smoking used to.*



List three short-term activities that you could do to reduce stress:

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### 3. Talk to Someone



One of the best ways to deal with stress is to talk to someone. Most of us do this by talking to friends, family, or co-workers.

*Whenever Janice felt stressed, she would phone her best friend, Alice, and they would talk about her problem. Sometimes they were able to come up with good answers to the problem. But, even when they couldn't solve it, just talking about it helped Janice.*

Some people like to join a support group. Often the people in a support group have the same types of problems, and they can help each other out. To find out about support groups that may be in your area, try reading the classified sections of local newspapers or contacting one of the national quitlines, such as 1-877-44U-QUIT or 1-800-ACS-2345.

*When Yolanda's doctor told her she needed to lose weight, she felt overwhelmed. She was depressed about her appearance and afraid of the harm she was doing to her health. Her doctor suggested that she join a support group for individuals trying to lose weight. At first, she didn't like the idea because she never was the kind of person who liked to talk about her insecurities. She also didn't know how a support group would help her lose weight. Finally, she decided to give it a chance. At first, Yolanda was quiet during the group meetings. But she felt that by listening to the other members she was learning a lot about nutrition, exercise, and the reasons people overeat. She also learned coping skills to use instead of eating to help her with stress. Later she became more active in the group herself. She found that she felt better after talking. In time, Yolanda felt good about herself, led a healthier lifestyle, and noticed the pounds starting to drop.*



Some people have very strong reactions to stress. They suffer from mood problems that get in the way of their lives. These people may benefit from seeing a health professional such as a psychologist, psychiatrist, or social worker. Besides therapy, a doctor may order medication as part of treatment for depression, anxiety, or other psychological problems.



*Since her delivery six months ago, Erika seemed to be living under a cloud. She couldn't remember the last time she was happy. The best she ever felt was just so-so. Any kind of problem or stress seemed to make her feel sad or irritable. She had felt this way for quite some time, but it may have gotten worse since she quit smoking. She was having a hard time getting out of bed in the morning. She felt overwhelmed and unable to cope with the responsibilities of being a new mother. On the advice of her doctor, she entered therapy with a psychologist. This has helped her to look at the causes of her depression. Together they are working on changing the way that Erika looks at the world, which should help relieve her depression.*

**List three persons, groups, health professionals, or other resources that you could contact for support:**

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#### **4. Accept Temporary Stress**

A certain amount of stress is a part of life, especially for life as a new mom. For example, many new mothers feel stressed when dealing with a fussy baby. Success at quitting smoking may mean getting used to what stress feels like without smoking. You will learn that the feeling of stress will pass on its own even if you do not have a cigarette. Because smokers often have a cigarette when they feel stressed, they may forget that these feelings will get better on their own.

## Look at Your Life

The methods just listed should help you deal with stress in your life. But another way is to change your lifestyle to reduce the number of stressors. Is your life more stressful than it has to be? Clearly, people may have little control over some stressors. But, many types of stressors result from choices that we make about our lives. Some healthy choices include: eating well-balanced meals, getting enough sleep, exercising, and taking care of yourself when sick. It is important to take good care of yourself and to respond quickly to any health concerns. If you take care of yourself, you are taking care of your baby. Ask yourself if there are ways to reduce the stress in your life. Ask yourself if there are ways to get more good things from life. Here is just one example from one woman:



*Kim was so proud of herself for quitting smoking that she now felt that she could make other decisions that might improve her life. The main thing that she figured out was that between working, cleaning the house, and caring for her family, she was not taking enough time for herself. She felt that she had lost her "me time." Kim realized that taking care of everyone but herself left her feeling irritable and depressed. During the*

*little free time that she had, she was too tired to have fun with her family. But she decided to change. She made plans with her friend, Tamika, to watch each other's children for 3 hours every week. Kim used this time to visit friends, to exercise, or to just relax in peace and quiet. These breaks allowed her to better enjoy her time with her family. Kim found that she was much happier than before and felt a lot less stressed.*

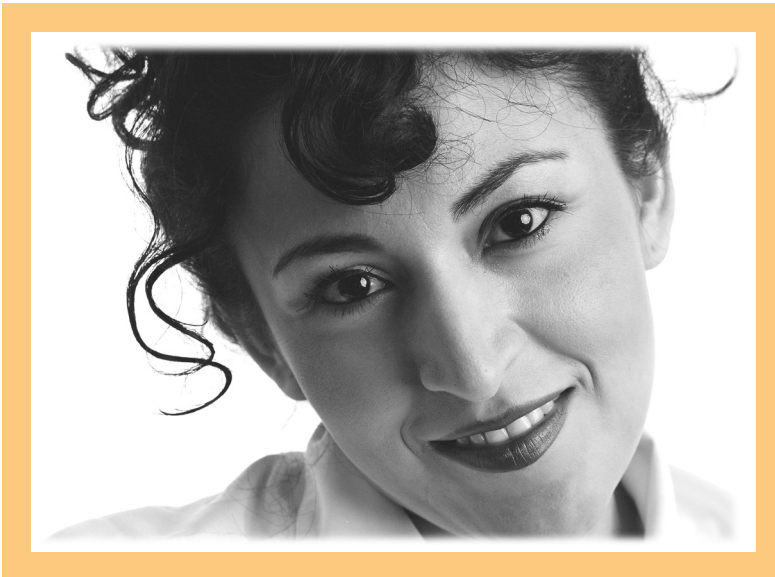
Of course, there are many other ways to reduce stress in your life. *Booklet 8: Lifestyle Balance* discusses "positive" ways to change your life.

**List one long-term change that you could make to reduce stress in your life:**

√ \_\_\_\_\_

## Summary

1. Do not smoke to cope with stress – deal directly with the problem.
2. Reduce the stress in your life by doing fun or relaxing activities (reading, exercising, or deep breathing).
3. Talk to someone for support.
4. Realize that you will always have some stress in your life – but smoking is NEVER an option.
5. Make time to focus on yourself – YOU MATTER!!!



**Notes:**

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**Enjoy Better Health for You and Your Baby**

**Stay Smoke-Free!**





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