

National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)

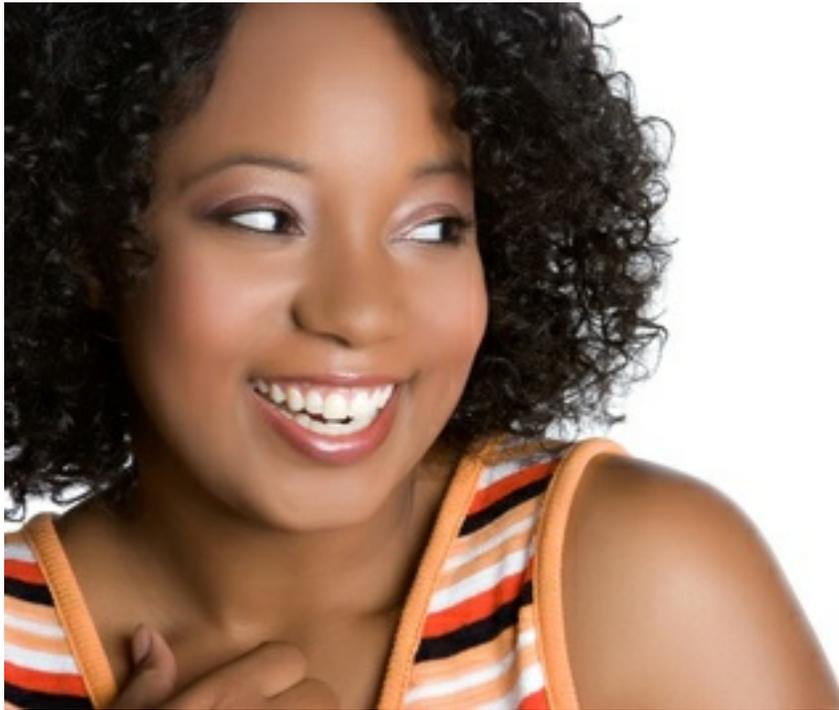
Quitting smoking: "My vision of where I want to be keeps me going."



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"Monica" started smoking cigarettes with her friends. Now, she's trying to quit—smoking is hurting her music career. (This story is based on the experiences of real people whose names have been changed.)



I started smoking when I finally broke into the jazz scene. After a show, I'd chill out with the band and share cigarettes. Getting up on stage and singing in front of an audience is exciting. But it's scary, too. Smoking after the show was like a reward after a hard day at work. It meant the tough part was over, and I could chill out with friends. I also liked to smoke while drinking at the bar.

After smoking for a while, my voice got rougher and lower. I had to take more breaths as I sang. I didn't sound as good as I used to. I realized that smoking could permanently hurt my voice and my singing career. I had to quit.

I noticed an ad at my bus stop for the tobacco quitline at 1-800-QUIT-NOW. I called and spoke for 20 minutes with a counselor about wanting to quit. She gave me advice about dealing with cravings and changing my daily routine to exclude smoking. She told me about medicines that could help—a nicotine patch, special gum, prescription pills, and even something that looks like a cough drop. She sent me information and worksheets to plan out how I was going to get through each day—especially stressful times—without cigarettes. We scheduled a time to talk each week for the next several weeks, so I'd have someone to tell how it was going. That seemed like the most important part for me.

The first week I tried to quit [I messed up twice](#). But I kept trying. I teamed up with a friend who also is trying to quit. I call her when I get the urge to light up. Or I chew some gum, go for a walk, or distract myself some other way. I keep a note in my pocket with a list of reasons why I want to stop smoking—singing, health, and not smelling like an ashtray.

My voice sounds so much better now I'm not smoking. And I'm saving up my daily cigarette money. I can't believe that I spent almost \$50 a week on cigarettes! I already know which dress I'll buy with that jar of dollars. Quitting smoking is the hardest thing I've ever done. But my vision of where I want to be keeps me going.

Learn more: Read about [how Monica finally quit tobacco](#) after two relapses.