

Quitting Smoking Pot: Why You Have To Quit Hanging Out With Pot Smokers

By Peggy L. Ferguson, Ph.D.

When trying to interrupt the momentum of addiction and become abstinent from pot and other drugs, it is an important first step to stop hanging out with people who are using. Many people initially balk at this "suggestion". However, if you think about it logically, it just makes sense to change your environment to minimize the probability of continuing to use or of relapse.

The use and abuse of drugs in your life is associated with people, places, events, thoughts, smells, etc. Some of the associations are direct. Other associations are indirect. You might associate pot smoking with your core group of buddies that you usually get high with. You might associate getting high with your local convenience store where you bought rolling papers, cigars, or even snacks for the "munchies". You can associate getting high with driving down certain streets, being in certain neighborhoods, or getting up in the morning with your cup of coffee and expecting to light up. As associations to getting high come up, they can create powerful cravings or urges to use.

Cravings are difficult to deal with in early recovery because you have not yet developed an arsenal of abstinent tools to be used to combat relapse. Being around old using friends are one of the most dangerous situations for relapse in early recovery. Even when you have decided that you are not going to use any more, whether "forever" or "one day at a time", putting yourself in an environment that is conducive to relapse rather than recovery enhancing, is playing recovery roulette. As the fear from the latest crisis in your life subsides, your resolve to quit may begin

to erode. Availability, the desire to fit in, wanting to have fun, or attempts to avoid feeling shame or punished, can contribute to giving in to cravings or abandoning your resolve to quit.

At that vulnerable slice of time, you may be questioning why you decided to quit in the first place. You may compare yourself to your companions and think (perhaps, correctly) that they use as much as you did. You may be telling yourself that sobriety is not worth it, since you still have negative consequences and you have feelings that you don't know what to do with. Your relationships may still be strained. At the moment that the joint/blunt/pipe is being passed around in front of your face, getting high can seem like the best choice. Thinking that you can continue to use willpower to keep from smoking pot, when it is in your face, is continuing to chase an illusion of control. "High risk" situations are exactly that--situations that put you at high risk of relapse.

Most high risk situations can be avoided in early recovery. Don't hang out with friends that get high. Instead, go to places where you can meet and get to know people who are not using. AA/NA is a good place to start. Build a new friendship network and support system of people who actively encourage your sobriety. Many people in early recovery spend a lot of time with family members who have been urging them to get into recovery. Before very long, you have to find a group of sober friends.

As you are avoiding high risk situations and people, you should be working on broader lifestyle changes. Paying attention to your health can be part of that. Getting exercise on a daily basis, getting to bed at a reasonable time to get enough sleep and be awake during the day, identifying problems in your life that need to be solved and actively working toward solutions rather than empty worrying are examples of simple lifestyle changes that can assist you in your recovery efforts.

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Addiction lifestyles are strongly associated with relapse. Recovery lifestyles increase the probability of continued recovery.



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