

WEIGHING DECISIONS

When you weigh decisions, you are looking at the costs and benefits of whatever you are doing – whether it is deciding to go to school, deciding to get married, or deciding to quit smoking.

You may have been smoking up to now because you believe the benefits of cigarette smoking outweigh the costs of quitting.

Weighing decisions involves personal choices. What may be a benefit to you may be a cost to someone else. When weighing decisions, having mixed feelings is normal.

CONSEQUENCES

Consequences are the results of your smoking. They can be both negative and positive. For example, in the short-term, smoking may help you feel more alert in the morning, but in the long run it could affect your health.

Many people are able to quit smoking on their own, and when they are asked about what made them change, they often say that they just “thought about it.” People often do things as a result of the decisions they make. They evaluate the consequences of smoking (decisional balance) before making the final decision to change.

This is exactly what you can do. Think of a weight scale with the costs (negatives) of smoking on one side, and the benefits (positives) on the other side. If the costs and benefits are pretty equal, there is nothing compelling you to change. If you keep adding weights to either side of the scale, an imbalance will occur. To change, you need to tip the scale. You need to personally evaluate your cigarette smoking so the negatives of smoking outweigh the positives.

This process is called decisional balancing. We do it all the time: weighing the pros and cons of change. For example, people weigh the pros and cons of making changes in their jobs and their relationships. Making decisions about whether to quit smoking or not, is the same as making decisions about other areas in your life.

THINKING ABOUT YOUR SMOKING

In thinking about your cigarette smoking, ask yourself: What do I stand to lose and gain by continuing to smoke? What role do cigarettes play in my life? At some point, you may have received real benefits from smoking – a sense that you “fit in” among friends who smoke, stress reduction, relaxation – However, since you are now reading this, you are reconsidering these benefits and focusing on the costs of your behavior.

