

Connections

The Newsletter of the Connections Program

A Partnership between the Health District of Northern Larimer County and the Larimer Center for Mental Health

The D's For Defense

Submitted by: Norma Pomerleau, M.A.

Stepping free from tobacco involves much more than just slapping on a nicotine patch or popping in some nicotine gum. While Nicotine Replacement Therapies (NRT's) such as these have been shown to be extremely beneficial in helping smokers (and chewers) deal with the biological aspect of the nicotine addiction, to successfully kick the habit for good, the psychological and social aspects of the addiction must be addressed as well. As a Quit Smoking Coach, I have found that helping smokers to develop a strong defensive strategy against urges to light up can be the best offense in the battle against Tobacco. Coincidentally, many of the tools that my clients have found to be effective in managing cravings start with the letter "D." This has led me to encourage my clients to "DO THE D'S FOR DEFENSE."

1. DEEP BREATHE. Breathe in and breathe out slowly, as if you were smoking a cigarette. A part of that "urge" to smoke is your body craving the delightful and relaxing feeling of a deep inhalation. When you do deep breathing, inhale deeply for a count of four, hold it for a count of four (as if you were taking a drag), and then exhale slowly through pursed lips for a count of four. Deep breathing will help you relax and make the craving dissipate.

2. DERAIL YOUR ATTENTION. Many folks find that it is effective to have a short word or phrase that they can use to "derail" their attention from smoking. One way to do this is to:

- A. Review your top 5 reasons for quitting tobacco and from that list come up with a single word or phrase that effectively sums them up. That word might be health, or freedom or even Loretta!
- B. This word, said aloud, becomes your "audible," your CUE to consciously MOVE your attention and your thoughts AWAY from smoking.

- C. Some folks find that a short affirmation, repeated silently during a deep breath, also works as an attention derailer.

3. DELAY – the urge will pass whether you smoke or not. "I can have a smoke any time that I want to... I just choose not to have THIS one." Most smokers falsely assume that each craving lasts a long time -- maybe 45 minutes or so; maybe forever. If you have not already done so, time yourself to learn the truth. Cravings come and go quickly. The average craving really only lasts a few minutes. No matter how strong the craving is, convince yourself that you can wait 5 - 10 minutes. To help those 5 - 10 minutes go by, practice the other D's.

4. DRINK WATER. Drink lots of water all day long, especially during a craving. Drinking water keeps you well hydrated, helps flush the toxins out of your system, and it will keep your hands and mouth busy, if that's something you miss about smoking. Some ex-smokers prefer to drink through a straw. **ADDED BONUS:** The act of going into another room to fill a glass with fresh, cool water serves as a great **DELAY** technique.

5. DISTRACT YOURSELF – DO SOMETHING ELSE. Distract yourself by getting up and making yourself active. Go for a fast walk. Go out and meet with a friend. If you choose to stay indoors, go into a different room. Grab a carrot stick and munch on it elsewhere. Put on some music. Open a book or browse through a magazine. Call up a friend. Pet your pooch. Many smokers have said that when they get an urge to smoke and then make the effort to change their surrounding environment, they do get distracted and actually forget that they wanted to smoke. Make your own list of "101 things to do instead of smoking."

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We encourage you to submit short articles (50-500 words) on therapeutic approaches, mental health topics, case studies, or therapeutic book/movie reviews, etc., & will publish them as space allows. We reserve the right to edit all submissions.

May-June 2010

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To view Connections Newsletter and the
Professional Bulletin Board online:
www.healthdistrict.org/connections

Connections is published 6 times/year. The purpose of *Connections* is to offer information on current therapy groups and services in the community; provide updates on services available through the Connections Program; and offer a place where information on community happenings of interest to mental health and human services providers can be shared.

Submissions are welcome. E-mail them to Emily Leetham at eleetham@healthdistrict.org by the following deadlines:

NEXT EDITION: July/August 2010
Article Deadline: June 15, 2010

Submissions printed in *Connections* do not necessarily reflect the views of the Connections Program. Our editorial staff do not check the credentials of individuals wishing to submit groups or other listings. If you have concerns regarding credentials or other issues, please contact the group leader or author of the article directly. Thank you.

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6. DISCUSS YOUR FEELINGS WITH SOMEONE. Pick up the phone and call a friend. Have a Quit Smoking Buddy that you can call whenever you feel that you need some support. Remember that you can call and speak to one of the Stop Smoking coaches at the Health District. We are here to help you throughout the process.

What's your Defensive Strategy? Do Your D's → Deep Breathe → Derail your Attention → Delay → Drink Water → Distract Yourself → Discuss it with Someone.

Norma Pomerleau, M.A. is a Tobacco Cessation Counselor at the Health District of Northern Larimer County. The Step Free from Tobacco program at the Health District helps adults to reclaim their natural freedom from tobacco, using free nicotine patches, lozenges or gum as appropriate and more than 30 proven quitting techniques and strategies. For more information, contact the Health District at 224-5209.



WELCOME New Connections Program Assistant

It is with great pleasure that we introduce Emily Leetham as our new Program Assistant. Emily started on March 17, 2010. She has replaced Carrie Husted who was with us for eight years. We wish Carrie the best in her future endeavors.

Emily comes to us from the Health District of Northern Larimer County's Community Impact Team. She holds a Bachelors of Science in Human Development and Family Studies from Colorado State University.

She enjoys working in the mental health field and brings much experience and talent to our team. Her background includes work with juveniles in the criminal justice system and in a residential setting. She most recently worked for the Community Mental Health and Substance Abuse Partnership.

She enjoys being active with her family and friends. Her motto: "Balance is the key to life!"

We are fortunate to have her on board!



Youth and Smoking

Schools Can Help Teach Our Youth to Live Tobacco Free

Because four out of every five persons who use tobacco begin before they become adults, tobacco-prevention activities should focus on school-age children and adolescents. Evidence suggests that school health programs can prevent tobacco use among youth. If your child's school doesn't have a prevention program, talk to administrators about starting one. Not sure how? Here are a few ideas.

- **Create Tobacco-Free Zones**

Research shows that tobacco-use prevention programs are most likely to be effective when schools develop and enforce a school policy on tobacco use that establishes environments that are tobacco-free at all times, including off-site school events.



- **Provide Tobacco Prevention Curriculum** Provide a sequential tobacco-use prevention curriculum during grades K–12, with intensive delivery in junior high or middle school, and with reinforcement in high school.



- **Include Everyone** Provide program-specific training for teachers. Involve parents, families, and the community in support of school based programs to prevent tobacco use.
- **Lend a Helping Hand** Provide support for tobacco-use cessation efforts among students and school staff who use tobacco.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Resources for the Community

Group Supervision

This is an ongoing group providing supervision for people who need hours for licensure. Space is limited. This group meets two time per month for an hour each time.

The cost is \$35.00 per session. The location is in Old Town, Fort Collins. There are two facilitators: Rachel Isenberg, LCSW, ACSW and Maggie Tibbitts, LCSW.

If you are interested in participating in this group, please call Rachel at (970) 490-6851 or Maggie at (970) 988-4173.

Resources for the Community

Suicide Prevention—Help is Available

With the recent rise in the number of suicides in Larimer County, it is important for the community to know that help is available. Connections, a service of the Health District and the Larimer Center for Mental Health, offers mental health and substance abuse resources and referrals. Last year, 132 people with suicidal thoughts came to us for help. When possible, we help people access low-cost counseling. We also offer therapy and support groups, care coordination and advocacy services. Phone and walk-in services are available weekdays, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m., at the Connections office in Old Town Fort Collins. Learn the warning signs for suicide and take action if someone you know is at risk. Information on suicide prevention is available locally from Connections (221-5551) and the Suicide Resource Center of Larimer County (635-6301). And if you or someone you know is experiencing a crisis, the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is available 24 hours at 1-800-273-TALK (8255).



Know the warning signs:

- Suicidal talk
- Obtaining the means to commit suicide i.e. buying a gun
- Social withdrawal
- Mood swings
- Preoccupation with death
- Hopelessness
- Increased alcohol or drug use
- Changes in eating and sleeping pattern
- Self-destructive or risky behavior
- Giving away one's belongings
- Saying goodbyes as if they won't see others again
- Changes in personality

• connections •

mental health & substance abuse resources

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If you wish to be removed from the *Connections* mailing list, your address is wrong, or you would like to receive the publication via email, contact Emily Leetham at eleetham@healthdistrict.org or call 970-494-4370.