



## Hypnotherapy – Tools To Kickstart A Smoke-free Lifestyle

I was ten, trying to fit in and was starting to become interested in boys. My best friend Clare was about a year older than me. She seemed to have a handle on how to impress the opposite sex.

### when the addiction began

I remember Clare and I taking my family dog Rosie for numerous walks. Clare would talk about lots of things. I would look up to her, she seemed to know so much, she taught me what swear words were and all sorts of other things. One day she pulled out a packet of cigarettes and asked me if I would like to try one. I remember at the time feeling really excited and at the same time very scared. I asked her what it was like. She said, “It’s okay, just try it and then you will see.” With innocent hands I reached over and pulled the slim cigarette out of its well-designed packet. I held the cigarette awkwardly. Clare reassured me that it wouldn’t be too harmful if I didn’t take it down and just puffed on it lightly. There I was at the beginning of a long journey that has been one of the biggest challenges of my life.

### habit and routine

Many years later I was sitting in my office. At this stage I was smoking up to 40 per day. I would wake up in the middle of the night to have a smoke and then would crawl back to bed, still needing a cigarette the next morning to wake me up and get me going for the day.

I found it hard to answer the phone without humming or coughing to clear my throat. I felt so trapped by my addiction. I started to notice that my gums and my mouth were not healthy and I had coughing fits throughout the day.

I knew that I needed to quit. At that time I was full of advice for others wanting to quit, but found it hard to work on myself.

### the plan

I decided to put together a plan. It took me about a year to finally action it, but I knew that if I didn’t do it I would lose my voice and, at worst, my life. My body was screaming at me to quit. I set up a quit date and decided that I would also go away for a holiday with my partner (who I am proud to say is now my husband). I suggested that if he was in control of the money, then I wouldn’t be able to buy any smokes. We decided that we would travel the North Island on a hot pools tour on his motorbike, which at the time, was our only form of transport. The good thing about travelling pillion is that you just can’t smoke when you’re on the open road going 100 kilometres per hour.

### my ‘quit day’

I recall the day when my husband and I were due to leave; we decided to spend the night in Levin where his parents owned a caravan. This would be our first stop up north. I recall sitting down to my last cigarette and looking at it. This was it. I was about to take a huge leap of faith.

### the moment of freedom

Nervously I lit the cigarette and it seemed like everything just slowed down. I thought ‘this is the last time I will light one of these things’. Then I began to talk to the smoke. I said, “You have been a big part of my life, but I just don’t need you any more, it’s time to say goodbye. You are my past, not my future. I deserve the best that life has to offer and that

can only happen without you. I am choosing freedom. I will never put another smoke in my mouth as long as I live. That is non-negotiable!" And with that I stubbed the butt out and said goodbye. Yes, I felt nervous, but I also felt proud and excited, all at the same time. I remember hopping on the motorbike and as we travelled towards Levin, I looked up at the stars. I took a deep breath and said, "I am free" and just smiled to myself. This was the first day of the rest of my life 'smoke-free!' I recall arriving at the campsite and settling into our sleeping bags, Graeme was getting upset with the mosquitoes and all I could do was lie there in the darkness grinning to myself, feeling really excited and proud of what I had done.

### how hypnotherapy helps

You may be wondering at this stage what this has to do with hypnotherapy. My job as a clinical hypnotherapist is to help people slow down and listen to that wise place, that inner genius within, that wants to help them to become smoke-free. That is exactly what I did when I quit. I entered a very focused state of mind where I tapped into my inner genius, into those ideas to achieve my goal of becoming smoke-free, and remaining smoke-free.

Every client I see is different and it is exciting to see them achieving their goal to become smoke-free. When I work with people, I like to explain **the three parts to cigarette addiction** –

- The physical urge for the nicotine.
- The way we use cigarettes to self-medicate emotions.
- The habits that we put in place to cater to the addiction.

As a hypnotherapist I have assisted thousands of people to quit smoking. It has become a passion of mine. With the right understanding and mental preparation, being smoke-free can become a reality. Everyone moves in and out of suggestibility states all the time. We are in charge of the choices that we make in our lives. There is a place within everyone, including you, that knows who you are and what you need to be able to create change. A good hypnotherapist can help you to engage that inner genius.

## tips on quitting

- Set a quit date.
- Work out your triggers and what you would like to replace them with.
- Get a support person you can call or visit when you need to.
- Write out a smoke-free contract to yourself, date it and sign it.
- Write a *Dear John* letter (goodbye letter) to the habit.
- Change your routines, start delaying some of the smokes.
- Make your living spaces smoke-free.
- Let others know how they can support you.
- On your quit date, get rid of your smokes.
- Use meditation, self-hypnosis or visit a hypnotherapist (they can make up a CD you can listen to at home to reinforce change).



### hypnotherapy sessions

In my hypnotherapy sessions we would:

- Discuss any triggers and prepare a quit plan.
- Go over some quitting tips.
- Learn tools to deal with stress.
- Learn about the three parts of addiction.
- Cover relapse prevention planning.

I use NLP and hypnotherapy to reinforce the changes that you want. The session is recorded onto CD to take away with you. ✨

**Meredith McCarthy** is a Wellington Clinical Hypnotherapist with over 15 years experience. She offers one-to-one sessions, smoke-free groups and retreats. For further information please visit the website: [www.meredithmccarthy.com](http://www.meredithmccarthy.com)  
For bookings, please contact Meredith, ph: (04) 577 1116, mobile: 027 699 3950 or email: [info@meredithmccarthy.com](mailto:info@meredithmccarthy.com)

