# Mental Health Awareness week 9-15 May 2022

The truth about smoking and stress

Many people mistakenly believe that smoking actually helps them cope with stress because smoking seems to relieve stress and anxiety.

Ask any smoker and they’ll say something like ‘smoking is the only thing that relaxes me’

And it’s true, having a cigarette does seem to have a calming effect. So, what’s going on?

1) smoking is an addiction. When a smoker wants a cigarette it’s because their body is experiencing unpleasant withdrawal symptoms. Smoking relieves the stress coming from the cravings

2) Those first couple of puffs on a cigarette involve breathing deeply. Deep breathing is relaxing.

3) Having a cigarette break, a bit of ‘down-time’, a bit of ‘me time’ is sometimes the only real break that people take during the day.

The truth is that smoking does not relieve stress and anxiety. Quitting smoking actually helps people feel more positive about life.

Don’t believe us, here’s what Shannon Williams a successful quitter with Smokefree City & Hackney has to say: “I used to smoke to calm my stress… Just a stupid thing because you know it really doesn’t do that but it’s very deceptive and you fool yourself… the smoke controls you. You don’t want it in your heart, but your brain tells you to do it. I would feel happy for a few minutes after I had a cigarette but then I would just feel upset… I feel so much more in control of my life now that I don’t smoke.”

This short animation shows how smoking affects stress levels: [Smoking and your wellbeing](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GHZXsvrL270)

**For support to quit contact Smokefree City & Hackney 0800 046 9946 or visit** [**www.smokefreecityandhackney.org**](http://www.smokefreecityandhackney.org)