



Consumers Helping Others Improve Their Condition by Ending Smoking

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Can Vaping be used as a Treatment for Quitting Smoking? by Deidre Stenard

Smokers have used vaping to quit as long as vaping has been around. There are several potential benefits of vaping compared to the risk of smoking tobacco cigarettes:



There may be harm reduction in an e-cigarette over a regular tobacco cigarette because there are a lot less chemicals and toxins in the e-cigarette making the e-cigarette an alternative to smoking.

The e-cigarette can be safer than a tobacco cigarette for the lungs and heart, The Carbon Monoxide in smoked tobacco cigarettes takes the place of oxygen in the blood, causing the heart to strain in getting the remaining oxygen around the body to where it is needed. Carbon Monoxide raises the risk of heart attack. Using the e-cigarette as a tool for treating smoking addiction makes a lot of sense. It is harm reduction.

There are 7000 chemicals in cigarette smoke, including 70 that cause cancer. One of those chemicals is Polonium, Continue on page 6



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Expungement for Cannabis Charges by Trish Dooley Budsock

You may be wondering, why in the world would CHOICES be writing an article about cannabis? Well, back in late 2021, we began putting together a brief presentation on cannabis, given the fact that it is now a legal substance in New Jersey, and impacts our audience in various ways. This section of the presentation was developed following a full-day presentation given for the team by Dr. Jill Williams, CHOICES' founder and medical director. The information provided during this presentation was extremely enlightening and relevant to some of the things that we do at CHOICES. Continued on page 4

## Tobacco Harm Reduction

By Azeem Sitabkhan



First of all, what is ‘Harm Reduction’? The concept of harm reduction, first used in relation to illicit drugs, refers to policies and programs which aim to reduce the harm from addictive behaviors for individuals, and the community and society at large. The concept of tobacco harm reduction (THR) refers to reducing the levels of disease and death from tobacco use among smokers. While eliminating exposure to tobacco altogether would result in the greatest reduction of harm, THR recognizes that this is not always achievable, and users may not always be able or willing to quit. So THR advocates that users switch to using nicotine in its less harmful forms.

People smoke primarily because they are addicted to nicotine, but it is the other toxins in tobacco smoke that cause most of the harm. Nicotine can be obtained from a range of products, which vary in their level of harm and addictiveness. This “spectrum of harm” ranges from conventional smoked tobacco (cigarettes) at the top, to medicinal nicotine (nicotine replacement therapy, or NRT) at the bottom.

More recently there has been considerable research around the potential role of e-cigarettes, and some evidence that they might help individual smokers quit cigarettes. However, they are not harm free and there are concerns

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## Smoking Privileges in the Navy

By Terrance Horyn

Tobacco addiction in the Navy includes a range of ages from teenage recruits to mature sailors.

During basic training I remember our “Company” (like a platoon) had a separate room to accommodate smokers. On a ‘smoke break’ my fellow recruits gathered into this recreation space attempting to seek solace by listening to a variety of music on the stereo, enjoying satisfying conversation, and releasing toxic feelings into the barracks’ surrounding vibe.

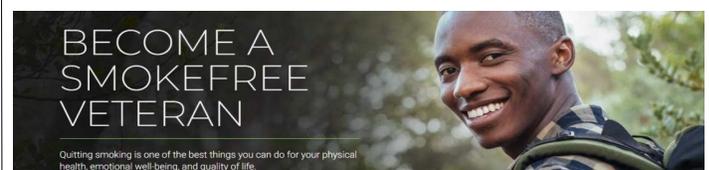
During the 1970s, which is the time period considered here, smoking was not looked upon as it is today. Now, after scientific research providing relevant data, our insight has revealed the deadly effects that the once accepted social lubricant can have on the health of all who have served.

Smoking can be very dangerous aboard ships if precautions are not taken. This is because of the possibility of igniting the ordinance (explosives) or interacting with the ship’s fuel.

The primary basis for keeping all the restrictions on tobacco utilization onboard ship is because of the terror a consuming fire can bring when isolated on a vast ocean and knowing the possibility that the damage can descend your vessel into the abyss.

Of course, if your ship is engaged in a fleet exercise, help is nearby. Nonetheless, exploiting the Navy’s protocol on tobacco use and disregarding the dominion established for safety could cost lives.

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## FDA Proposes Ban on Menthol Cigarettes

By Lisa Evans



[https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/press-releases/2022\\_04\\_28\\_fda-menthol-announcement](https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/press-releases/2022_04_28_fda-menthol-announcement)

Menthol cigarettes were first introduced in the 1920s and were advertised as the best cigarette to smoke when you have a sore throat. The perception of menthol being “healthy” continued until the 1950s when studies linked cigarette smoking to cancer. Almost one hundred years later, on April 28, 2022, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) proposed a ban on menthol cigarettes. Menthol masks cigarettes’ harshness, and scientific evidence supports menthol cigarettes as more addictive. While menthol and non-menthol smokers have the same risk and health outcomes related to smoking, menthol smokers have more prolonged exposure to the toxins and chemicals in cigarettes.

"Banning menthol—the last allowable flavor—in cigarettes and banning all flavors in cigars will help save lives, particularly among those disproportionately affected by these toxic products. With these actions, the FDA will help significantly reduce youth initiation, increase the chances of smoking cessation among current smokers, and address health disparities experienced by communities of color, low-income populations, and LGBTQ+ individuals, all of whom are far more likely to use these tobacco products," Acting Food and Drug Administration Commissioner Janet Woodcock, M.D., said in a statement.

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## ACT Your Way into a Better Way of Thinking

by Cleo Zifovski

Studies found that effective smoking cessation programs are essential for helping individuals quit smoking [1]. This is a huge responsibility to help people live longer, so it deserves attention. When combined with Nicotine Replacement Therapies (NRT) and medications, cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) has helped smokers cut down or quit via positive thinking and curbing cravings. Although, CBT-based treatments have been considered "best practice," CBT does not work for everyone [2].

Furthermore, smokers are currently taught to avoid situations that cause cravings, try to reduce or control their sensations, thoughts, and emotions, and engage in distracting activities that trigger smoking [2]. Despite the development of several smoking cessation behavioral interventions such as CBT that have demonstrated considerable effectiveness, many behavioral interventions still do not inspire or reach enough smokers who try to quit, indicating that a more accessible means of intervention may be needed [1].

Several studies have shown promising results from using Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) in managing psychological or behavioral health problems. ACT is drastically opposite to the standard behavioral treatment of avoiding, controlling, and distracting. "ACT uses a mindfulness-based approach to teach people to be more accepting of their unwanted thoughts and behavior. People are encouraged to commit to actions that are consistent with their values and to remain committed to these actions even in the presence of difficult cravings, thoughts, or emotions" [2]. To this degree, smokers are taught to accept their emotions and thoughts about wanting to

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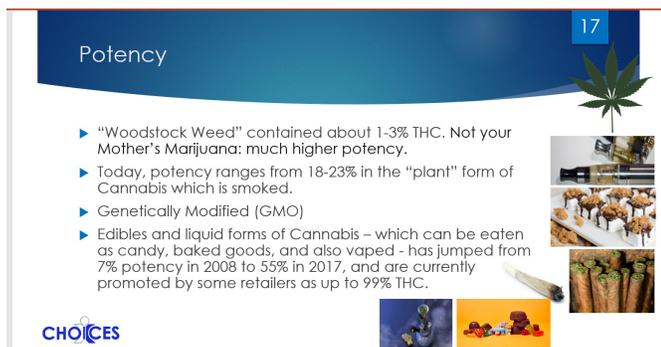
from page 1 Expungement

Over the next few months, we put together our own slides, which we then added to our usual tobacco presentation, and began delivering this information to the sites we visit. The information has been well received by both consumers and staff alike. Included below are a few screenshots from the PowerPoint presentation.

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### Potency

- ▶ "Woodstock Weed" contained about 1-3% THC. Not your Mother's Marijuana: much higher potency.
- ▶ Today, potency ranges from 18-23% in the "plant" form of Cannabis which is smoked.
- ▶ Genetically Modified (GMO)
- ▶ Edibles and liquid forms of Cannabis – which can be eaten as candy, baked goods, and also vaped - has jumped from 7% potency in 2008 to 55% in 2017, and are currently promoted by some retailers as up to 99% THC.

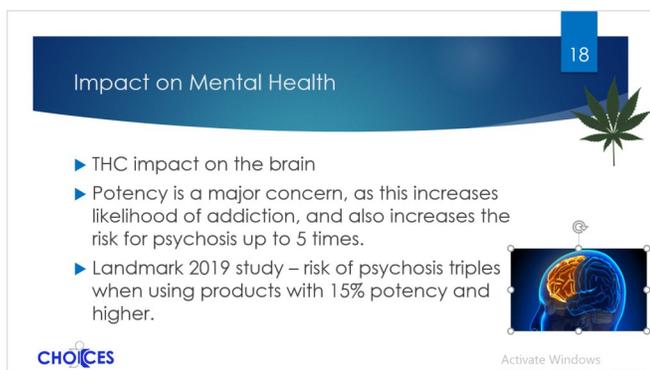


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### Impact on Mental Health

- ▶ THC impact on the brain
- ▶ Potency is a major concern, as this increases likelihood of addiction, and also increases the risk for psychosis up to 5 times.
- ▶ Landmark 2019 study – risk of psychosis triples when using products with 15% potency and higher.



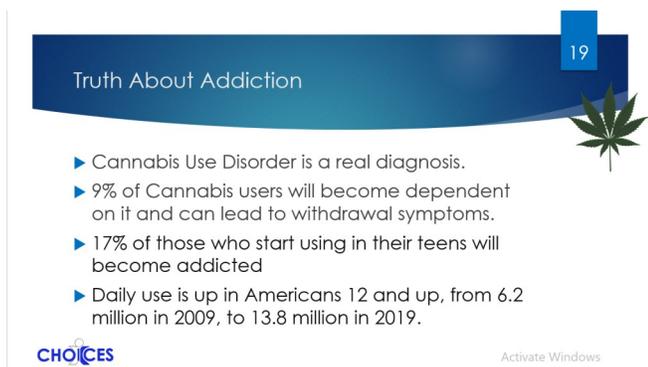
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Activate Windows  
Go to Settings to activate Windows.

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### Truth About Addiction

- ▶ Cannabis Use Disorder is a real diagnosis.
- ▶ 9% of Cannabis users will become dependent on it and can lead to withdrawal symptoms.
- ▶ 17% of those who start using in their teens will become addicted
- ▶ Daily use is up in Americans 12 and up, from 6.2 million in 2009, to 13.8 million in 2019.



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Activate Windows  
Go to Settings to activate Windows.

In this article, I will be referring to the substance as cannabis, because of the historical bias associated with the term marijuana – but for this article, these words are interchangeable.

Now that Cannabis is legal in NJ, one of the questions that has been raised multiple times, regards expungement. To expunge something means to erase, delete, cross out or destroy it. It is especially used in the context of law, in which it means to remove an arrest or conviction from a person's public criminal record. Many citizens of New Jersey are curious about how this works, so we wanted to provide that information to our readers. Some people we met with were under the impression that these charges would "magically" disappear from their record. Unfortunately, that is not the case!

The following information was taken from <https://www.njcourts.gov/marihashexpunge.html> and I would encourage readers to visit that site to fully research their particular case, but here are some highlights:

- The Marijuana Decriminalization Law, which took effect July 1, 2021, required the expungement of certain marijuana and hashish cases. As a result, the NJ Supreme Court has ordered that thousands of cases be expunged.
- You do not have to report this case on a job application, housing application, or college application. The case has been removed from the public record and cannot be used to keep you from school, housing, or most jobs.

**Now, you may be wondering, how can I confirm that my record has been expunged? This is what you need to know:**

- You can go to the court where your case was heard to confirm that your record was cleared and receive a certification.

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- Confirmation must be requested **in person**. You will need to bring identification. Call the court in advance to find out where and when to go.

### **What if I don't remember where my marijuana or hashish case was heard?**

Look at the paperwork from your marijuana or hashish case. If you cannot find any papers, you can still find where the case was heard.

- If your case was heard in Superior Court, start at the Superior Court courthouse in the county where you were arrested or charged. If you were an adult, go to the criminal division. If you were charged as a juvenile, go to the family division.
- If your case was heard in municipal court, start at the municipal court in the town where you were arrested or charged.
- If you do not remember which court handled your case, you can do one of these things:
  - Go to your local municipal court.
  - Go to the Superior Court court house in your county.
  - Go to the Superior Court Clerk's Office in Trenton.
- In all instances, call the court for instructions before you go. You will need to bring photo identification.
- Expungement information will be released to the defendant or the defendant's attorney only.

### **Should I get a lawyer?**

You are not required to get a lawyer. Still, the court system can be confusing. It is a good idea to get a lawyer if you choose to file a motion. If you cannot afford a lawyer, you can contact the legal services program in your county to see if you qualify for free legal services.

Legal Services of New Jersey maintains a directory of regional legal services offices. The NJ State Bar Association also maintains a list of county referral services that might be helpful.

### [Things to think about before representing yourself in court](https://www.njcourts.gov/forms/11218_things_to_think_about_eng.pdf?c=6Db)

([https://www.njcourts.gov/forms/11218\\_things\\_to\\_think\\_about\\_eng.pdf?c=6Db](https://www.njcourts.gov/forms/11218_things_to_think_about_eng.pdf?c=6Db))

To summarize, we want our readers to know that there is a wealth of information available and that this is just one way to advocate for yourself!

Please click here for more info:

<https://www.njcourts.gov/marihashexpunge.html>

From page 3 ACT Your Way

smoke and allow them to come and go without picking up a cigarette.

The takeaway message here is that emerging evidence suggests being more mindful and acknowledging one's cravings and withdrawal symptoms may help people stop smoking in the future. What it looks like is smokers accepting their cravings and withdrawal symptoms and developing skills for being with them rather than just dealing with them. In addition, identifying the values involved in quitting and developing a plan to stop smoking at the initial ACT intervention session is also very beneficial. Subsequent sessions could include reinforcing the strategy that was created, supporting participants in continued actions to quit, and repeatedly guiding them by those identified values.

1. Mak YW, Loke AY. The acceptance and commitment therapy for smoking cessation in the primary health care setting: a study protocol. *BMC Public Health*. 2015;15:105. Published 2015 Feb 7. doi:10.1186/s12889-015-1485-z

2. Can being mindful and accepting help you stop smoking? (n.d.). Home: KPWHRI. [https://www.kpwashingtonresearch.org/news-and-events/blog/2019/feb/Can\\_being\\_mindful\\_and\\_accepting\\_help\\_you\\_stop\\_smoking](https://www.kpwashingtonresearch.org/news-and-events/blog/2019/feb/Can_being_mindful_and_accepting_help_you_stop_smoking)

From page 2 Harm Reduction

around use among youths and dual use with new and conventional tobacco products. Continuing to smoke cigarettes alongside other tobacco or nicotine products would not lead to the same health benefits advocated by THR.

Although there is no single definition of harm reduction, it is generally acknowledged that it needs to reduce harm not only for the individual user but for the community and society in which they live. In tobacco harm reduction, therefore, it is necessary to consider the impacts on the whole population rather than just those who currently smoke. A THR product, like e-cigarettes, might enable some individual smokers to quit or reduce their risk of disease. But if it still increases the total population's level of harm, by introducing youths and other non smokers to the use of various products it cannot be considered as harm-reducing for society at large.

Although individual smokers who switch fully to less harmful products could reduce their health risks, that does not mean that the introduction of one or more newer products will lead to reduced harm at a population level.

Because of this, tobacco harm reduction has become controversial and, some feel, divisive in public health, in particular where the debate has focused on the potential role for other nicotine and tobacco products such as e-cigarettes.

Overall, quitting smoking entirely remains the best option both for individual smokers and from a public health perspective. But the debate will almost certainly continue.



From page 1 Can Vaping be Used

making cigarette smoke radioactive. A lot of the chemicals are created when the cigarette is lit, including Carbon Monoxide. There are a lot less toxic chemicals in an e-cigarette because the e-cigarette isn't lit. There are enumerable cancers and other diseases caused by tobacco smoke. This is because the 7000 chemicals travel all over the body through the blood stream causing cancers and disease. To name a few: Pancreatic cancer, Lung cancer, Head and Neck cancer, and Leukemia are all caused by tobacco smoke. The e-cigarette, on the other hand is estimated to contain only 1% of the toxins and carcinogens contained in tobacco smoke.

On October 12, 2021, the FDA (Food and Drug Administration) authorized the R.J. Reynolds Vapor Company to market and sell its Vuse Solo device with tobacco-flavored vaping liquid to adults. R.J. Reynolds Vapor Company submitted data that showed that these products would be in the interest of public health. The FDA conjointly denied marketing authorization for **10 flavored products** made by R.J. Reynolds Vapor Company and it has denied a multitude of flavored vaping products from other companies because of their failure to show that it would be in the interest of public health.

These decisions were made by the FDA because the Vuse Solo device will possibly benefit individuals and public health *by helping smokers quit*. The FDA decision is harm reduction due to the benefits of using the e-cigarette versus the harm caused by smoking tobacco cigarettes. The FDA decision is important because it implies that treatment professionals may be able to use the e-cigarette in the future to help people stop smoking.

Harvard Health Publishing, October 28, 2021, "Can Vaping Help You Quit Smoking?" by Robert H. Shmerling, M.D.



# Creatively Inclined

CHOICES is proud of our peers who are creatively inclined in the arts, poetry, and writing. Are you an artist, poet, or writer and want to see your work in print? We would love to share your artwork, poem, or story! Please contact us via email at [dooleypc@rutgers.edu](mailto:dooleypc@rutgers.edu).



Hand made wreath by Lisa Evans, a CHOICES Consumer Tobacco Advocate.

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Also, we may find that the several week-long fire prevention classes which are offered and encouraged to attend will enlighten your interest and present you with a new perspective of how to control tobacco abuse throughout the Navy.

With conscientious mariners populating the ranks, onboard mishaps can be significantly reduced, and life and property can be saved. This is an endeavor I'm sure the Department of the Navy will appreciate.

**L.O.L! L.O.L! L.O.L!**

by Terrance H

1. Why do seagulls fly over the sea?

2. How did Dracula get to America?

3. What do you call a wife of a hippie?

See answers below

Continued from page 3 FDA Moves to Ban Sales

Public health experts say the proposal could save hundreds of thousands of lives.

The ban is expected to take at least a year to go into effect. Legal challenges by tobacco companies are expected. It is important to note that the prohibition is for the manufacturing, distributing, and selling menthol cigarettes and all flavored cigars. The FDA is not targeting individual smokers, and no rules or penalties will affect cigarette smokers.

F.D.A. Moves to Ban Sales of Menthol Cigarettes By Christina Jewett, April 28, 2022, New York Times

### L.O.L! Answers

All jokes are either original by author or found in A Prairie Home Companion Pretty Good Joke Book 6th Edition

1. Because if they flew over the bay, they would be bagels.
2. Via a blood vessel.
3. Mississippi!



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**The CHOICES team will come to you!** The **CHOICES** team of peer advocates will visit your group or program in New Jersey and provide mental health consumers with education about the consequences of smoking and tobacco products along with information regarding treatment resources available to make quitting easier. Email us [dooleypc@rutgers.edu](mailto:dooleypc@rutgers.edu) to set up date.



*CHOICES is a partnership between Rutgers-RWJMS Division of Addiction Psychiatry, the Mental Health Association of New Jersey (MHANJ) and the NJ Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services and funded by the NJ Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services .*