

# Urge Surfing



Cravings are a normal part of quitting. This is your brain asking for nicotine to feel good or even normal. There are many ways to cope with cravings, such as distraction.

Urge surfing is another way to cope, in fact, this strategy asks us to focus on the craving rather than avoid it. By doing this we can see that the craving comes like a wave, starting off small like a little bump, but then it starts to develop momentum and gets stronger. We tend to focus on this part and tell ourselves it's too hard to cope. However, if we watch it to the end, we can see the craving will crash (and end) and then it goes away.



We cannot get rid of cravings, although some medications do help with this (such as nicotine replacement therapy). So instead, we learn to cope with them.

Urge Surfing asks us to ride that wave, like you would if you were a surfer riding a wave. If you accept that urges and cravings are a normal part of quitting, then you can use your breath and your attention to ride the wave.

**This asks us to be mindful of the process and engage with the wave, rather than trying to run from it.**



# Practice Urge Surfing

## Prepare yourself before you start

When you urge surf, you may experience thoughts or feelings that might be uncomfortable for you. You will not be avoiding these experiences, instead you will sit with them and engage with them.

This can be very uncomfortable. Be kind to yourself if this is hard for you! It's hard for everyone.

To start, maybe choose a situation that doesn't trigger a strong craving. This will allow you to practice the strategy before tackling the stronger cravings.

1



Close your eyes.  
Focus your attention  
for a few minutes  
on your breathing.

2



Picture the  
challenging situation  
where you have  
the urge to vape.

3



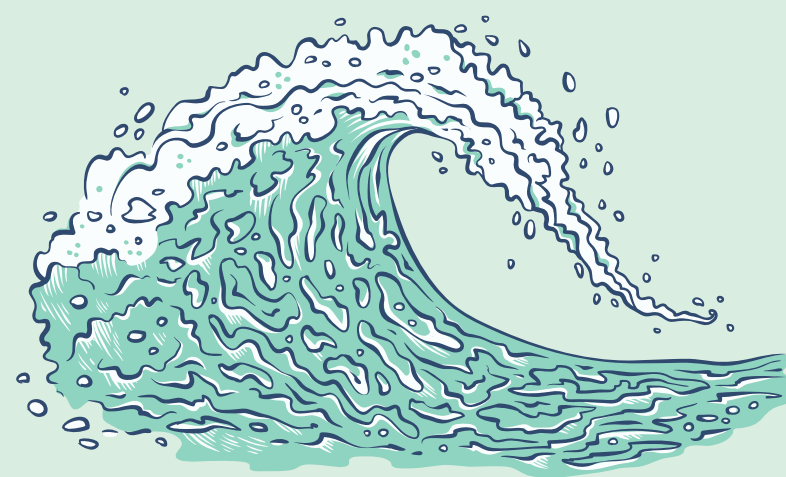
If cravings or  
urges occur, just  
observe them.

4



Notice the thoughts,  
emotions, or  
physical situations  
that come... and go.

5



Notice how the cravings and urges are like waves: they rise, they crest, they fall. Stay with the experience and observe the waves. Even though you are not reacting in this moment, the cravings and urges fall; they subside. They may rise again and subside again. You are like the surfer riding a wave. Try to enjoy the freedom of observing while not needing to react.

6



As you think of your experience of cravings and urges, you may notice that some are more intense than others. Some may feel like a little ripple while others feel like a tidal wave.

7



Notice that you can be present and not react. That you can experience cravings and urges and not react.

8



Now, let go of the imagined scenario and return your attention to your breathing.

9



Open your eyes if they were closed, and bring your attention back into the room.

Take some time to think about what that experience was like. Write it down.

**Urge surfing is effective but it's not easy to use. The more you practice, the easier it will get to do this exercise. So keep practicing!**

Adapted from Center for Motivation & Change: [bit.ly/3SMjYyN](https://bit.ly/3SMjYyN)

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