

TRIED & TESTED

SMOKING CURE

Can tapping your chakras really help you ditch the cigarettes? Alison Taylor finds out...

I can't say no, that's my problem. And I'm feeling quite angry about that now, having had two Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT) appointments to help me to give up smoking. But let's start at the beginning, as EFT is all about getting to the root of the problem. I'm 30 and I didn't start smoking until I was around 25. I say around because I can't actually remember when – or why – I started. The funny thing is that people assume I've smoked for ages, some even say I 'suit smoking'. I don't indulge that much – during the week I usually have no more than two cigarettes per day. But at weekends I binge smoke (it's a natural accompaniment to the binge drinking). My best friend and neighbour, Tamsin, is my main smoking buddy.

In the past, I've made several half-baked attempts to give up, but this time I'm committed. There are two reasons: the smoking ban has rendered my hobby far less enjoyable, plus I have a permanent cough. So I head to the Hale Clinic for a two-hour EFT session with Sandra Nathan. EFT is a form of hypnotherapy. One of the new breed of power therapies, it's designed to deal with unresolved emotional issues by confronting the root cause of the problem. I'm interested that it claims to get to the emotional root of why I smoke because I truly don't know why, which is frustrating. ►



Sandra describes EFT as 'acupuncture, without the needles'. It uses the same chakra points on the body as acupuncture, but instead of Sandra inserting needles, she gets me to tap my chakra points in a sequence. The chakra points are on the hand, face, collarbone, chest and armpit. While I tap, I have to repeat 'scripts' that Sandra devises for me. These scripts are based on the information I give her about my smoking habit. The first script is: 'Although I have this urge to smoke, I completely and utterly love and accept myself'. Next, she creates more specific scripts, such as one addressing the fact that I smoke in the evenings with my friends. We continue tapping and talking and I begin to feel a little lightheaded and physically tired. Sandra intermittently asks me to smell the bag of rolling tobacco I have in my handbag. The more tapping I do, the more the scent intensifies. This is apparently a good sign, and means we're getting closer to the heart of my emotional reasons for smoking – the fact that I enjoy the social bond and sense of belonging it gives me.

In the days that follow my EFT session, I don't smoke as much, although my efforts tail off as the week wears on and I find it difficult to resist smoking when out drinking. Sandra wants me to tap my chakra points when I get the urge to smoke, but I find this difficult to do in public for fear of looking a bit mad.

During my second session, Sandra delves deeper into my need to belong. We pinpoint my inability to say no when my friends, particularly Tamsin, ask me if I want a cigarette. I can't help smirking when Sandra begins our first round of tapping with the script: 'Although I am weak I completely and utterly love and accept myself'. This then develops into: 'Although I can't say no to Tamsin...' It becomes clear that smoking is symbolic of the bond Tamsin and I share. When we both helped each other through difficult times a few years ago, meeting up and having a cigarette was a shared coping mechanism.

The next step is visualisation. I have to imagine saying no to Tamsin. This is difficult because I never say no. I get a tight feeling in my chest – anxiety – then I feel cold. This, says Sandra, is the heart of my problem. I don't want to say no to people because I'm scared of being rejected. Sandra deduces that this stems back to when I was bullied at school. This makes sense.

Nowadays, it's not that I'm insecure about losing friends if I don't do the same things as them (ie smoke), it's more because I cherish my friendships so much, I relish these little rituals that bring us together.

I leave the session feeling drained and emotional, but also enlightened. I yawned throughout the second hour which was a little embarrassing but, apparently, yawning is a sign of release. Sandra offers a top-up session, but I feel confident that I now have the necessary tools to go it alone.

Another week on and I haven't given up altogether but I am smoking significantly less – I've cut my weekend consumption in half and I'm not smoking at all in the week. I've now decided it's enough for me to minimise my intake, rather than stop completely. Am I making excuses, backing out of my commitment to quit? I guess so – for now. But I'm very pleased that I'm smoking less, and don't feel that my decision to move the goalposts means EFT has failed. This is because I know that I now have some control over my smoking and I am convinced I will find a natural end to my habit in the near future – be it in the next few weeks or months. Giving up will not be an overnight thing for me and I'm OK with that. Now I tap when I get the urge and only allow myself a cigarette as a very

last resort. I realise that before, I would just say 'yes' automatically without actually thinking, 'Do I want one?' Now, I stop, think and tap. So far, so good. ■

A one-hour session with Sandra Nathan at The Hale Clinic costs £85. Enq (020) 7631 0156; haleclinic.com

3 MORE WAYS TO QUIT

1 The spa break
This sounds like our kind of quitting! The five-day package at Knock Castle in Scotland helps you through those first tricky days with a selection of massages, detoxifying pampering treatments and counselling. Enq roundelwoodhealthspa.co.uk

2 The 'electronic cigarette'
A battery-powered, tobacco-free 'cigarette' that gives a hit of nicotine without the tar. Be warned – it looks a bit silly. Enq electriccigarette.co.uk

3 The ear magnets
Two gold-plated magnets are placed over acupuncture points on the ear, which apparently activate neurotransmitters in the brain that reduce the desire to smoke. Enq azlifestyle.co.uk