



# Focus Group Report

*Findings of Four Focus Groups Regarding a Brochure  
Related to Smoking Cessation*

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## I. INTRODUCTION

### STUDY PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

The Agency for Healthcare Quality and Research (AHRQ) is developing a booklet to assist smokers to stop smoking. The booklet is written at a level as to be an effective information resource for smokers of all literacy levels. To aid the development of this booklet, focus groups were conducted to explore the perceptions, opinions, beliefs, and attitudes of smokers who want to quit smoking, smokers who have tried to quit and have since relapsed, and those who have recently quit smoking. The intended outcome of this research is to gauge reactions to the booklet's information and design, and discover areas where refinements and changes are needed to make the booklet more effective.

### METHODOLOGY

Four focus groups were conducted in two cities. Two groups were conducted in Baltimore, MD and two in Phoenix, AZ. Participants in all groups were either current smokers who wanted to quit, smokers who had recently quit smoking (within the past six months), or individuals who had quit smoking at some time but had since relapsed.

The groups in Baltimore consisted of General Market<sup>1</sup> participants and an English language version of the booklet was tested. The groups in Phoenix consisted of Hispanic participants and were conducted in Spanish. In this case, a Spanish language version of the booklet was tested. All participants met the following specifications:

- Mix of males and females
- Between the ages of 25 and 65
- High school education or less
- Mix of household income

Hispanic participants were recruited based on acculturation level, with the goal being to recruit respondents who were considered to have a moderate to high level of acculturation. Acculturation was determined based on their media habits (i.e., the use of Spanish and English media) and the extent to which they spoke English versus Spanish in the home. Copies of the screeners for both sets of groups can be found in the appendix to this document.

The groups were conducted using a standardized moderator's guide that was developed by Equals Three Communications. The groups were moderated by a

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<sup>1</sup> The term General Market implies that the groups were recruited without regard to the respondents' race and the racial and ethnic population of the group likely represented the population of that location.

professional, bi-lingual focus group moderator who moderated both the English and Spanish language groups.

**STATEMENT OF LIMITATIONS**

Focus groups seek to develop insight and direction rather than quantitatively precise measures. Due to the limited number of respondents and the recruitment methods, this research must be considered in a qualitative frame of reference. The reader is reminded that this research is intended to uncover a range of opinions on a topic. The data presented here cannot be projected to a universe of similar respondents.

The value of focus groups lies in their ability to provide observers with unfiltered comments from a segment of the target population and allow decision-makers to gain insight into beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions of their consumer base.

## II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This section of the report summarizes the findings from the focus groups. An in-depth analysis, complete with verbatim comments, can be found in Section III – Detailed Findings.

### *Quitting Smoking*

- Stress, addiction to nicotine, and being around other people who smoke were the most frequently cited reasons for why participants continued to smoke.
- All participants were aware of many of the products available to help smokers quit. Of these, respondents mentioned trying the nicotine patch and nicotine gum most often. For many these products did not work.
- Television commercials, doctors, the Internet, and magazines were frequently named as resources for information about quitting smoking. Many Hispanic respondents mentioned getting information from friends and family.

### *Reactions to the Contents of the Good News for Smokers Booklet*

- Most participants reacted positively to the booklet. They said that it was clear and easy to understand. However, many said the booklet lacked enough detail to be useful. They remarked that while the information was good it was nothing that they did not already know.
- Specifically, participants said they wanted more detailed information about the negative effects of smoking on the health of smokers and those around them (e.g., their children).
- Participants said the statements ‘the people you live with, especially your children, will be healthier’ and ‘you will have more money to spend on things other than cigarettes’ were particularly convincing in persuading people to stop smoking.
- Many participants said they did not agree with the advice on page five, *Do Things to Make Quitting Easier*, explaining that they did not understand how these would make quitting easier. They added that the text should explain how these tips would make quitting easier.
- Many respondents took issue with the recommendation that those who quit should ask others not to smoke around them. They explained their quitting should not affect those around them. Many said that they would feel uncomfortable asking others to stop smoking just because they had. This sentiment was particularly apparent in the Hispanic groups.

- Many participants said they would call the toll-free phone number on page six. There were different expectations for what they would get once they called the number. Some thought they would call to get more information while others said they would expect it to be a support line where they could talk to someone about quitting smoking.

*Reactions to the Design and Layout of the Booklet*

- Virtually all respondents said the booklet was clear and easy to understand. A few thought the look and feel of the booklet was too simplistic and talked down to the reader. They added that it looked more like it was aimed at young smokers in schools.
- Many participants found the title *Good News for Smokers* misleading. They said that based on the title they expected new information about quitting smoking to be in the booklet and were disappointed because they felt they already knew the information in the booklet.
- Most participants reacted positively to the ‘Quit Smoking’ character. They said they liked the fact it appeared on every page because the continuity reinforced quitting smoking.
- Many participants liked the use of graphics and pictures in the booklet. Some respondents, however, said that the pictures and graphics were too cartoon-like, which detracted from the serious nature of quitting smoking. They added that this made them feel like the booklet was aimed at young smokers only.
- A lot of participants said more vibrant colors should be used. They described the pink and gray colors in the booklet as dull and said they were not eye-catching.

*Recommendations for Refinements to the Booklet*

- Make the information in the booklet motivational as well as educational. Participants mentioned wanting more information and wanting to see images, such as the lung of a smoker, to motivate them to stop smoking
- The title implies that the information in the booklet is new. Find an alternative to the word ‘new’ that more accurately describes the content of this booklet.
- Provide an explanation as to why quitting ‘cold turkey’ is not an effective method of smoking cessation. Many participants were unaware that this did not work.
- Provide explanations about why doing things to make quitting easier (page 5) will benefit smokers. Most participants were unable to understand what effect doing the things listed on this page would have on their smoking habits.

### III. DETAILED FINDINGS

The following information is a detailed description of the results of four focus group sessions evaluating the *Good News for Smokers* booklet. Two of the focus groups were conducted with Hispanic participants and two were conducted with General Market participants. Participants fell into one of the following categories:

- Current cigarette smokers who want to quit smoking
- Smokers who have quit smoking at one point but have since relapsed and taken up smoking again
- Individuals who have recently quit smoking (within the past six months)

#### **Quitting Smoking**

Participants were led through an exercise to introduce the topic of smoking. The moderator asked participants what were some of the barriers to quitting smoking. The moderator then listed the responses on a flip chart.

Participants gave a variety of reasons for why it was difficult to stop smoking. Of these, stress, being addicted to nicotine, and the temptation of others smoking close by were the most frequently mentioned. Additional reasons were boredom, a fear of weight gain, the desire to smoke while consuming alcohol, needing something to do with one's hands, and the desire to smoke after a meal.

*“I just have tension, a little nervousness, some stress, and when I have a problem that I cannot talk about I have a cigarette, and it relaxes me.”*

*“The cravings for nicotine make it difficult to stop.”*

*“It depends on the environment in which one hangs out because there are many temptations; there are many stressors and there is never a lack of people ready to offer you a cigarette.”*

*“Boredom. If I'm doing something I can go hours without a cigarette but as soon as I stop I go for a cigarette. It's a habit.”*

*“The environment. If I go to a buddy's house to watch a fight, I try to stop smoking; they light up and have a few beers. The smoke is pouring around the room.”*

Flipchart Notes

What Makes it Difficult to Stop Smoking?	Stress (kids, financial) Boredom Habit Addiction to nicotine Withdrawal symptoms Withdrawals symptoms and cravings Potential weight gain Being around other smokers (especially significant others who smoke) Need something to do with hands Something to do after a meal
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All respondents were aware of aids available to help them quit smoking. They mentioned the nicotine patch, nicotine gum, the nicotine pill, nicotine water, and an inhaler. A few participants mentioned hypnosis while others said chewing either straws or pencils helped give them something to do with their hands and mouth instead of smoking. Nobody claimed to have heard of nicotine spray.

Of these aids, participants mentioned trying the patch and nicotine gun the most often. Most participants said that they did not like using either. They claimed that the patch made them feel nauseous and was expensive and said that the gum tasted terrible. Other aids that participants said they had tried included the nicotine inhaler, nicotine pills, and hypnosis.

*“The patch gave me messed-up dreams at night. Also, it made me nauseous, sick, and jittery.”*

*“I did, but it did not work for me. The patch, but the more I used it, the more I wanted to smoke.”*

*“I got the prescription [for the pill] but then found out how much it cost and said no that’s okay. It was over \$100 for a three-month supply.”*

*“[The inhaler] burned my throat. I tried it till it burned my throat. I think it was after a couple of times my throat was burned.”*

*“The gum is terrible, it’s liking biting into a cigarette.”*

Participants mentioned a lot of different places to get information about quitting smoking. Among these were television commercials (specifically for products aimed to help people quit), the Internet, doctors, and magazines. Among the Hispanic respondents, friends and family were popular sources of information. A few participants mentioned calling a hotline and being sent some information and brochures and some others mentioned taking a class.

*“On television, I’ve seen numbers you can call.”*

*“I got my information from the TV. It was an ad for the patch.”*

*“Internet, one site was the American Cancer web site.”*

*“The doctor, she told me about the patch and then prescribed the pill for me. I was going to get it until I found out how much it was.”*

*“I also talk to people at work and many of them had used the patch and it worked,”*

## **Good News for Smokers Booklet – Contents**

### *General Impressions*

Participants were each given a copy of the *Good News for Smokers* booklet. Before they had a chance to read the booklet, they were asked what they would expect to see in the booklet. Most participants said they expected to see some new alternatives to help smokers quit. Other participants thought the booklet might be advertising a product to help smokers quit.

*“Some alternative to quit smoking.”*

*“Something new to quit smoking.”*

*“I expect to see a product that does work to quit smoking.”*

*Different ways from what you see in TV other than the patch, the gum. I hope there’s something better inside the brochure.”*

After an initial reading of the booklet, participants were asked to rate the booklet on a scale of one to 10 – with one being the lowest rating and 10 being the highest. Participants gave the booklet a wide range of ratings. Those who gave it a high rating (8-10) said the booklet was useful and gave good information. Some commented that

they learned something by reading the booklet. However, many said that they already knew the information but the booklet served as a good reminder.

*“I rated it a 10. I thought it was excellent. It is true, everything they say in there is true.”*

*I rated it an eight. There was some good information there. The pills, I never knew about the inhaler, the spray. I do think they could have put more information, explained easier ways to quit.”*

*“I gave it a 10 mainly of the benefits to oneself, one’s health, one’s family.”*

*“I gave it an eight but there is nothing new. They did make an effort for someone who is starting fresh and new. Maybe to a young person it might bring out some factors that they haven’t thought about.”*

Those who gave the booklet a middle rating (5-7) said they had seen a lot of this information before and that there was not enough information in the booklet.

*“I would say a five. All the information inside the brochure is true; most of us already know it. I also expected to see people who quit, how they quit smoking.”*

*“I gave it a seven. It is what I’ve heard but it has everything in there about health and good things you could do. Like hang around other people quitting. It gives important reasons to stop. Things I’ve heard but haven’t done.”*

*“I gave it a five, it is just an average pamphlet.”*

There were many ratings of three and four. Those who gave the booklet these ratings said that the tone of the booklet talked down to them and appearance and writing in the booklet was juvenile. Other participants remarked that there was not enough detail in the booklet for it to be useful while others said the booklet gave them information they already knew and were expecting new information. Those who commented on the lack of detail in the booklet said that it would be of more use to a young smoker who was trying to quit for the first time. Some even said that it would be good for smokers in high school.

*“I gave it a three, the information is pretty generic. I thought it was going to have some breaking concept. I opened it up and got disappointed.”*

*“Three. I’m being talked to like I’m an idiot. If you were handing this to a 10- or 11-year-old who was trying to quit smoking it would be great. The content is good but it’s written for a kid. I’m a smoker not an idiot.”*

*“I only gave it a four. The only thing that stood out was the cover; it’s like saying, ‘oh, something great has come out. Something good exists.’ After that, there is nothing new inside. Because I know all of this already, and it’s too long and there is nothing new.”*

In terms of the usefulness of the booklet, respondents had varying opinions. Those who said it would be helpful claimed that it acted as a useful reminder to quit smoking and reminded them of the things they needed to do to quit. Information that participants said was specifically helpful included setting a date to quit and information about different aids to help people quit smoking. Participants who said that the booklet would not be useful remarked that the information was too basic and nothing they did not already know. Most participants said that the information in the booklet was realistic and believable.

*“I think it would be a good reminder for somebody that hasn’t thought of quitting.”*

*“Here there is something very important where it says to set a date and there’s a line.”*

*“It doesn’t go into detail. It tells you but it doesn’t explain anything.”*

*“It’s realistic, but it could contain more information.”*

As stated, many participants said that there was an insufficient level of detail in the booklet. Specifically, participants said they wanted more detail about the effects of smoking on their health and more detail about how the tips and advice contained in the booklet would help them. Even though they admitted that the information in the booklet was correct they explained that more detail would make the information more convincing and persuasive. Some participants said they would like more information about the types of medicines available to help people quit smoking.

*“When it said to try different methods, they could list it and tell you how you do it, list the side effects and the benefits and compare that to smoking.”*

*“Need more information on the effects of smoking.”*

*“You need more information about the lungs and that one can get cancer. They should show a lung, how it looks after smoking.”*

*“They could make a list of these statements as topics, then give you examples behind each one.”*

Many participants said that the booklet applied to them in as much as they were smokers. However, some reiterated that because they already knew the information and because they thought it was presented in a rather simplistic form, it did not apply to them directly.

*“You can relate to it. It seems to me we are reading yesterday’s news.”*

*“For me it applies to me. It makes you think about the money; one can run more, have more energy.”*

*“I think it is speaking to another person that lives in a place that doesn’t have information, that doesn’t go out, who has been enclosed and living in another world, someone who didn’t know this information. Not necessarily me because I’ve heard this a million times on the television or on the radio.”*

Responses varied when the respondents were asked whether they would use the booklet. Those who said they would use it remarked that it made a good reminder of what they need to do to quit smoking. Others said that because the information was not new to them, they would not use it. They added that they would prefer to seek out a resource that gave them new information.

*“It would be good to refresh your memory.”*

*“I wouldn’t use it. It’s nothing I don’t know already.”*

*Specific Remarks on Booklet*

Participants were asked to read the booklet one more time. As they read the booklet, they were asked to do the following:

- ✓ Put a **checkmark** by the information they like, or that you think is new and helpful
  - **Circle** anything they disagree with
  - ✕ Put an **X** by anything they think does not belong in the booklet
  - +
- Put a **plus sign** where they feel something is missing and needs to be added or where more explanation is needed

Most participants put a checkmark by the statements ‘the people you live with, especially your children, will be healthier’ and ‘you will have more money to spend on things other than cigarettes.’ They explained these were positive statements providing convincing reasons to stop smoking. Another part of the booklet that participants checkmarked included the tip that a combination of methods should be used to quit. The people who checked this agreed that quitting cold turkey does not work and a combination of methods allows smokers to tailor quitting in a way that suits them. A few participants checked the statement ‘after you quit, don’t smoke – not even a puff.’ They explained that this is the most important and difficult part of quitting.

*“I also put a checkmark where it says to use a combination of tactics because I think it’s a good idea, each person needs to find different tactics to help them quit.”*

*“After you quit don’t smoke or take a puff on page four. Nothing was new about it but that is the most important part of the puzzle.”*

*“On page two, more energy, breathe easier and it’s not new but it was real helpful. It lets you know what it will be like when you quit.”*

*“And don’t try cold turkey because it is impossible. A combination of tactics because you need to use several tactics to be successful.”*

*“Where it says the people you live with, especially the children, they will be healthier.”*

Most participants circled the advice on page five, *Do Things to Make Quitting Easier*, indicating they did not agree. Some participants indicated that they did not necessarily disagree with the information but needed a lot more detail to understand why these would be effective tips. Regarding the specific tips on this page, participants said they did not agree with ‘talk to a friend or go for a walk’ because many said that their friends smoke so it would only encourage them to have a cigarette. Many participants could not understand how taking a different path to work would help them quit smoking. A lot of participants disagreed with going to bed an hour earlier. Those who had quit smoking disagreed because they said quitting causes insomnia. They explained that if people who were trying to quit could not sleep they might be more prone to think about having a final cigarette before going to sleep or to relax them to help them sleep. Many participants did not understand why not drinking coffee would help them. However, they did agree that drinking alcohol was not a good idea explaining that smoking and drinking go well together. Most participants disagreed with ‘do something fun everyday.’ Some explained that their lives were too busy to do something fun *every day*. Others said that as far as they were concerned, smoking was something they considered fun.

*“On page five, the things they list for you to make it easier aren’t very helpful. They are kind of silly, like change the way you do things. What are you going to change? It doesn’t go into any detail.”*

*“On page five it says take a different route to go to work. And me, I don’t agree because I consider varying the route to go to work, it’s not the path that leads to quitting smoking. Because to quit smoking, it’s all about the intent, not the route.”*

*“Drink tea instead of coffee and lots of water. The alcohol part I can see because it leads to smoking but the other things I couldn’t see.”*

*“Do something fun every day. What does it mean? I start with work so that really helps. I do have fun sometimes in the evening. I don’t think you can do something fun everyday.”*

Components that participants felt did not belong in the booklet included, ‘tell your family and friends, and people you work with that you are going to quit. Ask them not to smoke around you.’ They explained they would be uncomfortable doing this and that it would be unfair to ask other people to stop smoking around them. A few added that there tends to be a dislike of smokers who proselytize not smoking. Again, many of the tips on page five of the booklet were given an X for the same reasons mentioned previously. Some participants believed that quitting ‘cold turkey’ was the most effective way to quit smoking and therefore did not think the statement ‘no more cold turkey’ belonged in the booklet.

*“I put them on page five. Do something fun, go to bed early, that’s not going to make any difference. Change the way you do things; most of us are set in our ways. I don’t think any of these belong.”*

*“I put an ‘X’ where it says don’t do it cold turkey because I think that the best way to quit is doing it cold turkey and not gradually.”*

Participants mentioned a few areas where additional information is needed. On page two, *Good Reasons for Quitting*, participants said they wanted more detail about how smoking harms the body and harms children and babies. They explained that this would make the reason more persuasive. They said they specifically wanted to know how smoking harms children and about the effects of smoking while pregnant. Some participants wanted to know why quitting ‘cold turkey’ was not an effective way to stop smoking.

*“I think they should have gone into more detail about the children being healthy. That’s the kind of thing that gets people to stop, their family and people they care about.”*

*“I put where it says don’t do cold turkey. We need more information.”*

Regarding the toll-free telephone number on page six, most participants said they would call it. Expectations for what they would hear if they called this number included additional, more detailed information on quitting smoking and having someone to talk to who would provide support in quitting smoking.

### **Look and Feel of the Booklet**

Participants were asked to provide feedback on the look and feel of the booklet. This included commenting on the design, layout, color scheme, and tone of the booklet.

Virtually all participants thought the booklet was easy to understand. They said the language was simple and the layout made the information very clear and easy to find.

*“Yes, really easy. Everything is big letters and like for a sixth grader.”*

*“I think it’s nice because it’s simple.”*

Regarding the title, *Good News for Smokers*, many participants said they found it misleading. They explained the title made them think that there would be new information in the booklet that they did not already know about quitting smoking.

Some participants remarked that the title *Good Information for Smokers* would be more accurate. However, many also said the title was attention-grabbing and made them want to read the booklet.

*“It’s good information but it’s not news.”*

*“Good news makes you think there is something miraculous in here.”*

*“I think when you look at the title, they are going to re-invent the wheel. I thought there was something in here I was going to run out and get to stop smoking tomorrow, but it’s basically the stuff we know.”*

Most participants reacted favorably to the ‘Quit Smoking’ character. Many said that they liked the fact the character on each page of the booklet reinforced quitting smoking. A few respondents said that the character made the booklet appear less serious than they would like and added that it gave the impression that the booklet was aimed at young people. Hispanic respondents remarked that “pare de fumar” was the more appropriate wording over ‘parar de fumar.’

*“They have it on every page, so it keeps your mind on it page to page. It’s like he’s trying to carry the message on each page.”*

*“It’s for younger people, like kids.”*

Participants had mixed reactions to the graphics and pictures used in the booklet. Some thought that they were appropriate for this booklet because they were simple and easy to understand. Others said the pictures were too cartoon-like and detracted from the seriousness of the booklet. They explained that the issue should be treated more seriously and as a result the graphics used should be more serious. They added that the cartoonish nature of the graphics made them think the booklet was targeted at young people.

*“I think they are too cartoony, they should be scarier. Show real lungs and stuff.”*

*“I think they make it look less serious.”*

*“I look at it and it looks juvenile to me. I don’t want to see all these cute pictures. I want cold hard facts in front of me.”*

Many participants said that more vibrant color needed to be used. Many found the use of gray and pink dull and said they did not stand out. However, many said that the use of red in the title and headings was effective and eye-catching.

*“They don’t catch your eye, they don’t stand out. The things that should really stand out should be vibrant and great and make you want to pay attention.”*

*“What I don’t like is the colors. The red and gray are too depressing.”*

*“If you are going to use the graphics put color in and brighten things up. It’s like it’s half-way there.”*

Many respondents liked the typeface used. They remarked that it was very clear and easy to read. In addition, the participants said that the size of the booklet was appropriate. Many commented that it was not too long and easy to get through in one sitting. A few respondents mentioned that they would prefer a tri-fold brochure to the current layout.

Participants said the booklet conveyed a helpful image and tone. They explained that it sounded caring and encouraging but added that it might be more effective if it had a more serious tone that graphically explained the harm cigarettes do to the body.

*“I think self-love, affirmation kind of thing, encouragement for those wanting to stop smoking.”*

*They are looking out for you and care about you. They are putting everything possible in the book to help you.”*

*“The sugar-coated version if you really want to get someone to stop smoking then show them what their lungs look like.”*

The locations where participants said they would expect to see the booklet included doctors’ offices, dentists’ offices, liquor stores, drug stores, gas stations, schools, and clinics.

As a final exercise, respondents were asked to work in small groups to come up with the top three things that could be done to improve the booklet and single most effective place to display the brochure. The following table shows their results.

Improvements to the booklet	Best place to display the booklet
Provide more detailed information	Schools
Use more vibrant colors	Secondary schools
Include testimonials of people who have stopped smoking	Schools
Include a phone number for a help line	Drug stores
Include pictures of unhealthy versus healthy lungs	Gas stations
Include more detailed information about the negatives of smoking	Grocery stores
Improve the color schemes	Hotel lobbies
Change the title	Include with Sunday papers
Make the graphics more appropriate for the target age groups	Doctors' offices
Change the title from 'Good News for Smokers' to 'Good Information for Smokers' or 'Good Ways to Stop Smoking'	

# **APPENDIX**

**General Market Screener**



Research

**Screener**

**EOUALS THREE**

COMMUNICATIONS

**Project:** Smoking Cessation Brochure Test (GM Recruit)  
**Client:** AHRQ  
**Date:** March 21, 2005

Group	Date	Time	Characteristics	Location
1	July 16, 2002	6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.	Current smokers, individuals who have recently quit, and relapsed smokers	Baltimore, MD
2	July 16, 2002	8:00 p.m. – 10:00 p.m.	Current smokers, individuals who have recently quit, and relapsed smokers	Baltimore, MD

**RECRUIT 12 TO SEAT 8 -10 respondents in the room**

**ASK TO SPEAK WITH A MALE/FEMALE IN THE HOUSEHOLD BETWEEN 25-65 YEARS**

Hello. My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I'm calling from \_\_\_\_\_, a local market research firm. We are conducting a study in the area about topics related to smoking. Let me assure you that this is not a sales call; we are simply interested in your opinions. If you are invited to attend one of the group discussions that are planned for this project you will be paid \$60 for your opinions. Would you be interested in participating in this study?

Yes ..... Continue  
 No..... Terminate

**Record Gender**      Male ( )      Female ( )

**RECRUIT MIXTURE OF MALES AND FEMALES FOR ALL GROUPS**

In the past year have you participated in a market research study or interview where you were paid for your time and for providing your opinions?

Yes ..... Terminate  
 No..... Continue

1. As I read the following categories of age ranges, please stop me when I reach the category that includes your age. **(READ AND RECORD)**

- Under 25 ..... Terminate
- 26 to 34 ..... Continue
- 35 to 44 ..... Continue
- 45 to 54 ..... Continue
- 55 to 64 ..... Continue
- 65 + ..... Terminate

**ALL RESPONDENTS MUST BE 25 YEARS OF AGE OR OLDER**

2. Do you, or does anybody in your household, work in any of the following industries? **(READ & RECORD)**

- Marketing or public relations ..... Terminate
- Advertising ..... Terminate
- Market research ..... Terminate
- Marketing ..... Terminate
- Healthcare ..... Terminate
- Health Insurance ..... Terminate
- No ..... Continue

3. Which of the following statements describes you the best:

- I currently smoke cigarettes and do not intend to quit ..... Terminate
- I currently smoke cigarettes but want to quit ..... Go to 3a
- I have recently quit smoking cigarettes (past six months)..... Go to 3a
- I do not smoke cigarettes ..... Terminate

3a. Have you tried to quit smoking in the past?

- Yes ..... Recruit 2 to 3 per group
- No ..... Continue

4. Which of the following ethnic categories best describes you?

- African American/Black ..... Continue
- Caucasian/White ..... Continue
- Hispanic ..... Terminate
- Asian ..... Continue
- Native American ..... Continue
- Other ..... Continue

**RECRUIT TWO-THREE MINORITIES PER GROUP**

5. Which of the following best describes your total annual household income?
- Less than \$20,000 ..... Continue
  - \$20,000 - \$34,000 ..... Continue
  - \$35,000 - \$49,000 ..... Continue
  - \$50,000 - \$74,000 ..... Continue
  - \$75,000 - \$99,000 ..... Continue
  - \$100,000 or more ..... Continue

**RECRUIT AS IT FALLS**

6. What is your education level?
- Less than high school ..... Continue
  - Some high school ..... Continue
  - High school/GED ..... Continue
  - Some college ..... Terminate
  - 4-year college graduate ..... Terminate
  - Master's/PhD (more than 4 years of college) ..... Terminate

**RECRUIT AT LEAST 5-7 INDIVIDUALS WITH HIGH SCHOOL OR LESS PER GROUP**

7. Finally, can you tell me about a television show that you have seen lately and enjoyed? What did you like about it?
- 
- 
- 
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**THIS QUESTION IS INTENDED TO ESTABLISH WHETHER THE RESPONDENT IS REASONABLY ARTICULATE AND WILLING TO CONVERSE. IF RESPONDENT HAS A THICK ACCENT, SERIOUS SPEECH IMPEDIMENT OR HAS TROUBLE COMMUNICATING (E.G., "SHUTS DOWN"), THANK & TERMINATE**

**INVITATION**

Thank you for answering my questions. I would like to tell you a little more about the discussion group now. The group takes place on (DAY, DATE) at (TIME) at our offices (GIVE ADDRESS). The group will consist of 8 other people, such as yourself, and a moderator. It will last approximately two hours and you will be talking about different topics related to smoking. You will be paid \$60 in cash for your time.

As I mentioned earlier, this is strictly a research project; no one will try to sell you anything. Will your schedule permit you to attend?

- ( ) Yes.....CONTINUE  
( ) No.....TERMINATE

So that we can start and end on time, please plan to arrive about 15 minutes early to pick up your nametag and to have some refreshments. We are counting on your participation, so please be sure to contact us as soon as possible if something arises and you find you can't attend. (GIVE PHONE NUMBER).

Before we hang up, let me get the correct spelling of your name, and your address and phone numbers so we can send you a confirmation letter with directions to our office and give you a reminder call the day of the group.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

HOME PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

WORK PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

**Thanks, again, for your time and we'll see you at the group!**

**RECRUITING INFORMATION**

Date recruited:\_\_\_\_ Recruiter Name:

Date of confirmation letter: \_\_\_\_\_

Confirmation call made: \_\_\_\_\_

Attended: Yes\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_

**Hispanic Screener**



Research

*Screener*

**EOUALS THREE**

COMMUNICATIONS

**Project:** Smoking Cessation Brochure Test (Hispanic Recruit)  
**Client:** AHRQ  
**Date:** March 21, 2005

Group	Date	Time	Characteristics	Location
1	July 17, 2002	6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.	Current smokers, individuals who have recently quit, and relapsed smokers	Phoenix, AZ
2	July 17, 2002	8:00 p.m. – 10:00 p.m.	Current smokers, individuals who have recently quit, and relapsed smokers	Phoenix, AZ

**RECRUIT 12 TO SEAT 8 -10 respondents in the room**

**ASK TO SPEAK WITH A MALE/FEMALE IN THE HOUSEHOLD BETWEEN 25-65 YEARS**

Hello. My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I'm calling from \_\_\_\_\_, a local market research firm. We are conducting a study in the area about topics related to smoking. Let me assure you that this is not a sales call; we are simply interested in your opinions. If you are invited to attend one of the group discussions that are planned for this project you will be paid \$50 for your opinions. Would you be interested in participating in this study?

Yes ..... Continue  
 No..... Terminate

**Record Gender**      Male ( )      Female ( )

**RECRUIT MIXTURE OF MALES AND FEMALES FOR ALL GROUPS**

In the past year have you participated in a market research study or interview where you were paid for your time and for providing your opinions?

Yes ..... Terminate  
 No..... Continue

1. Which of the following ethnic categories best describes you?

- Hispanic ..... Continue
- Caucasian/White ..... Terminate
- African American/Black ..... Terminate
- Asian ..... Terminate
- Native American ..... Terminate
- Other ..... Terminate

**ALL RESPONDENTS TO BE HISPANIC**

2. As I read the following categories of age ranges, please stop me when I reach the category that includes your age. **(READ AND RECORD)**

- Under 25 ..... Terminate
- 26 to 34 ..... Continue
- 35 to 44 ..... Continue
- 45 to 54 ..... Continue
- 55 to 64 ..... Continue
- 65 + ..... Terminate

**ALL RESPONDENTS MUST BE 25 YEARS OF AGE OR OLDER**

3. Do you, or does anybody in your household, work in any of the following industries? **(READ & RECORD)**

- Marketing or public relations ..... Terminate
- Advertising ..... Terminate
- Market research ..... Terminate
- Marketing ..... Terminate
- Healthcare ..... Terminate
- Health Insurance ..... Terminate
- No ..... Continue

4. Which of the following statements describes you the best:

- I currently smoke cigarettes and do not intend to quit ..... Terminate
- I currently smoke cigarettes but want to quit ..... Go to 4a
- I have recently quit smoking cigarettes (past six months)..... Go to 4a
- I do not smoke cigarette..... Terminate

4a. Have you tried to quit smoking in the past?

- Yes ..... Recruit 2 to 3 per group
- No..... Continue

5. In the home, which of the following best describes you:

- I speak Spanish most of the time..... Continue
- I speak both Spanish and English equally ..... Continue
- I speak English most of the time ..... Terminate

**RECRUIT A MIX**

6. When thinking about media (by that I mean television, radio, and magazines) that you use, which one best describes you?

- I get most of my news, information, and entertainment via Spanish-language media ..... Continue
- I get my news, information, and entertainment via both Spanish and English language media equally ..... Continue
- I get most of my news, information, and entertainment via English-language media ..... Terminate

**RECRUIT A MIX**

7. Which of the following best describes your total annual household income?

- Less than \$20,000 ..... Continue
- \$20,000 - \$34,000 ..... Continue
- \$35,000 - \$49,000 ..... Continue
- \$50,000 - \$74,000 ..... Continue
- \$75,000 - \$99,000 ..... Continue
- \$100,000 or more ..... Continue

**RECRUIT AS IT FALLS**

8. What is your education level?

- Less than high school ..... Continue
- Some high school ..... Continue
- High school/GED ..... Continue
- Some college ..... Terminate
- 4-year college graduate ..... Terminate
- Master's/PhD (more than 4 years of college) ..... Terminate

**RECRUIT AT LEAST 5-7 INDIVIDUALS WITH HIGH SCHOOL OR LESS PER GROUP**

9. Finally, can you tell me about a television show that you have seen lately and enjoyed? What did you like about it?

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**THIS QUESTION IS INTENDED TO ESTABLISH WHETHER THE RESPONDENT IS REASONABLY ARTICULATE AND WILLING TO CONVERSE. IF RESPONDENT HAS A THICK ACCENT, SERIOUS SPEECH IMPEDIMENT OR HAS TROUBLE COMMUNICATING (E.G., "SHUTS DOWN"), THANK & TERMINATE**

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- ( ) Yes..... CONTINUE  
( ) No..... TERMINATE

So that we can start and end on time, please plan to arrive about 15 minutes early to pick up your nametag and to have some refreshments. We are counting on your participation, so please be sure to contact us as soon as possible if something arises and you find you can't attend. (GIVE PHONE NUMBER).

Before we hang up, let me get the correct spelling of your name, and your address and phone numbers so we can send you a confirmation letter with directions to our office and give you a reminder call the day of the group.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

HOME PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

WORK PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

**Thanks, again, for your time and we'll see you at the group!**

**RECRUITING INFORMATION**

Date recruited: \_\_\_\_\_ Recruiter Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of confirmation letter: \_\_\_\_\_

Confirmation call made: \_\_\_\_\_

Attended: Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_



Focus Group

# MODERATOR'S GUIDE

EQUALS THREE

COMMUNICATIONS

**Project:** Smoking Cessation Booklet Test  
**Client:** Agency for Healthcare Research Quality  
**Date:** March 21, 2005

## OVERVIEW

DATE	TIME	CHARACTERISTICS	SITE
July 16, 2002	6:00 PM – 8:00 PM	Individuals who want to quit or have recently quit smoking	Baltimore, MD
July 16, 2002	8:00 PM – 10:00 PM	Individuals who want to quit or have recently quit smoking	Baltimore, MD
July 17, 2002	6:00 PM – 8:00 PM	Hispanic individuals who want to quit or have recently quit smoking	Phoenix, AZ
July 17, 2002	8:00 PM – 10:00 PM	Hispanic individuals who want to quit or have recently quit smoking	Phoenix, AZ

## STUDY PURPOSE

The goal of this research is to gather the perceptions, opinions, beliefs, and attitudes toward a low-literacy booklet designed to inform smokers on quitting smoking. The booklet will be tested among current smokers wanting to quit smoking and individuals who have recently quit smoking. The education of all participants will be high school or less.

## INTENDED OUTCOMES

The findings of this research will determine if this brochure would be effective in helping smokers quit smoking. It will also highlight changes that need to be made in order for this brochure to be more effective.

**REMINDERS FOR OBSERVERS**

1. Keep voices at whisper level, since the observation room is not truly "soundproof."
2. Not every moment of every group is productive. There are transition questions, bridges to new activities, and sometimes respondents go off on tangents as they talk.
3. The true value of a focus group is in the way it allows viewers to see and hear, firsthand, the perceptions, opinions, beliefs, and attitudes of respondents.
4. There will be a "false close" in which the moderator will speak with us to garner any additional questions to be asked before the group is dismissed.

**ROADMAP OF PLANNED ACTIVITIES**

Categories of Information to be Covered	Approx. Time Set Aside
Opening remarks and introductions	10 minutes
<b>Issue A:</b> Quitting Smoking	15 minutes
<b>Issue B:</b> Booklet Contents	35 minutes
<b>Issue C:</b> Look and Feel of Booklet	30 minutes
<b>Issue D:</b> Committee Exercise	10 minutes
TOTAL TIME AVAILABLE	120 minutes

**PLANNED INTERVENTIONS**

<b>Concept Statements</b>	<b>Product Sort</b>	<b>Document Test</b> ✓
<b>Private Writing</b>	<b>Taste Test</b>	<b>Video Review</b>
<b>Worksheets</b>	<b>Sleeves</b>	<b>Audio Review</b>

## DISCUSSION GUIDE

### INTRODUCTION

Hello. My name is Maritza Matheus and I'm the Moderator for today's 2-hour group discussion. Our purpose today is to...

#### Discuss smoking

We'll be doing two things:

1. Participating in a group discussion
2. Occasionally doing some private writing

Before we get started, I want to tell you that I do not work for a cigarette company and I don't work for a company that makes products to help people stop smoking.

I have nothing to sell today. This is a consumer opinion project. I'm a freelancer; I work for a research company based in Maryland and have been hired as an outside consultant.

Feel free to make negative or positive comments about any of the things we will be discussing today. This is a free-flowing discussion and there are no wrong answers.

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I want to thank you for contributing your time and your ideas today. I'm counting on you to make this valuable for you and me by saying exactly what you think.

### DISCLOSURES

1. Discussion Group Setting:  
Mention mikes, mirrors, observers, audiotaping.
2. The session is being taped so I can write an accurate report, not of "who said what," but "what got said."  
Your name will not be used in the report.

### PERMISSIONS

At any time you can excuse yourself to go to the restroom or to get more food or beverages. I ask that only one person should be up or out at a time.

### GUIDELINES

In order to make this session work as a research session, there are some guidelines to follow:

1. Please talk **one at a time** and in a voice at least **as loud as mine**.
2. **Avoid a side conversation** with your neighbors.

3. I need to hear from everyone in the course of the conversation and to the degree possible, let's have **equal "air time,"** so that everybody talks about the same amount -- nobody talks too much and nobody talks too little
4. There are no wrong answers -- but there are **different points of view.** Say what you believe, whether or not anyone else agrees with you.
5. We will observe the **no smoking rule** during this session and the **smoking laws** for this state.
6. **I may need to move** on to another area of discussion sooner than you are ready, and I may have to cut a conversation short in the interest of time. If I interrupt you, it is not personal; I just want to get everything on the agenda that is planned.

**SELF-INTROS**

Before we get started, I'd like to learn a little more about you. Let's go around the room and tell us:

- ▶ Your first name
- ▶ Where you live in the area
- ▶ One favorite free-time activity

**MODERATOR  
DISCLOSURE**

"To close out the circle, let me tell you a bit about myself --"  
[Moderator will be appropriate to the setting - 15 seconds]

Let's get started . . .

***Issue A***  
***(15 Minutes)***

***Quitting Smoking***

You were all invited here this evening because you plan on quitting smoking, have recently quit, or have tried to quit in the past.

1. What makes it difficult to stop smoking?

Probe: Others smoking around you, gaining weight, stress, the physical urge to smoke?

**MODERATOR TO LIST ON FLIP CHART**

2. What are some of the things that people can do to make it easier to quit smoking?

3. Have you heard of products designed to help people quit smoking? Which products have you heard of?

Probe: The pill, the patch, nicotine gum, nicotine water, nicotine spray, nicotine inhaler.

Probe: Have you ever tried any of these aids (moderator to list)?

Probe: What are your opinions of these aids to quitting smoking?

4. Where would/did you go to get information about quitting smoking?

Probe: What type of information were you looking for?

Probe: What did you think of the information you received?

**Issue B**  
(35 Minutes)

**Good News For Smokers Booklet – Contents**

**I am going to hand you each a booklet. Please don't open the booklet until I tell you.**

1. Based on the title, what do you expect to see in this booklet?

Now, for the next five to 10 minutes, I would like you to read the contents of the booklet and then we will talk about it afterwards.

While you're reading, I'd like you to keep in mind that we are going to be talking about the **information in the booklet, the wording, layout, and design**. So, if something stands out to you, feel free to make a note of it to bring up later in our discussion.

2. I want you to rate the booklet based on your overall impression. I'd like you to write on the front cover of the booklet, on a scale of 1-10, with 10 being "excellent" and 1 being "very poor," how you would rate the booklet.

Tell me about the rating you gave the booklet. What were your overall impressions of the booklet?

Probe: Did anything in particular strike you about the booklet? What?

3. How useful would this booklet be in helping someone quit smoking? Why do you think so?

Probe: What specific features or content make it useful; what takes away from its usefulness?

4. To what extent do you think the information/advice in this booklet is realistic?

Probe: Explain why you feel this way.

Probe: Does the advice in this booklet apply to you?

5. What are your thoughts on the level of detail in this booklet?

Probe: Is the information too specific/too general?

Probe: Does it have the information you would need to help you quit smoking?

Probe: What, if anything, is missing?

6. As you were reading, did you think this booklet was related to you, i.e., did you think, “this booklet is talking to me,” or as you read it, did you think it was talking to someone else?

Probe: Why?

7. Would you use this booklet?

Probe: Why/why not?

8. How would you describe this booklet to a friend?

Probe: If you had to tell someone the main message or theme from this booklet, what would it be?

Probe: Would you recommend this booklet to a friend?

Now I'd like you to read the booklet again. This time, as you read, I'd like you to do the following:

**MODERATOR WILL PLACE THE FOLLOWING  
INFORMATION ON A FLIP CHART FOR  
PARTICIPANTS TO VIEW**

- ✓ Put a **checkmark** by information that you like, or that is new or helpful to you
- O **Circle** anything that you disagree with
- X Put an **X** by anything that you think does not belong in the booklet

+ Put a **plus sign** where you feel something is missing and needs to be added or where more explanation is necessary

9. Let's talk about the notes and marks that you made in the booklet. What did you put a checkmark by?

Probe: Why did you mark that?

Probe: What was new information?

Probe: What information in the booklet was most useful to you?

10. What did you circle?

Probe: What was it about the information you circled that you disagree with?

11. What did you put an "X" by?

Probe: What was it about this information that made you think it did not belong?

12. Where did you put plus signs?

Probe: What did you think was missing?

Probe: What do you think needs to be added?

Probe: Overall, is there enough information in the booklet?

On page six of the booklet is a toll-free number people can call to get additional help. [**MODERATOR TO POINT NUMBER OUT**]

13. Would you call this number?

Probe: Why/why not?

14. What information would you ideally want to get if you called this number?

Probe: Would this be the information you would expect to get?

15. Would you recommend this brochure to a friend? Why/why not?

***Issue C***  
***(30 Minutes)***

***Good News for Smokers Booklet – Look and Feel***

I want to spend some time talking about the appearance and design of the booklet.

1. In general, is the booklet easy to understand? Why or why not?

Probe: Is all the information easy to find?

2. What are your thoughts on the title?

Probe: Having read the booklet, is this an appropriate title?

3. What are your thoughts about the “Quit Smoking” character?

Probe: Is this character appropriate for a booklet such as this? Why/why not?

4. In general, what do you think about the way they have used graphics and pictures in the booklet?

Probe: Are they appropriate for this booklet?

Probe: Do they make the booklet easier or more difficult to understand?

5. What are your thoughts on the colors used?

6. What do you think about the size of the typeface used?

Probe: Is the typeface used easy to read?

7. What type of image or feeling do you think the people who wrote this booklet are trying to get across?

Probe as needed: Does the way it is written and laid-out seem friendly, clinical, technical, high-tech? Explain why you believe this.

8. What do you think about the size of this booklet?

9. Where would you expect to be able to pick up this booklet?

Probe: Where would be the most effective place to display this booklet?

10. If you saw this booklet there, would you pick it up?

Probe: Why/why not?

Probe: What would you do with it? [read it then, read it later, pass it along to someone else, etc.]

**Initial Close**  
*(10 Minutes)*

**Committee Exercise**

I want to split you into two groups. In your groups, I want you to discuss the booklet we have looked at this evening. In that discussion, I want you to come up with the top three things you think could be done to improve this booklet.

As you are discussing the booklet consider the information presented, the level at which it is written, and the layout and design of the booklet.

I also want you to come up with the **one**, most effective, place that this booklet could be displayed so that people who need this information can get it.

**MODERATOR TO ASSIGN A SCRIBE FOR EACH GROUP**

I have to step out for a moment. I'll be back in a moment after I check on something. Please don't leave the room; I'll be right back.

Moderator will step outside in the corridor and meet with CLIENT SPOKESPERSON to collect any written questions the client wants asked of respondents.

**ASK ADDITIONAL Q'S HERE**

**CLOSE & ACKNOWLEDGMENT [1 Minute]**

Thanks for coming tonight and providing your opinions. The hostess outside has a "thank you" that you can spend!  
Goodnight and have a great day tomorrow.

**Good News for Smokes Booklet**

**Cover page**



**Page 1**



1

Page 2

## Good Reasons For Quitting

You will have more energy and breathe easier.



The people you live with, especially your children, will be healthier.

If you are pregnant, your baby will be healthier.

You will have more money to spend on things other than cigarettes.



My reasons for quitting: \_\_\_\_\_

2

Page 3

## There Has Never Been A Better Time To Quit

No more cold turkey.



A combination works.

3

Page 4

### Get Ready To Quit



Set a quit date.

My quit date: \_\_\_\_\_



Change the things around you.

- Get rid of all cigarettes in your home, car, and place of work.
- Do not let people smoke in your home.

After you quit, don't smoke—  
not even a puff!

4

Page 5

### Do Things To Make Quitting Easier

Talk to a friend or go for a walk.

Change the way that you do things.

Take a different path to work.



Go to bed an hour earlier.

Drink tea instead of coffee. Drink a lot of water and other drinks—but, not alcohol.



Do something fun every day.

5

Page 6

Get Help

Tell your family, friends, and people you work with that you are going to quit. Ask them not to smoke around you.

Talk to your doctor, nurse, or other health care worker. They can help you quit.



Meet with other people who are trying to quit, call a hotline, or talk to your doctor.

For help, call toll free: 1-800-XXX-XXXX

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Page 7

Get Medicine To Help You Quit



You can buy nicotine gum or the nicotine patch at a drug store.

Ask your doctor about other medicines that can help you.

- Nicotine nasal spray
- Nicotine inhaler
- Bupropion SR (pill)

7

Page 8

**You Can Quit**

Most people make 2 or 3 tries, or more, before they quit for good.

Quitting is hard, but—



8

Back cover



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
Public Health Service

June 2002