

Smokers who value the future more likely to quit

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Addiction researchers have known for many years that smokers are less likely than non-smokers to look to the future in planning their lives. New research has now shown that among smokers, those who have more of a future orientation are more likely to stop smoking.

Drs. Heather Brown and Jean Adams of Newcastle University (UK) tapped into eight years of data from a large Australian database to make this discovery.

The [Household Income](#) and Labour Dynamics of Australia (HILDA) survey collects data on economic and subjective well-being, work, and family dynamics every year from over 7,000 Australian households. Brown and Adams identified 1,817 participants who were [smokers](#) at the start of the survey (2001) and analysed their planning regarding their saving and spending to measure their future orientation. People whose spending and saving plans looked ahead by more than three months were categorized as having a longer time horizon, while those whose financial plans looked no more than a week ahead had a shorter time horizon. The researchers then looked at how many of those 2001 smokers had quit or tried to quit by 2008. Seventy-six percent of quitters were long-time-horizon planners, compared with 66% of those who continued to smoke.

Researchers in other fields have found similar associations: newly diagnosed diabetics who are future-focused are more likely to make healthy changes to their diet and [exercise habits](#), and [cocaine users](#) who discount the future are less likely subsequently to stop using the drug.

Says co-author Jean Adams, "It is possible that helping smokers to think about the [future](#) a bit more might be a useful way to help them quit."

More information: Brown H and Adams J. The role of time preference in smoking cessation: A longitudinal analysis of data from the Household Income and Labour Dynamics of Australia survey, 2001-08. *Addiction*, 107, [doi:10.1111/j.1360-0443.2012.03997.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1360-0443.2012.03997.x)

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