SHELTER IN PLACE: SUPPORTING SMOKERS DURING FORCED ABSTINENCE
Concise Practical Guide

Purpose:
This guide provides practical steps for supporting individuals who smoke when a group must shelter in place and smoking is not possible. The goal is to maintain group stability, reduce conflict, and help the smoker cope with stress and cravings.

SECTION 1: UNDERSTANDING THE ISSUE

When a smoker cannot smoke, they may experience irritability, restlessness, difficulty concentrating, and increased stress. These reactions are normal. The purpose of support is to keep the group functioning smoothly.

Key points:
Withdrawal symptoms come in waves.
Cravings peak for a few minutes, then fade.
Predictable coping tools reduce tension.
This is a behavioral management issue, not a moral one.

SECTION 2: SPECIFIC ITEMS THAT HELP

A. Mouth Engagement Items
Peppermint hard candies
Spearmint or wintergreen mints
Cinnamon hard candies
Sugar free chewing gum
Sunflower seeds if allowed
Flavored toothpicks if allowed

Purpose: These items occupy the mouth and provide strong sensory input.

B. Hand Engagement Items
Stress ball
Fidget cube
Fidget spinner
Worry stone
Rubber ring or silicone band
Short piece of paracord for knotting

Purpose: These items give the hands something repetitive and calming to do.

C. Comfort and Grounding Items
Warm blanket
Small stuffed animal
Soft fleece cloth
Simple tactile object such as wood rubber or fabric

Purpose: These items help regulate stress and agitation.

SECTION 3: EFFECTIVE ACTIVITIES

A. Purpose Driven Tasks
Keeping a written log or journal
Monitoring supplies
Manning a phone or radio if part of the plan
Tidying shared spaces
Assisting with simple inventory tasks

B. Quiet Engaging Activities
Crossword puzzles
Word searches
Sudoku
Simple card games
Doodling or sketching
Folding paper
Reading or listening to audio if available

C. Passive Distraction
Listening to music or ambient sound
Watching a video if allowed
Sitting quietly with a blanket or comfort item

SECTION 4: GROUP MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Normalize the situation by explaining that withdrawal can cause irritability and restlessness.
Provide space when needed by designating a quiet area.
Avoid confrontation during peak cravings by redirecting to a calming activity.
Maintain predictability with clear routines.

SECTION 5: SAMPLE SMOKER SUPPORT KIT

Mouth items:
Peppermint candies
Sugar free gum
Cinnamon mints

Hand items:
Stress ball
Fidget cube or spinner
Worry stone
Paracord segment

Comfort items:
Fleece cloth
Compact blanket

Activities:
Notebook
Pen or pencil
Deck of cards
Printed puzzle sheets

SECTION 6: QUICK REFERENCE CHECKLIST

Immediate support:
Provide candy or gum
Offer a fidget item
Allow access to a quiet space
Assign a simple task

Ongoing support:
Rotate activities
Encourage short movement breaks
Maintain patience
Keep routines predictable

Group considerations:
Explain withdrawal effects
Reduce noise and conflict triggers
Ensure the smoker feels included