

Ep #121: Practical Tools for Handling Triggers in the Moment



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With Your Host

Tami Ernst

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Welcome to the *Break Vape Podcast*. I am your host, Tami Ernst. If you are an overwhelmed mom struggling to quit vaping after trying everything in your power to quit, then you are in the right place mama. Each week on the show, we analyze stress vaping and addiction from a place of zero self-judgment so that you can build up the skills you need to ditch your vapes for good. Are you ready? Let's get to work.

Hey Mama, welcome back to Break Vape. I'm your host, Tami Ernst, and I'm so glad to have you with me today. If you're here, it means you've been doing the hard work, showing up for yourself, and making progress in your quit journey. And if you've been feeling a little stuck or overwhelmed at times, don't worry. We're about to dive into something that's going to help you get unstuck and keep moving forward.

Now, last week in episode 120, we spent some time talking about triggers. Those sneaky moments that can hit you out of nowhere and make you feel like you just need to vape. We broke down what triggers are, how to spot them, and why they happen. If you haven't listened to that episode yet, go ahead and check it out because it's the first step toward taking control of those cravings. But today's episode is all about what to do in the moment when a trigger strikes. I know those cravings can feel overwhelming, and sometimes it feels like they have all the power.

But here's the truth, Mama: you've got the power to change your response. You are in control even in the toughest moments. We're going to cover practical, go-to strategies to interrupt those cravings and ride the wave without reaching for your vape. And trust me, these tools will help you feel prepared and empowered when the next craving shows up. We'll talk about the pause strategy, substitution habits, and grounding techniques to keep you calm and in control.

So, grab a pen and paper or open up your notes app because you're going to want to have these strategies handy for when that next craving hits. Ready? Let's dive in and learn how to handle those triggers like the pro that you are.

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All right, Mama. Let's start with one of the most powerful tools in your trigger-fighting toolbox: the pause.

Now, I know this might sound simple, but don't underestimate the power of taking a pause before you respond to a craving. The truth is, most cravings come in quick bursts, and before you know it, you're reaching for your vape without even thinking about it. But what if you created a moment of space? Just enough time to notice the craving and choose a new response.

Here's how it works. The pause gives you a moment to regain control over that split-second decision. Instead of automatically reacting, you're giving yourself a chance to step back, breathe, and ask yourself, "Do I really need this right now?" or "Is there another way I can handle this feeling?"

Now, I'm not talking about some long, drawn-out process here. Just a quick, intentional pause to stop, breathe, and reset. It could be as simple as taking three deep breaths, or if you need more time, you can count to 10 slowly. This moment of awareness is everything because it shifts you from autopilot to a place of conscious choice. Even if you do choose to vape in that moment, at least you've made an intentional decision after considering the alternatives rather than operating on addiction autopilot.

Let's say you're feeling stressed out, the kids are fighting, and suddenly that old urge to vape hits you like a ton of bricks. If you immediately reach for your vape, it's a quick, easy way to get relief. But guess what? That relief doesn't last, and it only brings more problems. But if you can pause for just a few seconds, maybe even a minute, you can start to make a different decision. You might choose deep breathing instead, or maybe step outside for a quick walk or a moment of quiet to reset.

Here's a little exercise for you: next time you feel a craving, pause. Don't do anything for a moment. Just stop and breathe. Let the craving rise and fall like a wave instead of letting it control you. You'll be amazed at how quickly it passes when you give yourself a moment to just be with it. You don't need to be in a

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rush. The pause is your power. The more you practice this, the stronger you'll get at it.

You'll start to see that cravings don't have the hold on you that they used to. You're taking back control, one pause at a time. Reaching for your vape is a habit, so let's make this your new habit. Every time a craving hits, pause for a moment.

Okay, Mama, now that you understand the idea of the pause, let's talk about what to do when you've paused but you're still craving relief. Because let's be real, cravings don't disappear just because you've paused. They'll still be there, and we need healthy substitutes to fill that gap so we're not left empty-handed when the urge hits. When you vape, it isn't just the nicotine you're looking for. You use it to cope with emotions, manage stress, or fill a moment of boredom. So, let's talk about some simple substitutions that can help you break that habit and redirect your energy.

Let's start with the most basic but most powerful substitute: breathing. When the craving hits, your body is in fight-or-flight mode. Your mind is telling you to run to the vape for comfort. But deep breathing sends the message to your brain that you're safe, you're okay, and you don't need that quick fix.

Try this: inhale deeply for a count of four, hold for a second, and then exhale slowly for a count of four. Do this for about a minute. You'll be amazed at how quickly your body calms down. This is an instant reset, and you don't need anything but your lungs to do it.

Next up, another simple redirect is cold water. If you need to physically reset your body, grabbing a glass of cold water can work wonders. You know how when you're hot or tired and you get that refreshing drink, your body feels revived. The same thing happens with cravings. Water gives your mouth something to do, cools you down, and refreshes your body, taking the focus off the urge. Take a sip and see if you can feel the difference.

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If you're in a space where you can move, do it. I'm talking about the really simple stuff, like stretching, shaking out your hands, or walking around the room. Your body holds tension, and when you feel that craving coming on, releasing that energy through movement can redirect your focus. It's a simple but effective way to disrupt the craving, plus you get a little physical activity in there. It's a win-win.

Another trick: reach out to someone. Text a friend or send a message to an accountability buddy. Tell them what you're feeling, what's triggering the craving, and that you're working through it. It doesn't need to be a long conversation, just a quick message that lets you connect with someone else who's supporting you. It gets your mind off the craving and helps you stay accountable.

You've heard me say it before, but I'll say it again: positive affirmations work wonders. The way you talk to yourself makes a huge difference in how you feel. So, instead of hearing that old voice telling you to give in, try switching it up.

Say to yourself, "I am stronger than this craving." "I'm in control of my choices." "I don't need to vape to feel better." Your brain believes what you tell it, and affirmations give you a moment of empowerment when you need it most. Say it out loud, say it in your head. Whatever you do, just say it.

Now, for some of you, you might just want something to keep your hands and mouth busy. This is where crunchy snacks like carrots, apple slices, or pretzels, or sugar-free mints can come in handy. Something about that crunchy texture can keep your focus off the craving and give you a little satisfaction. So keep some snacks nearby that are healthy and easy to grab.

So here's the thing: cravings don't have to control you. You have so many substitution habits you can use to redirect your attention and energy. The goal is to replace the old habit of reaching for a vape with something healthier that makes you feel calm, empowered, and in control. When the craving hits, try out one of these substitutes. It might be deep breathing one time, water the next, or movement after that. The more you practice, the easier it'll become to automatically reach for a healthier choice.

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Remember, you're rewiring your brain. It's a process that takes time, but you've got this, Mama. If you try these and they don't work for you in creating the long-term change you're looking for, I have one more set of tools to share with you: grounding techniques.

When you're hit with a craving, it's easy to feel overwhelmed, like your brain is going 100 miles an hour. Maybe cold water isn't enough in some moments. You need something that runs deeper. Grounding techniques are all about helping you recenter and bring yourself back to the present moment. Instead of getting lost in the craving or feeling like you have to act on it, whether that's with your vape or with a replacement, grounding helps you regain control.

These techniques are simple, quick exercises that connect your body and mind to the present, breaking the pattern of craving by shifting your focus. They can help you slow your racing thoughts, bring you back to your body, and ground you in the reality that you don't need to vape to deal with stress. Grounding techniques help you break the cycle and create the long-term calm that reduces cravings over time, as well as relieving them in the moment.

Now, let's go over three grounding techniques you can try next time you feel a craving.

1. The 5-4-3-2-1 method. This one is quick, effective, and can be done anywhere. It's a way to get out of your head and back into your body by using your senses. Here's how it works.

Five things you can see: Look around and name five things you can see. It could be a chair, a plant, a piece of furniture—literally anything.

Four things you can touch: Feel something nearby, like the fabric of your clothes, the surface of your desk, or the floor beneath your feet.

Three things you can hear: Close your eyes for a second and notice the sounds around you. Maybe it's the hum of your fridge, birds outside, or the sound of traffic.

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Two things you can smell: Take a deep breath in. What do you smell? Maybe a candle, your shampoo, or fresh air.

One thing you can taste: Take a sip of water, or if you're eating something, focus on that taste.

By going through each sense, you help your brain shift away from the craving and reconnect with the present moment. It's like a mini-reset, and you can do it in just a minute or two.

2. Box breathing. Box breathing is a deep breathing technique that calms your nervous system and helps you regain control over your breath when cravings are high. Here's how you do it. Inhale for 4 seconds. Hold your breath for 4 seconds. Exhale for 4 seconds. Hold your breath again for 4 seconds. Repeat this cycle a few times, focusing on each breath as you go. This technique is amazing because it slows down your heart rate, lowers stress, and calms your body in a matter of moments. Whenever you feel triggered, just pause, breathe, and give your body the space it needs to reset.

3. Urge surfing is exactly what it sounds like: surfing the wave of the craving instead of fighting it. Instead of trying to push the craving away or suppress it, you acknowledge it and let it wash over you. Here's how it works. When a craving comes up, don't try to immediately get rid of it. Instead, lean into the sensation. Notice how it feels physically. Pay attention to the intensity of the craving—how strong it is. Where do you feel it in your body? Is it in your chest, your stomach, your hands? The key is not to react, just ride the wave of the craving without giving in. Notice how it rises, peaks, and eventually falls. Most cravings are short-lived. They peak and then dissipate, and when you allow yourself to ride it out, you can feel in control again.

Now, here's your challenge for the week. Pick one grounding technique to practice each day. Start with the 5-4-3-2-1 method when you first feel a craving. Use it to redirect your mind and calm your body. If you're feeling stressed, use box breathing to bring yourself back to a calm, centered state. And anytime a craving persists, try urge surfing. Sit with the feeling, notice it, and let it pass. At

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the end of the week, look back and try to remember how many cravings you were able to manage by using these techniques.

Keep practicing, and trust me, the more you use these tools, the easier it gets. They won't just be helpful for cravings; they'll help you manage stressful moments in your everyday life, too. And remember, Mama, you're in control. These techniques give you the power to handle cravings with confidence, and soon enough, you'll start to see them as just another part of your journey instead of something that controls you.

All right, Mama, let's wrap this up. We've covered some powerful tools today to help you handle cravings when they hit: the pause, substitution habits, and grounding techniques. These are your go-to strategies for staying in control when triggers strike. And remember, the more you practice, the easier it gets. You've got the tools; now it's about putting them into action. You are stronger than you think, and you've got this.

Next week in episode 122, we're going to dig even deeper and talk about how to prepare for triggers ahead of time. Because when you're ready for them, they're so much easier to handle. We'll walk through how to anticipate and plan for those moments before they catch you off guard. Until then, Mama, keep practicing, keep celebrating your progress, and I'll see you next week. Stay strong, stay calm, and keep showing up.

Thanks for tuning in today. If you like what was offered in today's show and want even more support, send an email to hello@BreakVapes.com to learn more about how my proven system can help you ditch your vapes for good. Bye, for now.