The aim of this study was to examine how depressive symptoms and cynical hostility are related to socioeconomic status (SES), smoking cessation, and obesity. In spring 1992, randomly selected subjects (N=3404) aged 25 to 64, from four areas in Finland participated in a survey. Smokers from the annual Finnish health behavior surveys between 1989 and 1994 were used as another data source (N=4483). Hostility and depression have been proposed as mediators between SES and poor health. It was found that cynical hostility was less prevalent among respondents in higher SES groups but that expression of anger was reported more often among higher SES groups. Divergent results with regard to socioeconomic status require more accurate hostility concepts. SES differences in smoking prevalence is a major cause for SES differences in health. No significant differences in motivation to quit smoking between smokers in different SES groups was found in this study. However, smokers in higher SES groups were more likely to believe that they were able to quit smoking. Negative emotions such as depression and anger play an important role in addiction to smoking. Here, a cognitive aspect of depression was also related to smoking cessation. Smokers of both genders with elevated depressive symptoms had lowered self-efficacy in smoking cessation but depressed female smokers were more willing to quit smoking than other female smokers. Cynical distrust was related to lower self-efficacy in cessation. In relation to weight, depressive symptoms had moderate association with obesity and central obesity. Higher cynical distrust scores were related to higher BMI except among well-educated females. However, cynical distrust scores were not related to weight gain or loss, but depressive symptoms predicted both weight gain and loss. Increasing SES differences in smoking and obesity are important issues in public health. Psychosocial factors, such as depression and hostility, are not easy targets for the diminishment of SES differences in obesity and smoking. However, knowledge about these psychosocial factors contributes to our understanding about how to change health related behaviors. Furthermore, by examining SES differences in psychosocial factors we can increase our understanding of how psychosocial environments can influence health.

Avainsanat-Nyckelord: depression, epidemiology, comorbidity, hostility, smoking cessation, socioeconomic factors, obesity, body mass index.