

## *Joel's Reinforcement Library*

**NEVER TAKE ANOTHER PUFF!**

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### *"What should I call myself?"*

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An online forum member recently posted a message asking whether or not she should call herself a non-smoker since she had in fact quit smoking. Basically the answer is yes, although for some people it can create a state of confusion. These are people who look at the term from a historical perspective before the term smoker and non-smoker had any real negative or positive connotations. Early on the term was often used to refer to a person who never smoked a day in his or her life. I guess the more accurate term for usage today for a person who never smoked should be a "never-smoker." But it is hard to undo commonly accepted terminology. Sometimes on official documentation, such as insurance forms, there may be a legal distinction between the terms smoker, ex-smoker and never smoker. But for personal and general purposes, the term non-smoker is fine as long as you understand that there is a difference between a non-smoker and a never-smoker.

Other terms that can apply to a person who used to smoke but no longer do are ex-smoker, reformed smoker, recovering smoker, or arrested smoker. Although, I think they should all be preceded by "very happy" as in "very happy ex-smoker" so the term is not interpreted with a tone of sadness or deprivation to the person who it is being said to.

It is crucial that each and every person who used to smoke but no longer does understands that there is a big difference between a never-smoker and an ex-smoker. Even though physically and mentally the never-smoker and ex-smoker may feel the same, even to the extent of having the exact same attitudes or outlook, there is one important physiological difference. The ex-smoker still has an addiction. It may now be asymptomatic but it exists nonetheless. This difference may only be apparent in one situation.

**A never-smoker could, if they really wanted to (which, for no logical reason should ever happen) take a nice deep drag on a cigarette and in all likelihood, they would cough, gag, and possibly even throw-up from such a stupid and impulsive act. They might feel crummy for a while and hopefully would never consider doing it again.**

**An ex-smoker could do the same irrational act, taking a drag, coughing, gag, and maybe even throwing-up. He or she could feel absolutely horrible, physiologically, maybe even worse than the never-smoker who did the exact same thing. He or she is likely to end up hating the experience and be very angry at himself or herself for having done so, but within minutes, or hours or maybe days, he or she will likely have an uncontrollable urge and smoke another. The second time he or she may get the same reactions, feel absolutely horrible and sick. Soon the person will find himself or herself smoking more nicotine and will either quickly or gradually return to his or her prior levels of daily nicotine intake or maybe even higher than before.**

**The difference lies in the fact that the first drag - even though unpleasant - creates additional uncontrollable urges in the ex-smoker as compared to likely fostering repulsion in the never-smoker. One drag of nicotine means relapse to an ex-smoker. The addiction that was lying dormant is now brought back to full force.**

**You are an ex-smoker now, or whatever term you are comfortable with. But at every level of your consciousness, always remember you are still and always will be a recovering nicotine addict. It is not necessarily a pleasant way to think of oneself, but if your recovery is to endure, it is important to retain a basic awareness that because of your underlying arrested dependency, you must always remain on guard. For as negative as it may feel and sound in having to identify yourself an ex-smoker, it is far superior to having to again say, "I am a smoker."**

**A smoker is a person who is currently under control of a drug that compels them to constantly administer dose after dose, puff after puff after puff, dozens or possibly even hundreds of times a day. And with that active drug - nicotine - he or she is also receiving over 40 carcinogens (cancer producing chemicals) and more than four thousand other chemicals, hundreds of them poisonous (arsenic, hydrogen cyanide, carbon monoxide, and formaldehyde, to name a few). The smoker is increasing his or her risks of some of the most debilitating and fatal diseases known to man. He or she smells perpetually bad and he or she is a social outcast while actively using his or her drug delivery system.**

**Yes, ex-smoker may not sound perfect, but active smoker is a much more horrible thing to have to admit to and experience. To keep your current status using whatever name you've chosen, and to never return to the deadly way of life of a smoker, just remember to NEVER TAKE ANOTHER PUFF!**

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## Joel

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