

Joel's Reinforcement Library

NEVER TAKE ANOTHER PUFF!

"I Feel 100% Better Since I Quit Smoking"

"Not smoking makes me feel great!" Often you will hear an ex-smoker excitedly express this statement when first quitting cigarettes. What is amazing is when you think back to the days when the very same smoker would blatantly proclaim that his smoking never caused him any difficulty. He functioned perfectly normal for someone his age. It is impossible for any smoker to accurately judge just how much impairment his smoking is causing. Not until he stops will he actually recognize the full degree of improvements possible by quitting smoking.

The statement that not smoking makes the ex-smoker feel great is very misleading. Not smoking doesn't make people feel great. It actually only makes them feel normal. If a person who never smoked a day in his life decides one morning not to have a cigarette, he will not feel any better or worse than the morning before. But if a person wakes up every day and smokes a cigarette, followed by 20, 40, 60 or more before going back to bed, he will feel the effects of nicotine dependence. He never feels normal. His life consists of a chronic withdrawal state, only alleviated by lighting one cigarette every 20 to 30 minutes.

While smoking at these intervals keeps the suffering of withdrawal down to a minimum, it does so at a cost. It impairs his breathing, circulation, elevates his carbon monoxide levels, wipes out his cilia, robs him of his strength and endurance, and greatly increases his risks of deadly diseases like cancer. All this will cost him hundreds of dollars a year, make him appear socially ostracized, and even viewed by family and friends as weak or unintelligent.

It is no wonder that once he quits smoking he feels so much better. But it is important for the ex-smoker to realize that he feels so much better because smoking made him feel so bad.

For once a smoker quits, he often forgets just how rotten life was as a smoker. He

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forgets the bad cigarettes, the cough, the aches and pains, the dirty looks, the inconveniences, and most importantly, the addiction. He forgets what life was truly like as a smoker. Unfortunately, he doesn't forget everything. One thought often remains, lingering for years and even decades -- the thought of the best cigarette he ever smoked.

It may be a cigarette he smoked 20 years earlier, but it is the one he remembers above all others. Without keeping an accurate perspective of what life was really like with cigarettes, the thought of the best cigarette often leads to an attempt to recapture the bliss by taking a puff. What follows is an unexpected and worse, an unwanted relapse to a full-fledge addiction.

To stay off cigarettes, some people look at smoking in an artificially negative light. They think of the worst condition smoking may or may not really cause them. Don't look at cigarettes this way. But on the same note, don't look at cigarettes in an artificially positive light either. Don't think of smoking as being inhaling one or two delightful cigarettes a day just when you feel like it. You couldn't do that before and you will never do it that way again.

Rather, look at smoking as it actually was. It was expensive, inconvenient, and sociably unacceptable on a daily basis. It controlled you totally. It was costing you your health and had the full potential of one day costing your life. See cigarettes for what they were. If you remember your life as a smoker it will be easy to NEVER TAKE ANOTHER PUFF!

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