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Joel's Reinforcement Library

NEVER TAKE ANOTHER PUFF!

Negative Support from Others

I actually wrote the below post to a member of Freedom a number of months ago because of someone making the comment to her that because she was such a basket case from not smoking, she should just give up. Sometimes such comments come from people near and dear to you and can become quite emotionally shattering. I'm attaching the original letter below in hopes of preparing all who read it, in the event something like this ever is said by others to you. No comment, look or stare from another person can undercut your quit. Only you can do that. The way is by simply disregarding the fact that you can **NEVER TAKE ANOTHER PUFF!**

Joel

The comment you received is very common, at times, almost universal, where a dear family member or friend blurts out, "If this is what you are like not smoking, then for God's sake, go back." Most of the time the person making the comment is not really considering the implications of the statement. It is comparable to you telling someone on chemotherapy and who is in a really bad mood due to hair loss, nausea, and some other possible negative side effects, and hence, in a less than happy mood, that he or she should get off that stuff because he or she is so irritable that he or she is ruining your day.

Of course, if analyzed by any real thinking person, the comment won't be made, because most people recognize that chemotherapy is a possible last-ditch effort to save the other person's life. The decision to stop the treatment is a decision to die. So we put up with the bad times to help support the patient's effort to save his or her life.

What family members and friends often overlook is that quitting smoking, too, is an effort to save the quitter's life. While others may not immediately appreciate that fact, the person quitting has to know it for him or herself. Others may never really appreciate the concept, but the person quitting has to.

One thing I did notice over the years was that, while the comment is often made, it is usually from a spouse, a child of the smoker, a friend, a co-worker or just an acquaintance. It is much more uncommon that the person expressing it is a parent or even a grandparent. I think that says something. Parents are often used to their kids' outbursts and moods, having experienced them since they were infants. The natural parental instinct is not to hurt them when they are in distress and lash out, but to try to protect them. I think it often carries over into adulthood and is a very positive statement about parenthood.

A tragic situation is often experienced when a person does actually encourage a family member or friend to smoke and then, months, years or decades later, the person dies from a smoking induced illness. Sometimes the family member then feels great guilt and remorse for thinking that he caused his loved one to relapse to smoking way back when he or she remembers making the remark. But you know what, they didn't do it. The smoker did it to him or herself. Because in reality, no matter what any person said, the smoker had to quit for him or herself and stay off for him or herself. How many times did a family member ask you to quit while you were still smoking and you didn't listen? Well if you don't quit for them, you don't relapse for them either. You quit for yourself and you stay off for yourself.

I am going to touch on the comment from one more angle. Sometimes when you were a smoker and someone did something inconsiderate or wrong that angered you, and you were about to take the issue on, you experienced an immediate and almost uncontrollable urge to smoke. That urge, induced by the urine acidity, all of a sudden took precedence over dealing with the person and issue at hand, and sent you off in pursuit of a cigarette. This momentary venture gave you a cooling off period and at times, you may have even let the whole event slide, feeling it was now not worth even mentioning. Consider this behavior from the other person's perspective. He or she may not even know that he or she did something offensive, and even if it is recognized, they paid no penalty for the infraction.

As an ex-smoker, you may not take that kind of behavior from another person, being wronged and accepting it without challenge. Well to the other person, now having you stand up for yourself may make you seem to be a bad or terrible person. But you know what, if they were wronging you to start with, they are the instigators of the reaction. You just may not take being walked over any more and they will just have to get used to that fact. But the odds are if this is the case, they will no longer take advantage of your "good" nature and will not repeat the offending practice. So in

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some ways, you are educating them to be easier to live with people too.

Whatever the situation, keep focused on the fact that you are quitting for yourself and whether or not any specific person supports your effort, you are behind it. We are behind you too. You will not find a single sole here at Freedom who will tell you to go back to smoking. We all recognize the significance of the effort. You are fighting for your health and your life. To win that fight, no matter what, **NEVER TAKE ANOTHER PUFF!**

Joel

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