

## *Joel's Reinforcement Library*

**NEVER TAKE ANOTHER PUFF!**

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# *How Can I Get My Family and Friends to Quit Smoking?*

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That is the question that I'm often asked by successful clinic graduates wishing to help those closest to them achieve freedom from their deadly addiction to cigarettes. Unfortunately, there is no simple solution. Smokers are going to smoke until they are ready to quit. Pestering, threatening, insulting, destroying or hiding cigarettes all cause the smoker to feel resentful and usually result in higher consumption of cigarettes for spite. These are not the methods of choice.

One method which I do suggest is understanding. Smokers do not smoke because they are stupid. They don't smoke because they are mean or obnoxious and wish to hurt their families and friends. They smoke because they are human, and as humans they make mistakes. One that all smokers are guilty of is experimentation with a highly addictive and dangerous drug - nicotine. Many of them took up smoking long before any dangers were known. When they realized the dangers, they may have attempted to quit, but for some it is not easy. They are hooked on a drug, and it will take strong resolve and a support system to overcome the initial difficulties encountered during the quitting process.

The best support which can be provided by significant others is to offer love, patience and understanding, and to try to make the smoker's life as easy as possible over the first few days. The smoker giving up cigarettes may have severe emotional outbursts and be irritable, depressed, and even irrational. These are all the effects of nicotine withdrawal. Many family members and friends will encourage them to smoke rather than act like that. If they were recovering alcoholics, they would not be offered drinks by these people. If they were reacting to chemotherapy they would not be begged to give it up and sacrifice their lives for the family's momentary comfort. Unfortunately, many friends and family members often do not take smoking cessation seriously enough. We are not talking about giving up a simple little annoyance such as biting of nails. We are talking about a powerful and deadly addiction. They are dealing with a

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real physiological need as well as a strongly ingrained psychological dependence. Offer the most encouragement you can. Be tolerant of their temporary emotional outbursts. They will soon return to normal, and you will have the personal satisfaction of knowing you helped them over one of the greatest challenges of their lives - giving up cigarettes.

While non-smokers may offer their love, patience and understanding, you, as an ex-smoker, have the unique ability to be a highly supportive and credible source to the individual attempting to quit smoking. You know what it was like to smoke. You know how much nicer it is to go through life as an ex-smoker. Share this knowledge. Be honest - if you still have "thoughts" for a cigarette, tell them. But clarify what the thoughts are like. If you are a typical ex-smoker, the thoughts occur quite infrequently, and even when they do occur they last only seconds and are just a passing desire rather than a real painful episode such as those encountered during initial cessation.

People giving up cigarettes need to know this natural evolutionary process of smoker to ex-smoker. When they encounter urges after the first two weeks, they are no longer experiencing physical withdrawal, rather they are responding to a psychological trigger. They are experiencing a new situation for the first time without a cigarette. The urge will pass and they will have learned how to face all future similar experiences as an ex-smoker, with no discomfort.

Share with them the information we shared with you. Give them the same support that the others ex-smokers gave to you. Most important, once smokers give up their cigarettes, offer periodic support to them letting them know you care about them, and always reinforce one concept to guarantee success in their continued non-smoking status - NEVER TAKE ANOTHER PUFF!

**Joel**

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