

Joel's Reinforcement Library

NEVER TAKE ANOTHER PUFF!

I Smoke Because I'm Self-Destructive!

Many Smokers believe they continue to smoke because of their self-destructive attitude. They actually want to get sick. Some say they are afraid of reaching old age. Others arrogantly vow to continue smoking until it kills them.

While some people do have emotional problems which lead to self-destructive behavior, I believe the majority of smokers with this attitude are not in this category. Most make these statements to hide their fears of not being able to give up cigarette smoking.

Over the past years, I have had many people ravaged by smoking related illnesses come into smoking clinics. They often explain that they had made such excuses yet were shocked when they actually did become ill. Clinic participants who fail occasionally state that they just didn't care enough about themselves to give up cigarettes. Unfortunately, some were later diagnosed of having cancer. Others have had heart attacks, strokes or other circulatory conditions. Many were discovered to have major breathing impairments from emphysema. None of them ever called me enthusiastically proclaiming, "It worked, it's killing me!" On the contrary, they were normally upset, scared and depressed. Not only did they have a potentially deadly condition, but they knew that, to a major degree, they were responsible for its occurrence.

An equally tragic situation is experienced by the survivors of people who die of smoking related illnesses. Many ex-smokers go back to smoking through the encouragement of family and friends. This usually happens to someone who is disease free and quits to stay healthy. Initially they are nervous and crabby (remember those days?). Soon the spouse, kids and others are saying, "If this is what you are like as a nonsmoker, for heaven's sake, smoke!" While it may seem to be a good idea at the time, consider how the relative feels when the smoker gets cancer or has a heart attack and dies. The guilt is tremendous.

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Some beliefs or statements made by smokers sound irrational, as if they have a real death wish. Often, there is really nothing wrong with the person - it is a drug effect. Fear of withdrawal or of being unable to cope with life without cigarettes results in a defense mechanism to justify dependency. Once off smoking these excuses simply disappear, leaving a physically and psychologically healthier individuals who will have a good chance of remaining this way by following one simple procedure - NEVER TAKE ANOTHER PUFF!

Joel

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