

Joel's Reinforcement Library

NEVER TAKE ANOTHER PUFF!

“It's only cigarette smoking - it's not like a crime punishable by death”

“So I failed in quitting smoking, big deal. I'm not going to feel guilty or be hard on myself. I mean, it is only cigarette smoking--it is not like a crime punishable by death.” I had to refrain from laughing at this statement. It was seriously quoted to me by a clinic participant who failed to abstain from smoking for even two days. She had the same old excuses of new job, family pressures, too many other changes going on.

But to say that cigarette smoking isn't a crime punishable by death--that was news to me. According to the United Nations, tobacco kills 4.9 million users per year. While we know that these people were killed by tobacco, it is hard to classify these deaths. Were they murders, suicides or accidents?

When examining the influence of the tobacco industry, one is tempted to call all tobacco related deaths murder. The tobacco industry uses manipulative advertising trying to make smoking appear harmless, sexy, sophisticated, and adult. These tactics help manipulate adults and kids into experimenting with this highly addictive substance. The tobacco industry knows that if they can just get people started, they can hook them on cigarettes and milk them for thousands of dollars over the smokers' lifetimes.

The tobacco institute always contradicts the research of all credible medical institutions that have unanimously stated that cigarettes are lethal. The tobacco institute tries to make people believe that all these attacks on cigarettes are lies. If the medical profession was going to mislead the public about cigarettes, it would be by minimizing the dangers, not exaggerating them. The medical profession has a vested interest in people continuing to smoke. After all, the more people smoke, the more work there is in treating serious and deadly diseases. But the medical profession recognizes its professional and moral obligation to help people be healthier. On the

other hand, the tobacco industry's only goal is to get people to smoke, no matter what the cost.

It could be argued that a smoking death is suicide. While the tobacco industry may dismiss the dangers, any smoker with even average intelligence knows that cigarettes are bad for health but continues to smoke anyway. But I do not believe in classifying most of the smoking deaths as suicidal. Although a smoker knows the risk and still doesn't stop, it is not that he is trying to kill himself. He smokes because he doesn't know how to stop.

A smoking related death is more accidental than suicidal. For while the smoker may die today, his death was in great part due to his first puffs twenty or more years ago. When he started smoking the dangers were unknown. Society made smoking acceptable, if not mandatory in certain groups. Not only did he not know the danger, but also he was unaware of the addictive nature of nicotine. So by the time the dangers were known, he was hooked into what he believed was a permanent way of life. Any smoker can quit, but unfortunately many don't know how.

Whatever the classification--murder, suicide or accident--the end result is the same. You still have a chance, you are alive, and you know how to quit. Take advantage of this knowledge. Don't become a smoking statistic - NEVER TAKE ANOTHER PUFF!

Joel

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