

Joel's Reinforcement Library

NEVER TAKE ANOTHER PUFF!

So how did most successful ex-smokers actually quit?

If you look around the Internet or even request information from professional health organizations on how to quit smoking you are likely to find that the standard advice given is to use a pharmacological approach, i.e., nicotine replacement products and or Zyban. Each time you see this advice you will also be told that these approaches double your chances of quitting. Some sites and groups come out and almost say, point-blank, do not go cold turkey--basically leaving the reader with the impression that nobody could possibly quit this way.

The American Cancer Society's [Cancer Facts & Figures 2003](#) report contains the chart to the right which shows the percentage of current smokers who have tried different routes at quitting smoking and also indicates the percentage of current ex-smokers who quit by different techniques.

The numbers that are highly telling are the percentages that indicate how former smokers had actually quit. Keep in mind that this chart is limited. It does not tell us how

Table 3. Percent of Current and Former US Adult Smokers* Using Recommended Cessation Methods

	Current Smokers (%)*	Former Smokers (%)*
Followed recommended therapy (drug therapy and/or counseling)	15.1	6.8
Quit "cold turkey" or slowly decreased amount smoked	82.4	91.4
Other	2.5	2.1

*Weighted percents are age-adjusted; data for the analyses were derived from the National Health Interview Survey, 2000, National Center for Health Statistics, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Source: American Cancer Society's "Cancer Facts and Figures 2003" report, Table 3, Page 25

long they had quit or other key pieces of information, such as, did the people who used quitting aids such as NRT ever actually get off the NRT. But I am not concerned about that at this moment.

According to the American Cancer Society report, how did former smokers actually quit? Those using drug therapies and counseling had a 6.8% quitting rate while those using other methods 2.1%. The remainder quit cold-turkey or cut down. In that it is generally accepted that cutting down techniques do not work, we can safely assume that they had an extremely limited impact upon the overall number. So, approximately 90% of the people who are successfully classified as former smokers quit cold turkey. On the same page as Table 3 is located you will find the following recommendation:

"All patients attempting to quit should be encouraged to use effective pharmacotherapies except in the presence of specific contraindications."

You have to ask yourself how many of the successful ex-smokers in the world today would have actually succeeded if they sought out and listened to "professional" advice such as this.

If you are trying to determine what is the best way to quit, you have a choice. You can go with the "experts" or you can go with what 90% of successful quitters have done.

Take Your Own Survey

So how do most people really quit smoking? Don't take our word for it, or the American Cancer Society's, but instead talk to every long-term ex-smoker you personally know. See how many of them fall into one of the following three categories:

- 1. People who woke up one day and were suddenly sick and tired of smoking. They tossed them that day and never looked back;**
- 2. People who get sick. Not smoking sick, meaning some kind of catastrophic smoking induced illness. Just people who get a cold or a flu and feel miserable. The feel too sick to smoke, they may feel too sick to eat. They are down with the infection for two or three days, start to get better and then realize that they have a**

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few days down without smoking and decide to try to keep it going. Again, they never look back and stuck with their new commitment; or

3. People who leave a doctors office given an ultimatum. Quit smoking or drop dead--it's your choice. These are people who some sort of problem has been identified by their doctors who lays out in no uncertain terms that the person's life is at risk now if they do not quit smoking.

All of these stories share one thing in common--the technique that people use to quit. They simply quit smoking one day. The reasons they quit varied but the technique used was basically the same. For the most part they are clear examples of spur of the moment decisions elicited by some external, and sometimes unknown circumstance.

I really do encourage all people to take their own survey, talking to long-term ex-smokers in their real world: people who you knew when they were smokers, who you knew when they were quitting and who you still know as being successful long-term ex-smokers. The more people you talk to the more obvious it will become how people quit smoking and how people stay off of smoking. Again, people quit smoking by simply quitting smoking and people stay off of smoking by simply knowing that to stay smoke free that they must Never Take Another Puff!

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