

## *Joel's Quit Smoking Library*

**NEVER TAKE ANOTHER PUFF!**

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### *"I made a conscious decision to smoke"*

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A couple of years ago, in our earlier days at Freedom, a member wrote that she made a conscious decision to smoke after experiencing a horrendous day. Although the group's relapse policy no longer allows people who relapse to return and post their relapse excuses, I thought it would be good to bring up the response from back then, as a tool to help our current members think through any such thoughts.

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Do many people actually desire to go back to smoking or make the conscious decision to relapse?

You said you made a conscious decision to smoke. Does this mean you made a conscious decision to go back to full-fledged smoking, your old quantity, maybe even more? Do you mean to say that you wanted to maintain that full quantity, paying thousands of dollars a year, and tens of thousands of dollars over your lifetime in support of that addiction? Do you mean you made a conscious decision to go back to constantly smelling like a cigarette? Do you mean that you were making a conscious decision to stand outside in subzero weather, tropical down pours, or unbearable heat waves, just to sneak a few drags when in some hostile environment that is restricting your smoking? Do you mean that you made a conscious decision to be viewed as a social misfit or outcast, shunned or ridiculed by others? Does it mean that you made a

conscious decision to accept all these consequences with the idea you would smoke until cigarettes would slowly cripple you? Do you mean to say that you made a conscious decision to smoke until you would eventually leave your family, friends, basically all your loved ones behind, because you were going to smoke until cigarettes killed you? Was that your conscious decision?

I am not trying to be harsh or insensitive here. I am just trying to clarify that when a person has a bad moment and relapses saying to themselves that they made a conscious decision to smoke, it is usually an untrue statement. They don't make a conscious decision to smoke. They make a conscious decision to have a cigarette. These are two completely different decisions. It is easy to make a conscious decision to have a cigarette when you think that is where it will end. Thinking in terms of limited quantity or limited time smoking is fantasizing about smoking. This fantasy will be a person's downfall.

Now, in fact, you are being forced to make a decision. Your body is going to demand it. The decision now is, are you going to be a full-fledged smoker, under the criteria above, or are you going to quit again? If you don't make a decision and take action, the decision is already made. You are a smoker again. On the other hand, if you decide to quit, then you may have to put up with the initial withdrawals and the struggles that accompany stopping smoking. Neither option is optimal, but one, as bad as it seems, is clearly better than the other. One may be miserable; the other is potentially lethal.

You started your post that this was the worst day of your life. If it is the day you go back to smoking, this may not be an inaccurate assessment. If it is the day you almost lost a quit but got it back and never smoked again, well then in retrospect you will probably realize that today was a day that had bad components. But in the grand scheme of things, it was the day you permanently quit smoking and in that real sense it was a good day too. This may be hard to see now but in time, smoke-free time, this may become a very realistic assessment.

This is a fight for your health and your life. Give it your all because the alternative is cigarette smoking. And if cigarettes are given the opportunity they will take your all. To keep your freedom, your health and your life you must understand that your quit is contingent on knowing that to stay smoke free you must Never Take Another Puff!

*Joel*