

Joel's Reinforcement Library

NEVER TAKE ANOTHER PUFF!

Because Now it Really Hurts!

“I want to quit for my health. I have no pulse in my legs and my doctor says I'm going to need surgery. But he won't even consider operating until I quit smoking. Besides this, I have had throat polyps removed and all of my doctors say I have to stop smoking.”

This dramatic story was told to me on the third day of a recent Stop Smoking Clinic. When I asked the participant how long she had all of these smoking related problems she replied, “For many years.” Then I asked why she decided to quit now? She answered, “Because now it really hurts.”

As opposed to fear, pain is a marvelous motivator for initiating a life-style change such as quitting smoking. Fear of something that might happen may make a person think about quitting. But fear can be bargained around. Thoughts like, "Maybe it won't happen to me," are often used as defense mechanisms protecting the smoker's addiction to cigarettes. But pain is not so easily dismissed. It is here, it is now, and it hurts.

While pain can be a powerful motivator in making positive change, it can also be responsible for preventing necessary changes from being successfully attempted. The participant in the above story is a good example of this. For years she knew that her cigarettes were slowly crippling and killing her. But any attempt to quit resulted in nicotine withdrawal symptoms. This discomfort results in taking a cigarette to help alleviate withdrawal. This inevitably results in relapse. So while the smoker may have solved the problem of withdrawal, the method used prolonged a much more serious problem - continuation of a powerful and deadly addiction.

While some discomfort may be involved in giving up cigarettes, it is insignificant compared to the pain and suffering which can be caused by continuing smoking. Physical withdrawal from quitting will normally peak within three days, and totally subside within two weeks. Diseases such as emphysema, heart disease, other

circulatory conditions and cancers involve months or even years of long term suffering. These pains are much more severe than anything encountered while quitting. The biggest difference, though, is that these diseases have the full potential of permanently crippling or killing their victims.

Smokers are not only prone to have these major catastrophic illnesses. Due to the weakening of the body's defense mechanisms, smokers are more frequently plagued by infectious diseases, such as colds, flu, and pneumonias. While most of these infections rarely result in permanent crippling or death, they do result in great inconveniences and discomfort. Not only does the smoker have a greater risk of these diseases, but when he does get one of them, it is more severe, and painful than it would have been if he didn't smoke. No non-smoker would consider inhaling dry hot smoke into an already burning irritated throat. But no matter how intense the pain, the smoker will else he suffers withdrawal besides the cold.

So any smoker who is afraid of experiencing the pain of withdrawal must consider the alternative. Continuing to smoke has the full potential of causing long-term suffering from causing and aggravating common infectious diseases. More significantly, smoking may eventually cause life-long, chronic suffering from diseases like emphysema, cancer, and circulatory diseases. And if the smoker waits too long, a smoking induced death may be the only relief. Don't let fear of withdrawal stop you from quitting. Withdrawal is short, and mild in comparison to the suffering caused from continuing to smoke. Once you quit, you will never experience it again as long as you - NEVER TAKE ANOTHER PUFF!

Joel

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Page last updated by [Joel Spitzer](#) on August 25, 2003

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