

Joel's Reinforcement Library

NEVER TAKE ANOTHER PUFF!

He Will Quit When He "Bottoms Out!"

It used to be believed that when dealing with drug addictions, such as alcoholism or illegal drug abuse, the addict had to "bottom out" before realizing the need for help. Bottoming out meant life became so complicated and unmanageable that the abuser would finally see that there was no other alternative except to quit drugs or lose everything and everyone close to him. What types of situations would precipitate an addict to come to such a realization? Things so severe as losing a family, career, health, or maybe even ending up homeless or in jail.

All these occurrences are traumatic and should be considered life shattering experiences. However given a lot of time, support and professional assistance, the addict can often regain some semblance of a normal lifestyle. Many even feel that living through such an experience gives them a real love of life and sobriety that they could never have fully appreciated without having survived such devastating experiences. As long as bottoming out doesn't entail loss of life, there is always some hope for rectifying the problems the drugs brought on and maybe coming out stronger than they were before drugs became a part of their lives.

Smokers, too, are drug addicts. Unfortunately, some smokers are content with the idea of waiting to bottom out before making a drastic move like quitting smoking. Until then they feel that their lives are quite manageable. When things get bad enough they believe they will quit with relative ease. While this sort of logic has been known to work with other drug dependencies, there is a major flaw in approaching smoking in this manner.

Bottoming out experiences for smokers are not normally correctable by time. Smokers generally won't lose their families from smoking. They probably won't lose their job, and they probably won't end up homeless and penniless trying to support their addiction. They won't end up in jail for smoking, and they will never be committed to treatment without their own consent. So what kind of incident is likely to be considered bottoming out for the smoker?

Diagnosis is the most common way smokers bottom out--diagnosis of a disease like cancer, heart disease or emphysema. While quitting upon diagnosis may improve chances of survival, a lot of irreparable damage is already done. With emphysema, the patient's breathing will be impaired for the rest of his or her life. Stopping smoking will significantly slow up or stop further deterioration, but normal breathing will never again be possible. Waiting for a diagnosis of cancer or circulatory disease as the bottoming out experience may cost the smoker his or her life. In fact, some smokers never have the opportunity to bottom out. The first discernible symptom for these smokers is sudden death which is not the bottoming out experience the smoker was likely counting on.

Many who quit before bottoming out recognize that they feel physically and emotionally better than they have in years and truly do appreciate the health and self esteem improvements. Those who quit should be proud of their accomplishment. They quit before they had to, and they will derive the greatest benefits for having taken that action.

For those who are waiting for that magic moment when they know it is time, be forewarned. You may not have the strength to quit at that time; you may not get the desire to quit in time; and, most importantly, you may not have the opportunity to quit in time. Last year, 390,000 Americans died prematurely waiting for the right time. They never found it. Don't feel the need to wait for some unforeseen inspiration. Quit now before you have to. Quit now and - NEVER TAKE ANOTHER PUFF!

Joel

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