

Joel's Reinforcement Library

NEVER TAKE ANOTHER PUFF!

The Fan Letter

Dear Julio:

I just felt I had to write you this letter to illustrate that I am truly your biggest fan. I know you hear it from others, but when you hear my story, I am sure you will agree that few will risk as much as I just have to see you perform.

You see, I have been having difficulty breathing, so bad in fact that I made an appointment with my doctor. Generally, I avoid talking to my doctor about any breathing difficulty. You see, I have smoked a pack and a half per day for over 40 years, and I know if I complain of breathing I will just get one of those stern doctor lectures. But this time it was bad enough that I thought I had better bring it to his attention.

I found out that I am in the early stages of emphysema. I never thought this would happen to me. This time when he said I have to quit smoking, I finally took it seriously. He was not talking about what might happen in the future, but what has happened and what would eventually cripple and kill me if I didn't take action. You see, every puff I take now destroys a little more lung and permanently takes away a little more of my ability to breathe.

I can tell you, I have never been so scared in my life. He suggested a clinic, and I signed up immediately. I went the first day, but I was really skeptical as to whether I could get off for even 24 hours. But, to my surprise, I actually stopped for the whole day. It was tough, though, and I was really shaky about making it for the next 24 hours, but I knew I was fighting for my ability to breathe.

When I went to the clinic the next night, I joined 11 other people—all who went 24 hours without smoking. They were all nervous--some were even physically ill from not smoking, but we were all off the full day and were proud of it. It was good to be with others sharing such a common bond.

The clinic meets every night the first week. Our instructor said that since it can be very difficult getting through the first 72 hours, focusing on just making it to the meeting the next day makes it seem a little more tolerable than thinking about making it for the rest of our lives. He said it was extremely important to attend those early meetings, not only for the information but for the support and motivation over such a crucial time period. Everyone in the meeting seemed to agree that being there each evening really helped motivate him or her to get through the next day.

The instructor reemphasized that we should arrange our schedules so we could attend every session. In fact, there was nothing else going on in our lives that week that was as important as quitting smoking. Anything we had to postpone at work or at home could be made up the next week and during the rest of our lives, but failing to quit smoking could permanently cost us our health and our lives.

When the instructor made the comment that there was nothing going on in our lives as important as quitting smoking he didn't know that I had tickets for your concert that next evening. I thought surely that would be an exception to the rule. After all, you would be gone next week. But, Julio, to my shock, when I told him the reason that I couldn't make it to the clinic, instead of agreeing he instructed me that seeing how shaky I was, I should forego the concert and attend the session. He acted as if missing the clinic for your concert was a lame excuse. But as important as my breathing is, I knew it was more important to see you.

So, Julio, I went to your concert. It was great too--everything I expected. I knew I made the right choice. The next day though, I went back to smoking. Funny, everyone else who went to the clinic that night made it through the next day and even through the weekend. In fact, they all are still off smoking. But they didn't get to see you that night. So who really got the best deal that day?

Anyway, my breathing is getting worse, and I am not sure now that I will be quitting again soon. If my instructor and my doctors are right, smoking the way I do, I may eventually become so impaired that getting to your future concerts may become difficult or maybe even impossible. I think you will agree I sacrificed a lot to see you, maybe even my life. But I am sure you would agree it was the right thing to do, wouldn't you Julio?

The next time you are in my area I may not be physically able to get to see you. Maybe as a reward for my sacrifice you can come do a private performance for me. But, I know you are a busy man, and even if you can't make it to my home or hospital bed, I will think no less of you. After all, I am your biggest fan and you have my unshakable devotion.

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An Undying Fan?

Joel

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