

Joel's Reinforcement Library

NEVER TAKE ANOTHER PUFF!

“I’m just too weak to quit smoking!”

“I can't believe it, I'm just too weak to quit smoking.” This statement came to me on the fourth day of a clinic by a participant who could not stop smoking for even one day. When I asked him where he kept getting the cigarettes from, he replied, “They are mine, I never threw them out.” When I asked him why he never got rid of them he said that it was because he knew the only way for him to handle not smoking would be by keeping cigarettes around in case he needed one.

This man was not capable of succeeding in his attempt to quit smoking. Not because the addiction to nicotine was too powerful. It was his fear of throwing out his cigarettes which rendered his attempt a failure. He figured if he needed them, he would have them. Sure enough, every day he needed one. So he would smoke one. Then another and still another. Five or six a day, never reaching his optimal level and never breaking the withdrawal cycle. He was discouraged, depressed, embarrassed, mad, and, worst of all, smoking.

Quitting smoking needs to be done in steps. First, the smoker should strengthen his resolve as to why he wishes to quit. He should consider the health consequences, the social implications, the fact that he is totally controlled by his cigarettes, the expense and any other personal problems cigarettes have caused him. It is helpful to write down all of these negative aspects of smoking. In the future when he does get the thought for a cigarette, his own reasons for quitting become powerful ammunition for not returning to smoking.

When the decision is made to quit, the smoker should implement a program that has the greatest potential of success. The first and most important step is to quit cold turkey. To accomplish this goal he should dispose of all smoking material. Cigarettes, cigars, pipes, butts, ashtrays, lighters--anything that was considered smoking paraphernalia. If cigarettes are not there, they cannot be smoked.

Then the person only needs to live through the first few days, one day at a time.

Physical withdrawal may be rough or very mild. The symptoms will be overcome by making it through the first few days without taking a puff. Within three days the physical withdrawal will peak and by two weeks will cease altogether.

But the real obstacle is the psychological dependence to cigarettes. Most smokers are convinced smoking is essential in performing many normal daily activities. Dealing with stress, working, driving, eating, sleeping, waking up, relaxing - just about everything requires smoking. The only way to overcome this perceived dependence is by proving to oneself that all activities done with cigarettes can be done equally well without cigarettes. Just living through the first few days and functioning in normal required roles will prove that the smoker can survive without cigarettes. It may be difficult, but it is possible.

Once the initial quitting process is overcome, the rest is simple. Sure there will still be times when the ex-smoker wants a cigarette. But the ex-smoker must realize that he does not have the option of only one. Because he is a nicotine addict, smoking is now, and always has been an all or nothing proposition. The thought of relapsing back to his old level of smoking with all the associated consequences is all the ammunition needed to - NEVER TAKE ANOTHER PUFF!

Joel

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