

## *Joel's Reinforcement Library*

**NEVER TAKE ANOTHER PUFF!**

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*“Things were just so bad at work that I took a cigarette!”*

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This sentiment was expressed to me by a clinic participant who had successfully broken free from their nicotine addiction . I then asked her if she had had a loaded gun in her possession at the time things were so bad, would she have put it to her head and pulled the trigger. Without a moment of hesitation, she responded, "Of course not," as if I had just asked a ridiculous question. "Then if the problems were not worth shooting yourself for, they were not worth smoking for either," I replied.

While on the surface the analogy may seem a bit exaggerated, looking at the particular case history reveals that the risk this woman was facing by returning to smoking could easily cost her her life.

Five months prior to this "catastrophic time at work" she suffered a severe heart attack. Fortunately, she survived and six weeks after returning home from the hospital she enrolled in our clinic to quit smoking. She had been smoking four packs per day and had been a smoker for over 33 years. To her surprise, she quit with what seemed to be minimal difficulty. She successfully remained off cigarettes for three months. In that time, though, she gained close to 30 pounds. While 30 pounds is a lot of weight to gain, she understood fully why her weight had increased. She ate more. A lot more.

But she was so concerned about not returning to smoking that she figured if eating would prevent smoking, then 30 pounds was worth it. Technically, she was correct. The strain produced on her heart from 30 pounds of extra weight was nothing compared to the risk of smoking 80 cigarettes per day. She was preparing to find a weight control program to address the weight gain problem.

But now this problem at work caused her to take a cigarette. She thought it would only be "one" to help over the initial crisis. She failed to understand the basic rule of

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addiction. There is no such thing as one. Not one pack, one cigarette, one butt, or one puff. All of these will lead to the same end result. **ONE ADDICTION.** A powerful addiction. An addiction which could make an ex-smoker of 30 years return to her full past level of consumption within 24 hours. Because she didn't understand this most important rule, she broke it. And now she was smoking again and couldn't seem to quit.

Now the analogy between taking a cigarette and pulling the trigger becomes quite realistic. While her 30 pounds were insignificant compared to smoking, now she was going to return to her old level of cigarette consumption and be 30 pounds heavier. All this within 6 months after a heart attack. Adding all this up, she became a walking time bomb.

While you may not have all of her risk factors, returning to smoking still may be the decisive factor in a heart attack, cancer or any number of tragic illnesses smoking causes. You are now free from your addiction. Don't let a major crisis, a trivial stress, a party, a drink or any other situation let you make the same mistake. Stay free from cigarettes—**NEVER TAKE ANOTHER PUFF!**

**Joel**

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