

Joel's Reinforcement Library

NEVER TAKE ANOTHER PUFF!

Come Share Your Strength, Come Recognize Your Vulnerabilities

At every clinic graduation I make an impassioned plea for all participants to come to future sessions as a way of reinforcing their resolve to stay off nicotine. At the time I make the request many, if not most, of the clinic graduates realize the benefit and commit to the concept of returning to future clinics. While the commitment is made in all good faith, compliance is pitifully low. Within weeks of graduation, most feel they are so secure not smoking that coming into available clinics for further enforcement is unnecessary and inconvenient. They still have good feelings about the clinic and generally feel they will come back when they "need to."

Unfortunately, most only recognize they need to come back by one obvious symptom. They are once again chronically administering nicotine and can't seem to stop. This is a dangerous way to find out they could have benefited from reinforcement meetings. For once a relapse has occurred there is no guarantee a smoker will have the strength, desire or opportunity to quit again before smoking tragically interferes with his health, social status, and maybe even his life.

Reinforcement in our clinic is basically a sharing process. The sharing offered by successful graduates is a powerful motivation to the current clinic participants who are desperately attempting to keep the strong resolve needed to overcome the powerful physical and emotional traumas experienced during the initial quitting process. Seeing a variety of people who have successfully overcome such a seemingly impossible task offers hope and encouragement at the time they most need it. Your presence and sharing one day every couple of months can make a real difference, and, possibly, in the long run even saving the life of one or more current clinic participants. What else would you do for an hour and a half on a weekday

evening that could play such a pivotal role in other people's lives?

But sharing is a two way process. By coming to help current clinic participants you will walk away with more than a good feeling that you helped others that day. You will walk out with a greater understanding and appreciation of just how lucky you are to be off smoking and a lot more prepared to deal with the occasional obstacles that can still threaten any ex-smoker weeks, months, years and even decades after cessation.

In the clinic I just graduated, we had one participant who relapsed almost 11 years after being in our program. She was feeling great not smoking but complacency led to relapse, which led to smoking and the painful process of quitting. Another participant there had once been off of smoking for over 35 years before his first relapse. Since then he's tried three previous times and still can't get off. Witnessing these people and others like them is a sobering but beneficial process. It will make any ex-smoker recognize just how close he is to being a smoker again and greatly appreciate that, to this day, he made the right decision not to take that first puff.

While these two people and others in the clinic had valuable experiences they wanted and needed to share, it was really sad that, except for the 10 people who came to panel night, no other past participants came to help or came to benefit from these experiences. Ten out of over 4,000! It's time to join the minority. Be one of the few who comes to reinforce resolve. It is so much better to learn from others' mistakes, as opposed to maybe one day having to learn from your own.

Consider coming to share your time and experiences with one of our groups. You will not regret it. If traveling is impossible, call me or write me some time and share a story I may pass on to others of how you still overcome the occasional obstacles that can lead to relapse. If you do, I promise I will share a concept with you which will help secure your continued ex-smoking status. I will share with you the knowledge that to stay off of smoking you simply need to remember to never take another puff!

Joel

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