

## *Joel's Reinforcement Library*

**NEVER TAKE ANOTHER PUFF!**

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### *"I Will Stop Smoking After I Lose Weight"*

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"After I lose some weight I will quit smoking." Many times a smoker will use being overweight as an excuse for continuing to smoke. He may feel that the logical sequence is to lose weight and then quit smoking. But the end result of this approach is usually quite disappointing.

For even if the smoker does lose the weight, the odds are that he will do so by increasing his cigarette consumption. Cigarettes are capable of suppressing the appetite. Then when he tries to quit smoking he will probably eat more in order to curb his urge to smoke. Once again he will gain back the weight, and out of discouragement will probably relapse back to cigarettes. And then he is in the same position that he was in at the start--overweight and smoking.

If a smoker's goal is to quit and stay off cigarettes and to permanently lose weight, he must achieve success in one without depending on the other as a crutch. This is not to say that the smoker must quit smoking and go onto a diet at the same time. While it is not impossible, dieting is difficult for many smokers during cessation.

Due to the drop in blood sugar levels that accompanies smoking cessation, the urge to snack on sweet foods is constant. Also, without a cigarette to cue the end of a meal, the smoker may continue eating long after dessert is over. But if the smoker wants to control his weight while quitting, he must either control the urge to snack or eat lower-calorie alternatives during the initial quitting phase.

But the ex-smoker may feel that it is better to deal with one problem at a time. He may indulge himself with his favorite foods with the full expectation that he will only be doing this for a week or so. Cakes, cookies, potato chips and many other popular snack foods are used. A potentially long-term and destructive eating habit may be established. What he thought would last only a few days, becomes weeks and maybe even months. Weight gain will be the inevitable result. The ex-smoker will either relapse to cigarettes out of discouragement or continue gaining until positive steps are taken to break free from the new pattern of overeating.

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If, on the other hand, the ex-smoker addresses the food issue when first quitting, all the long-term weight problems can be avoided. To help curb the urge for sweets, plenty of fruit juices should be consumed for the first three days after quitting. This will help stabilize the drop of blood sugar, hence alleviating some of the common withdrawal symptoms encountered during smoking cessation. Also, the acidity of the juices should help accelerate the excretion rate of nicotine, thus shortening the duration of physical withdrawal symptoms.

Snacking on carrots and celery is also a reasonable alternative for the first few days. These items should be encouraged because they are low in calories and, for the most part, non-habit forming. Within a couple of weeks, the ex-smoker will tire of these vegetables and just give them up. He will have quit smoking without replacement of food as a permanent crutch.

Staying off smoking is a lifelong commitment. The most important step you can take to insure success in this goal is to keep a positive attitude about not smoking. Don't develop a negative replacement behavior which will result in a secondary problem. This will make a positive attitude toward not smoking impossible, and the end result will be a relapse to cigarettes.

If you have already gained weight since quitting, take action to rectify the problem. Then you too will feel good about your accomplishments. Not only will you have quit smoking, you will have done so without depending on any other destructive crutches. You really will have taken control of your life. To keep control, watch your diet and - **NEVER TAKE ANOTHER PUFF!**

**Joel**

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