

Joel's Reinforcement Library

NEVER TAKE ANOTHER PUFF!

*"If they ever cure lung cancer,
I would go back to smoking."*

This sentiment is often expressed to me by clinic participants when they are initially trying to quit. More surprisingly though, some ex-smokers off for substantially longer times maintain this feeling. Apparently, these people originally quit smoking out of fear of cancer. But once off smoking, so many other benefits are evident to most ex-smokers that fear of disease should not be the only motivation for not smoking.

Physical and psychological benefits from not smoking are both numerous and rewarding. Most ex-smokers breathe better, have more energy and greater endurance. Circulation improves and cardiovascular fitness is greatly increased. Because of the benefits to the respiratory and circulatory systems, ex-smokers can participate in activities which they had to avoid while smoking. Ex-smokers are more productive, both at home and work, leaving them more time to do enjoyable recreational activities. Food smells and tastes better, making the ex-smoker much more capable of enjoying finer culinary treats. They become calmer, better able to deal with life's demands and stresses. Aesthetic improvements are dramatic. They smell better, and even the skin appears healthier.

In many, not smoking will prevent premature wrinkling which would have occurred if they continued to indulge in cigarettes. They are more socially acceptable as ex-smokers. No longer do they have to worry about offending non-smokers around them. They can go anywhere, any time without worrying about whether they will be able to get their 20-minute fixes of nicotine. Improved self-esteem is a major benefit noted by the majority of ex-smokers. No longer are they spending hundreds or even thousands of dollars a year on cigarettes. No longer do they worry about burning holes in their furniture, clothes and cars. No longer do they worry about starting fires which could destroy everything they own and possibly themselves. Last, but in no way least, they are eliminating from their lifestyle the greatest preventable cause of premature death and disability in our country.

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Why would anyone want to sacrifice such gains to go back to smoking? Even if they reduced the risk from one disease, all the other diseases still pose a great threat to smokers. But worse yet, returning to smoking means once again becoming an addict. All of the associated behaviors will once again become necessary to maintain a serum nicotine level high enough to avoid withdrawal.

They will have to smoke in places where smoking is unacceptable. When encountering stress, they will have to smoke continuously to feel better. "Better" means just as rotten as they would have felt originally if they were non-smokers encountering the same stress. No longer could they sit comfortably through a two-hour movie or meeting where smoking is prohibited. Once again they will be viewed by others as weak unfortunates unable to break free from such a dirty chemical dependency. Some view them with pity, others with scorn. No one views them with envy. They will smell bad, they will look bad, and they will be slowly crippling and killing themselves.

Life is simpler, healthier and more enjoyable as a non-smoker. Whenever considering going back to smoking, or just trying one cigarette, take a long careful inventory of the gains you have made by quitting. Think of the inconveniences and dangers you will face of once again having to smoke 20, 40, 60 or even more cigarettes a day. Consider both of these sides and, if you choose to remain an ex-smoker, simply - NEVER TAKE ANOTHER PUFF!

Joel

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Page last updated by [Joel Spitzer](#) on August 23, 2003

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