

Joel's Reinforcement Library

NEVER TAKE ANOTHER PUFF!

What A Relief, I Think I Have Cancer!

"Last night I was getting a burning sensation in my lungs. I actually thought I had lung cancer. I wasn't scared, surprised, or even upset. I was actually happy. I can't remember ever looking so forward to being diagnosed of having a terminal illness." This unusual statement was made to me by a clinic participant on her fourth day without smoking. While it sounds like the ravings of a severely depressed or mentally ill individual, in fact she was nothing of the sort. To the contrary, she was smiling and laughing when she said it.

What was the humor she saw in the statement? As soon as she said it to herself the night before, she realized the pain she was experiencing was the same complaints she heard three other people describe earlier that day at her clinic. It was a normal part of the healing process from quitting smoking. She also recognized the fact that she was not looking forward to a debilitating illness and an early demise. She was looking forward to taking a cigarette. When the pain started she rationalized that as long as she had lung cancer already, she might as well smoke. Then she realized she was looking forward to cancer. At that point she recognized just how morbid her thought processes had become. Not because she was quitting smoking, but because she was an addict was she capable of thinking in such depraved terms. Upon recognizing the absurdity of the situation, she laughed off the urge and went to bed.

It is important to remember just how irrational your thoughts were when you too were a smoker. As a smoker you were constantly warned of the dangers through the media, physicians, family, friends who quit, and most importantly, your own body. Not a week went by when you were not being bombarded by the constant annoying message that smoking was impairing and killing you. But being the obedient addict you were, you disregarded these pestering outside influences to obey your true master--your cigarette. As Vic, the participant in my first clinic once stated, "Everywhere I turned I was being warned about cigarettes. Newspapers reports and magazines articles constantly reinforced that cigarettes were deadly. Even bill boards advertising cigarettes carried the Surgeon General's warning signal. Every time I'd

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reach for my pack, a warning label stared me in the face. It was only a matter of time before I reached the only logical conclusion. I quit reading!"

The control cigarettes exert on you when you are in the grip of the addiction is complete. It makes you say and do things that when observed by outside observers makes you look weak, stupid or crazed. At the same time it robs you of your money, health and eventually life. Once free of cigarettes you can recognize all these symptoms of your past addiction. To avoid ever living such a miserable existence - **NEVER TAKE ANOTHER PUFF!**

Joel

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