

Joel's Reinforcement Library

NEVER TAKE ANOTHER PUFF!

The Isolation of a Widowed Smoker

Life had become a boring routine. She had just been going through the motions of maintaining a normal semblance of existence. Waking up, having a cigarette. Washing up and brushing her teeth, having a cigarette. Eating breakfast, having a cigarette. Doing some light cleaning, vacuuming, dusting, and having a cigarette. Watching a little television while having a cigarette. Preparing a sandwich for lunch, having a cigarette. Taking a short nap, waking up for a cigarette. Reading the newspaper, having a cigarette. Making a list of needed groceries, having a cigarette. Getting ready to do some light shopping, having a cigarette. Driving to the local market, having a cigarette. About to enter the store, but stopping to have a cigarette. Checking out at the cash register, leaving the store and having a cigarette. Going home and starting to prepare dinner, having a cigarette. Eating dinner, having a cigarette. Clearing the table and washing the dishes, having a cigarette. Watching a little television, having a couple of cigarettes. Washing up, brushing her teeth and getting dressed for bed, having a cigarette. Getting into bed, having a cigarette. Going to sleep.

Ever since the loss of her husband many years ago, nothing in her normal daily existence seemed to give her life any meaning or any real happiness. Weeks would go by with her barely cracking a smile. Almost nothing seemed to bring her joy anymore. But this day was starting differently. After breakfast her phone rang. She ran for a cigarette. On the fourth ring she made it to the phone and picked up the receiver. It was her daughter. She lived only an hour away, but because of her career, her husband's schedule and the kid's school, soccer, piano, ballet lessons, etc., they only were able to visit occasionally. Well, to her pleasant surprise, she found out that they were coming on Saturday to spend the day.

For the first time in weeks she seemed truly happy. As soon as she hung up the phone she grabbed for a cigarette. She had to start planning and preparing to see the kids. She called her beauty shop to make an afternoon appointment. When she hung up

the phone she took a cigarette. She got dressed and ready to go shopping, and right before leaving, she took a cigarette. In the car driving to the store she hurriedly smoked two cigarettes for she knew she could not smoke while in the store. She hurriedly went up and down the aisles, with a certain bounce in her step for she was still so excited about the visit. When she left the store she hurried to her car and lit a cigarette. She went home, put away the groceries, prepared and ate a quick bite, smoked a cigarette and hurriedly left the house to be on time for her beauty shop appointment. While she was there she smoked and conversed with the other patrons, glowing as she told of her exciting weekend news.

When she got home, she smoked a cigarette, and starting preparing a turkey for the big Saturday night meal. She smoked and ate, smoked and cooked and smoked and prepared for bed. One last cigarette and she slowly dozed off, happy and excited about the joy of the upcoming day.

When she woke up she excitedly grabbed for her first cigarette. She got up and cleaned and brushed her teeth, and took another cigarette. She ate breakfast and smoked again. She started preparing her feast and smoked numerous cigarettes. Even though she was not conscious of the fact, she was smoking more than normal. Through years of conditioning she had learned that since she couldn't smoke when around the grandchildren she had better have plenty of nicotine in her system by the time they arrived. A little last minute cleaning, and cooking and smoking. She was ready.

The door bell rings. She hurries to the door and opens it up. There is her family. Everyone is excited. She goes to kiss the youngest, who says "Oh grandma, you smell like an ashtray!" She was used to these comments, she loved him anyway. After 15 minutes of talking with all the kids and her daughter and son-in-law, she and her daughter go to the kitchen to work on the dinner. After a couple of hours she starts to feel the twinge for a cigarette. But she knows she can't smoke. The kids are running through the house vigorously. As the hours pass, her patience becomes strained. Too much noise she thinks to herself, boy, does she wish she could smoke a cigarette. She starts to complain of a minor headache. They decide they better eat early, grandma is seeming a little tired and a little hassled. They sit down to eat. The food is good and everyone is enjoying.

But grandma seems to be feeling worse and worse. Four hours have passed and still no cigarette. After dinner they all decide grandma needs some rest and mutually everyone agrees they will leave early. She kisses them all good-bye and rushes them out. As the door closes she hurries to her pack and smokes three cigarettes in a row. She finally starts to feel better. She now sits down in a quiet empty room thinking

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how lonely she feels and how sad that they had to leave so soon. But at least she has her cigarettes. But it had been a long day. She washes up, brushes her teeth, gets dressed for bed, and has one last cigarette.

Tomorrow would be another routine day.

Joel

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