

## **THE WAY I DISCOVERED TO QUIT SMOKING**

by Robert Phipps

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### **HISTORY**

I smoked for twelve years, from age 16, in 1956, to 28. I smoked three packs a day. I started with Camels. At that time, that cigarette had the most macho image, and I wanted to be a “real” man. When, after a few years, I developed a bad cough, I moved “down” to Lucky Strikes; and then over time, as I continued to have bouts with colds, sinus infections, bronchitis, to Pall Malls, Marlboros, Winstons, and ultimately to Kents, the weakest cigarette then available. I kept going with weaker and weaker cigarettes trying to continue smoking and eliminate, or at least reduce the health problems that smoking was causing me. But the health problems continued, and at some point I decided that I should quit smoking.

The first time I tried to quit smoking, I lasted an hour or two. A few months later I tried again and lasted for close to a day. Then over a few years, I tried several more times and, while I was able to stay off cigarettes for longer periods each time, I would always ultimately start smoking again. Then, one time I quit and stayed off cigarettes for a month. I didn’t want to go back; I was comfortable without smoking. But I wondered what would happen if I just had one cigarette. I wondered if I could just have one, and then stay off them. So I decided to have a cigarette, to give myself the test; and I did—and I failed. Once again, I was back smoking three packs of cigarettes a day.

This led me to a serious period of inner questioning. Why did I start smoking? Why did I smoke so much? Why was I unable to quit? Why when I had seemingly been successful at quitting, did I go back? What was making it so hard? What were the forces working against me? All the questions enabled me to discover answers, and more importantly—or maybe, consequently—to discover a way to quit smoking, to permanently quit smoking, will no ill effects, no unpleasant substitutions, no pangs or feelings of deprivation, no wanting to start smoking again, and most importantly, never again, in nearly forty years, smoking a cigarette.

I would guess that since you are reading this, you have an interest in quitting smoking. If so, please read the method, below. It worked for me, and it has also worked for friends of mine. I hope and believe it will work for you. Good luck.

### **INTROSPECTION**

- First, we must ask ourselves why we want to quit smoking. It is very helpful if we want to stop smoking on an emotional level, not just intellectual.
- We must look at why we smoke: Is it to stay thin? To look sexy? To look cool? To relieve stress? Is it because of addiction? There are many reasons, and probably more than one apply (we are exposed to many messages from tobacco companies to keep us smoking: Sex, success, hipness, all the “positive” associations in movies, magazines, entertainment events.)

- We need to realize and admit that we are addicted (that was the plan of the tobacco industry, after all), both on a physical level and a psychological level, and we have to deal with both of them if we are going to be successful.
- We must look at how much we smoke, and when. (I smoked three packs a day. That was an average of one cigarette about every 15 minutes.) I didn't even think about lighting up. I was programmed, and at that interval of time, my hand just automatically reached for a cigarette. There are also other triggers to smoking, such as having a drink, after a meal, after sex, and so forth. This interval, this time after which we automatically reach for a cigarette, is conditioned in us, and it takes a long time after we have quit smoking for it to lengthen and finally become infinite; in other words, for the desire for a cigarette to be permanently gone.

### **HOW IT WORKS**

- We need to see that we've got two opposing forces here. One is a desire to quit, and the other is a double addiction (physical and psychological) to smoke, a *need* to smoke. When the desire to quit is stronger than the need to smoke, we can quit. And as long as it stays stronger, we can stay off cigarettes. However, the addictions last much longer than the desire to quit, and only taper off gradually. While at some point the desire to quit loses its force, and we tend to forget why we quit. The reasons aren't as strong as they were originally. For example, I got the desire to quit when I got sick, but then soon after I got well, I forgot about quitting; the desire to quit fell away. At the point the intensity of the desire to quit falls below that of the need to smoke, we will think of and express many rationalizations ("I enjoy smoking," and "What's life for if you can't enjoy it," and "I'm not going to live forever anyway," and "I've heard of plenty of smokers in their eighties who are still going strong," etc., etc.), and then we start smoking again. Therefore, the big job in order to be successful at staying off cigarettes is to be able to keep the desire to quit as intense as possible, and always greater than the need to smoke.

### **THE SMOKING CYCLE**

- We need to see that there is a smoking cycle. First we get the feeling that we want to smoke, and so we do. After we finish that cigarette, there is an interval of time during which we don't need to smoke; in my case approximately 15. (Two packs a day would be one every half-hour or so, and one pack a day would be one about every 45 minutes.) Then at the end of that interval, the programmed need to smoke arises again, and we just automatically reach for a cigarette and light up. We don't think, "Gee, I think I'd like a cigarette right now"; we just reach for a cigarette and pop one in our mouth and fire it up.

### **THE TASK & EFFECT**

- So now we see that the task is identified. All we have to do is take care of that moment when we would normally have a cigarette, and then we can coast for the interval, until the next urge arises. And then we take care of the need for that

cigarette, and repeat that process again and again. And if we do that every time, then over a long enough period of time (say a month, or so), the need for the cigarettes just falls away. Actually what happens is, over time, the interval between the need for cigarettes lengthens, so instead of being, say 15 minutes between cigarettes, it goes to 30 and then to an hour, and then on to several hours, and finally within the span of a month or so, the need for a cigarette never arises again at all.

### **THE SOLUTION**

- So, the question is, how can we take care of that need to smoke without actually smoking; take care of that time when we would normally light a cigarette? What I came up with was a 3x5 card. Just a plain old 3x5 card. On one side--at the time I had the emotional desire to quit--I wrote all the reasons why I wanted to stop smoking. There were bad breath, colds, coughs; there was fear of cancer, emphysema, heart disease; there were burned clothes, burned furniture, burned carpets; there were smelly clothes and higher dry-cleaning bills; there was anger of other people; I was tired of being ostracized, of harming others; I knew insurance rates were higher for smokers; and then there was the cost to purchase the cigarettes themselves, which when added up over time, was considerable; all these reasons I listed on one side of the card. Then on the other side, I wrote something like, "Cigarettes have no mind or will; they cannot defeat me."
- That card became my pack of cigarettes. I carried it in my pocket where I had formerly carried my cigarettes, and every time I would have an urge for a cigarette, I pulled it out and read it. Reading that card got me through that need for a cigarette, and then I was able to coast for the 15-minute interval. And every time the need for a cigarette arose, I would read that card and remind myself of why I quit, and then be able to get through that period of time. And gradually, over time the intervals between needs for cigarettes lengthened. And finally, after about a month, I didn't have any more urges to smoke. And more importantly, I didn't have any *desire* to smoke. I threw the card away. I never had to eat candy or chew gum or eat junk food. Other than the card, I never had the need for anything as a substitute for smoking. The card was all I needed. It constantly reminded me of why I wanted to quit in the first place, and keep my desire to quit more intense than my need to smoke. I never felt any stress or feeling of loss. And I have never had a cigarette again. And that was almost 40 years ago.

### **OTHER INFLUENCES**

- One other thing: I found that to make it work, I couldn't straddle the fence, as a smoker. I had friends that were smokers. When I quit, they made jokes about me and generally weren't very helpful to me. I suspect that what I was doing threatened them and, so, subconsciously, it would make them feel better if they could make me "quit" quitting. I don't know, but I decided that I had to choose to not be in environments where there were other people smoking, at least until I was able to conquer the addiction. It was important enough to me to do that, even if it meant missing some social events with friends that I would have otherwise

enjoyed. That was my personal decision, but I think it's an important consideration.