

***MY LOVE,
PLEASE STOP SMOKING!***

Your Way Out of the Labyrinth...

by

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Foreword by Kim McElroy, MD

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Foreword by Kim McElroy, MD

Annually, smoking kills over 400,000 people in the United States alone, producing more victims than AIDS, automobile accidents, homicides, suicides, drug overdoses and fire, combined. Cigarette smoking is directly responsible for at least 20% of all deaths from heart disease. Smokers in their thirties and forties have a heart attack rate that is five times higher than their nonsmoking peers'. Smoking accounts for about 30% of all cancer deaths; it causes 85% of all lung cancers and boosts the rates of pneumonia, bronchitis, emphysema, leukemia, cancers of the throat, mouth, esophagus, kidney, bladder and pancreas too. Smokers suffer more strokes and are more often subject to forms of dementia, like Alzheimer's disease.

In women, smoking produces thyroid disorders, infertility, ectopic pregnancy, miscarriage, porous bones and lack of control over the passage of urine. Pregnant women experience higher rates of infant mortality and stillbirth. Low birth weight, sudden infant death syndrome, attention deficit disorders, a lower rate of intellectual development burdens smoking mothers' children in infancy and follow them into later life. They tend to depression and substance abuse.

Smokers age prematurely. They develop more and deeper wrinkles. They suffer higher rates of hair loss and go prematurely gray. Smoking helps trigger abnormal rates of pigment production in the skin, causing blotches. Smokers subject themselves to lost hearing and vision. They incline to cataracts and diseased gums.

Were this not enough, smokers expose friends and loved ones to second-hand smoke that contains the same harmful toxins smokers regularly inhale. Passive exposure to smoke increases the risk of heart disease by 25% to 90%, of lung cancer by about 25%. Half an hour spent in a smoke filled room reduces the level of antioxidants (like vitamin C) in the blood and lowers the body's ability to protect the heart. Parents' smoke imposes a higher risk of asthma, bronchitis, pneumonia, ear infections and eczema upon their children. With this, I shall bring my litany of human suffering and sorrow to a close.

The good news is that most of the effects of inhaling tobacco are reversible. This happens fast. Your body frees itself of nicotine within a day. Eight hours after your last cigarette, levels of oxygen and carbon monoxide normalize. In 24 hours, your risk of heart attack decreases. After 2 days, damaged nerve endings start growing back. By the third day, lung capacity starts increasing. In 2 to 12 weeks, this increase will reach 30%. Circulation improves. Over the next few months, cilia start

growing back in the lungs, bringing fewer infections, less coughing and shortness of breath with them as they develop. The greatest long-term benefit is a steady decline in your chances of getting cancer. Ten years after quitting, your chances of developing lung cancer are the same as though you had never smoked.

I was delighted to hear that my friend Thomas had quit and jumped at his offer to introduce this book. Quitting smoking is the single most important thing he could have done to improve his health. Based on his personal experience of untangling the grips smoking had upon him, this book is guaranteed to help you identify and eliminate the factors that lead you to believe stopping smoking is something hard, if not impossible, to do. You will learn to listen to your body and follow its council; you will rid yourself, in the process, of the mental habits, the self-deceptions that support your smoking habit.

The last section of the book guides you through the first two critical weeks after you have overcome your addiction. Most importantly, you will discover that what many consider a painful, arduous process is in fact a joyous, liberating journey of self-discovery instead.

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Chapter One: Why?

The Purpose of This Book

is setting first things first. After months, lack of food will kill you; without water, you will last a week; but without air your life is over in minutes. This book is about breathing. It is also about its destruction.

Interactive, the text solicits your thoughts; you help define your smoking habit by identifying the needs, goals and wishes that make it be.

The book focuses on cigarette smokers for the simple reason that people inhale cigarettes more than they do other forms of tobacco. Whoever inhales pipes or cigars is a de facto cigarette smoker by suffering the same physiological damages cigarette smokers do. The concept 'cigarettes', then, applies to whomever inhales tobacco.

How much do you smoke? Please take a moment's time to calculate how much money you will save over a year. The savings start the day you stop. Multiplying what you spend on cigarettes each day by 365 gives you the hard truth of how much of your money goes up in smoke.

Interactive: Think of what else you could do with the money...

The Money is Spent

already, so why worry about it? This consideration leads to another: having smoked x years, why stop now? You can no more regain lost health than you can recover spent money. Wrong!

Medical evidence supports the conclusion that it is never too late to stop smoking. When you quit inhaling tobacco, the adverse effects of nicotine, tar and all the chemicals they use to enhance the effects of tobacco reduce to nothing. The strain you have been putting on your heart, lungs and circulatory system ends immediately; every cell in your body cries out in joy and relief.

Repairing the damage your body has sustained begins immediately. During the first day after you quit smoking your body rids itself of a good bit of the nicotine it contains; the tars and other ingredients found in tobacco (there are more than 500 chemical additives routinely added to cigarettes), are another matter. All the particles that have gone deep inside you, into the cytoplasm of your cells for instance, take far longer than a day to remove. The lack of stimulation nicotine provides the neural pleasure centers of the brain is what smokers feel first. It is what they respond when they stop, interpreting the missing kick as a need to smoke. The buzz nicotine provides is not the only thing that has gone missing, though; wherever one's bloodstream reaches, inhaled smoke deposits pollutants chemically welded to the nicotine one craves. Oxygen molecules carry the whole mess deep into one's body. Where within you does your blood not go? The negative effects of the tars, the natural chemical ingredients and manufactured additives are events integral to the nicotine kick one craves!

Interactive: How old were you when you smoked your first cigarette? Now, please multiply the costs of a year's cigarettes by the number of years you have been smoking habitually. Nice money!

The Tip of the Iceberg

is the smallest part. The cost of cigarettes is the same. Money you spend on tobacco is, as it were, a down payment. Think of the holes you have managed to burn into various items of clothing. Consider your home furnishings charred with burns like fat brown worms; these marks are costly, and more importantly, they disfigure precious things – things you chose and loved unbranded like the way they were when you brought them home!

The major hidden cost of smoking, though, relates to one's damaged health. Smokers miss more days at work than their nonsmoking colleagues do. The United States government, in the late '90's, sued the tobacco industry to recover billions of dollars of public money spent treating injured smokers, and dying ones. Medical care, I think you will agree, especially when you tie it to time lost at work, is a factor more complicated to come to terms with than refinishing the surface of the cherry wood table is.

Interactive: To the costs of smoking supplies, please add what you have spent on burned clothing, home furnishings, days missed at work and increased healthcare costs. These top up the cost of cigarettes you came to earlier. The cost of cigarettes and lighters alone was surprisingly high. What now?

Withdrawal Symptoms

get me every time I try to stop, and Lord knows, I've tried! Every time, though, the miseries take over. When it gets too bad, I do the sensible thing: I fire up a fag.

Worth noticing about this set of associations is that the people who relish listing the difficulties they experienced trying to quit are, without exception, people who still smoke. The only thing that follows from this is that trying to quit smoking is agonizing. Is this also true of stopping?

The cornerstone of this book is the proposition that quitting is not only painless and easy; even more, it is a joyful process of discovery. For you to make this come true requires a certain amount of preparation. Identifying the factors that make quitting seem difficult is a good place to start. When you have seen through the first wave of excuses, you are in position to tackle the remaining blocks you have put in your way. Success rests, in the first instance, on clarifying the difference between trying to quit smoking and actually doing it.

Smokers regularly pretend they do not smoke, not really! Who thinks of her/himself as a non-smoker while puffing away has enthroned the belief that stopping smoking is not only difficult, but impossible to do: Lemon tree, very pretty and the flower is very sweet but the fruit of the poor lemon is impossible to eat! Who thinks of himself as a nonsmoker while keeping at it is confused; from which it follows that pretending you have quit already stands firmly in the way of your wanting to.

Important is to face the fact you are hooked. The questions below will solicit personal answers from you, answers indicating your addiction's psychological profile.

1. Have you ever gotten up to smoke in the wee hours of a restless
2. night?
3. Have you ever, during a performance, slipped out of your
4. seat to the theater lobby for no other reason than to have a quick smoke?
5. Is it, as far as you are concerned, practically unthinkable to drink coffee or alcohol without smoking?
6. Do you fire up a cigarette after waking in the morning, or just after a nap?
7. Do you smoke after exercising, or during breaks in play (innings, sets, etc.)?

8. Have you ever put a freshly lit cigarette in the ashtray only to find another one is burning there?
9. Discovering late one night that you have run out of cigarettes, did you leave home for no other reason than to get more?

A 'yes' answer to any of the questions above reflects the response of an habitual smoker. The greater the number of times you marked 'yes' the deeper your addiction goes. A large number of 'yes' answers – even all seven of them, does not diminish your ability to stop smoking decisively and easily. What your answers show is the psychological design, the mental climate of your individual smoking habit.

Interactive: Identifying the pattern your smoking habit has gives you the edge of knowing what situations will likely challenge you as a new nonsmoker – once you have stopped. Situations, in other words, in which you habitually smoked before are likely to turn up again in the form of pleasant memories whose rosy glow invites you to repeat the pleasant experience.

The idea comes to you, “now would be a nice time for a cigarette.” There is a very simple method for dealing with all of these situations as they arise. First, however, it is important for you to these identify situations. They are benchmarks of your own distinctly personal smoking habit. To understand, in advance, the impulses these situations trigger in you will allow you to deal with them later when they will serve to entice you to smoke again.

Understanding these experiences is like recognizing someone you know.

For instance, if you love to smoke during coffee breaks with your friends, imagine yourself in their company – Rebecca is there, too; only this time you are not smoking. You are breathing deeply instead, and enjoying your friends' society without feeling a need to hurt yourself to be with them. Does this mean you are no longer friends? Certainly not! What is important is you have quit. Your friends are as wonderful as they always were, maybe even more so, on this special day. Smoking together does not make you friends; nor need friendship make you smoke.

When you have performed this mental exercise in one situation, you have forged the key for unlocking situations similar to it. Just before drifting off to sleep at night is an ideal time to let the kaleidoscope of smoking scenes you enjoy most drift through your mind. Imagine your friends making light of you by offering you cigarettes, which you refuse. This is, in fact, very likely to happen once you are in their company as a fresh nonsmoker!

Instead of seeing yourself reaching for a cigarette, imagine yourself enjoying the situation all the more because your need to smoke is no longer an essential part of being together with your friends, or having coffee. This sort of imaginative exercise is not only fun – imagining one to be free is always so; more important is the self-respect you are creating. What you see as a new alternative among imagined possibilities will wind up contributing to your real freedom. Situations you thought could only go down in one way turn out to contain alternatives – ways of reacting that you had not considered until now. The more vividly you imagine being free in your favorite smoking situations, the better your chances will be of making it come true. The day is not far off when what you are rehearsing today will become Technicolor reality. You are having coffee with Rebecca. Can you think of better company? She is wonderful – still, when you are in her company the habitual call to smoke pops into your mind! This time, however, you not only refuse to submit to the impulse, you easily defeat its siren song by reminding yourself, “Having another cigarette is only an idea.” With this, you breathe a sigh of relief. After all, flapping your arms to fly to the moon is an idea, too. But no one in his right mind believes action is called for in this case either. Rebecca smiles at you. It is plain she is glad to see you!

The Only Impediment

to stopping smoking successfully is your tobacco consumption – smoking is the event you can and will remove from your life. If, one morning, you do not reach for that first cigarette (with a woozy feeling of anticipation), there is no longer any reason for you to consider quitting. Often, reasons for quitting are what you give yourself in order not to try, and more importantly, not to succeed. It is a punishment factor. When you suppose addiction to cigarettes is hopeless and escape inconceivable, you are cunningly and thoroughly defeating all hope. Capable of defeating yourself with complete success, ironically, what follows is to deny you are hooked.

This is not as simple as it looks. No one wakes up one morning and says, “Betty, I am going to smoke three packages of cigarettes today! Tomorrow I am going to do the same thing and I shall continue doing it on every day that follows for as long as I live (probably not very long)!” Smokers do not start smoking as an act of will. Most start on whim. Perhaps one day in the parking lot, your school chum held out his pack of his and said, “Here, try one!”

People also start smoking by imitation. After all, Mom or Dad, or _____ smokes and I want to be like her/him. Reasons for starting up are as accidental and are as various as we are. Why you started makes no difference. What matters – and it is the only thing of real importance, is addiction has come to dominate your life: no rationalization, none whatsoever, will alter this fact. The only thing that will change it, of course, is to stop smoking.

Whoever says, “I can stop smoking anytime” is worse off than one who believes cancer will get him before his willpower kicks in. The former believes his/her daily intake of nicotine and tar is some kind of accident, a complete fluke like the chance meeting of a home-town friend on a random street corner in a foreign city. Honest addicts know they are hooked and will admit it, which means they are ready and willing to acknowledge a problem exists. To succeed in quitting, you must identify your problem instead of rationalizing it away. “I am not addicted. I just smoke one from time to time. I can quit whenever I like. Anyway, a pack a day is no problem for me. I enjoy every cigarette I smoke!”

“Have a look at this photo, Joe. Cancerous lung tissue!”

Terror never straightened anyone out. Photos of cancer tumors will make Joe tremble. He will mumble “terrible, terrible” fidget and fumble for his cigarette pack. He will draw one out and

light it. Ok, you made his hands shake but so what?

Interactive: What are your deepest feelings about your addiction's hold on you? Isn't it terrible, being helpless and completely without hope!

Secret Thoughts of Immortality

are what make most smokers' rationalizations tick. The fact that countless generations of human beings have died does not prove you will, too. The mad hope that you will be the first person to step away from what fate has decreed for everyone else is thinkable; therefore it is rational in the sense of being conceivable. While no one can imagine a round square, conceiving of yourself as smoking as much as you like and living forever presents no problem whatever – in the simple sense that it is a clear idea.

Even if you were immortal (which you are not), remember that the quality you give your life is more important than how long it will last. You have all the time in the world to dream of climbing stairs effortlessly, or of making love forever. Anyone can dream, even with a hacking cough that tears through you every time you impose the slightest strain on your body. Time is now. You may dream about running a mile tomorrow; but can you actually do it today? As you dream, you are only marking time like prison inmates do in the movies. Prisoners are the ones who mark time aren't they, scratching messy Roman numerals into the walls confining them? Other things are happening, as well:

1. Does your toothbrush make you want to gag?
2. Is the surface of your tongue coated with a substance that turns the color of whatever you have been drinking?
3. Are you subject to sensitive, sweaty feet?
4. Is foot odor, along with its treatment, an accepted part of your life?
5. Do your hands perspire chronically – especially when you wish they would not, like when the boss wants to shake hands?

Interactive: These questions pinpoint random side effects smoking has on people, depending on how long they have smoked, of course. Effects vary from person to person; however, obvious constants, things like your hair and clothes reeking of tobacco smoke, bleary eyes, stained teeth, shortness of breath, bleeding discolored gums – you can add these on to whatever part of the list above applies to you!

Dreams of Freedom

never got anyone out of prison; nor will dreaming you are a nonsmoker free you of the nicotine jail you have chosen as your special form of incarceration. When you light up at breakfast, not feeling particularly well, what with a dry mouth, caked, plugged nostrils and scratchy eyes, suddenly you find yourself muttering “This is it. This is my last cigarette – ok my last pack, anyway.” Such outbursts of resolve make you feel better. Suddenly you feel fine: “It’s not easy,” you tell yourself. “Why not sweeten this decisive moment with one last cigarette – for old times, one for the road, so to speak!” Quitting in this manner is really very, very – what? It’s a tricky way of making your first cigarette of the day taste better! You sugarcoat an old routine of reaching out your automatic hand for the cigarettes in their appointed place; you pretend your first smoke of the day is a sacrificial offering. Wow!

The underlying problem is that all your cigarettes have come to taste the same; this angers you; it makes you hate yourself more than you should for smoking; so you jazz up lost flavor with imaginative new ideas to breathing new life into a tired, old routine – it has become a ritual act devoid of real pleasure or of meaning.

Do you remember your first cigarette? You were most likely together with a friend. What a thrill! First, you felt a stabbing sensation in your lungs and then a tiddly, glorious feeling passed through you, your distorted vision and all – the famous buzz. It was a bit like falling in love! Suddenly the whole world looked different! Objects were more sharply outlined than before – and look at the colors! How satisfying it is, then, to end one’s smoking career the way it began – with a single astonishing, exceptional cigarette!

The satisfaction of this drama is that when you first invented it this morning it got you all excited. Now, nearing mid-day, the thrill is gone. The ‘last pack, anyway’ theory starts looking more attractive. With a sinking feeling that maybe you cannot renounce smoking so quickly and easily as you thought, you fish another cigarette out of the pack that you happen to have brought along. With a few hours’ distance between you and the day’s first smoke, lo and behold! This one has the buzz back in it that, in time, had gone missing from the others. Who said quitting isn’t worth it? It feels wonderful!

“Maybe quitting completely is not the right approach,” you muse; fresh hopes, a bright future beckons you with a feeling of joy that borders on ecstasy. “Why not smoke a few, delectably rare cigarettes in the course of a day? The real problem with

smoking is the dumb, monotonous repetition my habit has taken on. If I can put *that* away I will be home free.” You conclude it is more reasonable (and attainable) to smoke only the few cigarettes: cigarettes you will really enjoy during the course of a day.

This watered-down version of stopping, as long as it lasts, is emotionally nearly as satisfying as the drama of the decisive stop had been some hours earlier. Notice: it is a celebratory cigarette that sweetens your moral resolve in both these cases.

As wonderful as theory is, the day wears on and unexpectedly, the boss hands you an incredible workload and barks that it needs doing by yesterday. With this unforeseen new responsibility, the joy of being a moderate smoker fades. You table it: “The hell with quitting today! The job calls for everything I’ve got: I’ll reconsider stopping tomorrow!”

What is clear is that the nicest, easiest way of stopping smoking is to pretend you have done it already when you haven’t. The idea that stopping is painful is made of oft-repeating self-deceptive rituals like this. The actual pain of stopping smoking (as distinct from the *idea* that it is painful) is the damage smoking did to your body while you smoked – whether you ever considered stopping or not. But this is another subject! Fooling yourself has the advantage of combining the ease of continuing to smoke with the good feelings that come from having quit. The problem is that you have not quit. Although it is true that each of us, as mentioned before, started smoking for reasons as individual as we are, what we share is the inexhaustible capacity for fooling ourselves about what is going on when we smoke. Fooling yourself is as much a part of your smoking habit as inhaling smoke is!

When you view the drama of getting, lighting, posing with and inhaling cigarettes, the mental posture (you mentally envision yourself in profile, looking a bit like Clark Gable, you fancy) you are investing your present smoking with the thoughts and feelings that it is your fate, your destiny; it will not only give your present cigarette a new kick, it illumines the actions that go with smoking as though this time, too, were your very first time.

Willpower is the Answer

is how most people respond once they have acknowledged that they have a problem. Why do they respond thus? Willpower comes to mind because it is the opposite of habit – “habitual” means smoking whether you want to or not. Nobody ever suggested that willpower is what produced the addiction. “I hooked myself on cigarettes by the sheer force of my will! One morning I made my decision and never once have I wavered!”

What is missing is not willpower. What has gone missing is the healthy body you had before submitting it to profound, if gradual, and therefore an only subliminally noticeable physical degradation that inhaled smoke brings to every part of your body.

Healthy people can breathe through both nostrils; they have normal, tranquil, low-velocity heart rates and the ability to climb flights of stairs without gasping like someone going under for the third time now. Willpower will no more restore your heart rate to normalcy than it will enable you to fly. Quitting smoking, then, is not about willpower. It is about identifying tricks and turns of mind that keep you smoking. You can will yourself to rise from your chair but you cannot will yourself to enjoy it. Recovering the joy of a healthy body is as involuntary as smoking is; the pleasure of physical movement returns very soon after you stop inflicting injury and hurt upon yourself, when you stop inhaling smoky air laden with tar, nicotine and chemical additives. Terror will not stop you from smoking. Willpower won't either. What will stop you is undoing the things, one by one, that keep you at it.

Interactive: Why not take a moment to reflect upon your favorite excuses for smoking? These are reasons you offer people when you explain to them why you smoke. What advantage derives from them?

But the Pain

of quitting requires willpower to subdue it! The mistake here is that every discomfort one feels after quitting is an effect of having smoked, not of having quit – and please remember smoking affects not only your body but your mind, as well. Integral to smokers' addiction is first, to deny its existence and then, to ignore its destructive effects. Continual inhalation of smoke brings continually increasing disabilities with it; the easiest way to forget what you are doing – and have done with it all, is to fire up another one. Fresh burning smoke distracts you from having to notice the damage that nags you like a yapping dog, little aches and pains that are its signals. Now you are busy lighting up; taking inventory of your aches and pains can wait. There are thousands of other matters to think about. Think, for instance, of how many ways you can inhale tobacco (you can do it through your nose) and what fun blowing smoke rings is! Meanwhile, debonair, you wave your cigarette through the air as thoughts race through your mind; you have integrated smoking into the dance of life. Isn't smoking one of its magic moments?

A clear sign of subliminally planned failure is when people lavish sudden attention upon the effects smoking has had upon them – as an argument for stopping. The inherent danger of confusing physical pain with the remorse you feel for having smoked is that it can lead you, by a very new route, to believe either that you have stopped already or that stopping will not help or that stopping is what hurts. The more reasons you can give to support such ideas, the truer they must be!

Please take a moment. Think carefully about your favorite reasons for being unable to stop smoking. "I will get fat if I do," is a classic.

Interactive: Why not compare the reasons you give yourself for not quitting with the reasons you give other people when you tell them why you smoke? You may well discover that your reasons for not wanting to stop have nothing whatsoever to do with the ones you give others for explaining why you smoke.

Let's Make a List

of the most popular reasons people give for continuing to smoke.

1. If I quit I will get fat. 2. I want to be like _____ (the name of someone you admire goes here). 3. I am active enough to stay in shape whether I smoke or not. 4. I feel fine the way I am. 5. I have all the time in the world to quit and I will do it when I want to!

There are, as mentioned, as many reasons for not wanting to stop as there are individuals giving them. Some of these we have already surveyed: the fear of withdrawal symptoms, one's lack of willpower and so on. Now, let us look at the items in the list above one by one.

I'll Get Fat!

Yes! It is easy to do when you stop. However this is only true if you maintain the life-style you have gradually – very gradually, slipped into as a smoker. Smokers tend to become increasingly inactive. This is not hard to understand. The more you smoke, the more costly each physical movement you make becomes and so, the life-style most compatible with habitual smoking is to do nothing at all. This does not mean smokers cannot keep pace with their companions. Smokers and nonsmokers do sports together. However, an athlete who runs every day will not even be out of breath after jogging two or three miles inhaling at twice the speed he/she exhales. Someone who averages two packs a day, on the other hand, will have to struggle mightily even to reach the finish line (who ever thought a mile was so ridiculously far?), and over the next few days our freshly mobilized runner will do some hefty complaining. Standing up, to say nothing of walking, bending or, in fact doing anything at all, will be painful.

It is true that smokers can do most things nonsmokers can; but the drain on one's energy is dramatically higher for smokers. Whoever can breathe easily is already ahead of anyone who smokes. Veteran smokers struggle for breath after trivial exertions.

Here are some physical facts: A week after you quit, your pulse rate will sink to a nonsmoker's level. The moment you begin smoking again, your pulse rate will shoot back up, with astonishing swiftness, to where it was before you stopped. Psychologically, smoking a single cigarette will, in a flash, negate the nonsmoking week that preceded it: your pulse accelerates with the first few puffs you take and the entire mindset you had developed during the entire time you smoked will return to reclaim you. If you continue smoking (as most likely you will), both your smoker's heart rate and your smoker's mental attitude will stay with you.

Whoever fills their lungs with smoke all day, it takes their hearts that much more effort to provide the body's millions of cells with the oxygen they need. Your lungs receive more pollutants, less oxygen; your heart works overtime trying to make up the difference. Meanwhile, the circulating blood serves to pile up pollutants in your body.

I remember how astonished I was after six weeks of not smoking. When Tom Lynn and I went swimming in the lake just over the hill from his place, I was amazed how far I could swim –

and how easy it was! My joy grew instead of fading out over after the first few strokes I made. Similarly, once in Mexico when a knife-wielding drunkard threatened me (he was so pickled he could scarcely walk), I took off running. I loped effortlessly for what seemed like miles – all in sheer fun; I ran like a gazelle the tiger wanted not because I was afraid but because doing it was so enjoyable.

In sum, extra energy comes from quitting; it will automatically compensate for your tendency to get fat – more or less, anyway. This happens whether you want it to or not, and it has nothing to do with consciousness – except for the fact that you are aware of it. When people are only subliminally self-aware, many of them simply overlook their new potential. It is easy to do and this is so because the refusal to be self-aware is a residue of your smoking habit. Instead of awaking to one's new potential, a new nonsmoker tends to continue steering his or her life by rules that developed while they smoked; it is a psychological part of the smoking habit that remains even after the physical fact of smoking has become history. The psychology of smoking is a result of smoking. It is a mode of conduct whose rules are outdated; and yet they remain – by force of habit! People tend to be slow in recognizing the fact that consciousness, still tied to the habit of smoking, is static and out-of-touch with one's body's swift changes. What you had come to think of as being out of reach is actually already a part of your life. You are ready to go but you don't know it; you will need to attune yourself to the facts of your new reality. Instead, smokers' sloth and a smoker's habits of thought still guide you. You take for granted what once was, supposing it must remain so; and in consequence of this, the changes fresh air produces in your body go unnoticed. It is as though the symptoms of smoking were as eternal as the mythological smoker held him/herself to be. The truth is, only the smokers' mindset remains fixed and the more you move, the quicker you will catch on.

The active you, whom you slowly and reluctantly had written off as something that once was, starts coming back to life again the instant you flood your body with fresh air. The longer and the more you smoked, the deeper rooted your habit of sitting around has come to be. This is of the essence of smoking: moving will promote further motion – all according to the same law that makes smoking one cigarette prompt you to reach for another until everything, including life itself, grinds to a halt.

“Me do push-ups? You must be joking.”

Fair enough, it doesn't have to be push-ups. Do whatever you like doing best but do something, please. New energy will blast through you because of your accelerating ability to breathe. This means you not only feel better, you look better too. It is all happening at once. Together with your new ability to breathe, a vast increase in energy is making you beautiful in many ways at once: go on and drink it in – and don't forget, you are becoming richer, too!

I Want to Be Like

_____ , so quitting would be like deserting the group or, as Mark Twain observed, “Heaven for climate, Hell for society.” The friendship-smoking connection is not as simple as it looks; the converse of group smoking is group quitting. The fly in that particular ointment is that whoever wavers first is in the driver’s seat (more of this in the section entitled, “We shall quit together”).

Concerning friendship, it is easy to see that if your friends’ affection depends upon everyone smoking together, their friendship is a caricature of the real thing. It is as though someone were to say, “I will be your friend if you will help me rob the First National Bank tonight!” It is less like a friendship than it is like a threat! Honor among thieves is a cliché. Your friends will continue to love you whether you smoke in their company or not. Whoever likes you only so long as you help them steal horses is more horse-thief than friend!

True, when someone quits smoking, pals will inevitably sidle up with offers of cigarettes; sometimes this is maliciously, other times jokingly done; sometimes it simply happens by chance. Insecure friends will bait you by setting their cigarette packs out at an attractive angle on the table, and behold: two or three little cigarettes are poking their wee heads out most invitingly in your direction. This is the “whoops” school of enticement. Or someone will say, “Here, have another drink,” expertly popping a cigarette out of the eye of the pack they are holding; the cigarette is so close to your face that you cannot help but see it. “Oh, how silly of me! Of course I’d forgotten you’ve quit smoking, Tom!” This sort of thing happens because they would prefer for you not to remind them of their own addiction. For you to have quit deals them desires in conflict. Your success in quitting means that they can, too. What is on the line for them is self-esteem. If they can get you to light one they are home free. “Let’s have a wee one together! Come on! Smoking is our destiny!”

Interactive: When you feel yourself starting to drift to sleep tonight, imagine yourself keeping company with your smoking pals. Imagine their surprise when they discover you no longer smoke. Imagine each one of your friends’ individual response to this newly discovered fact. You can see them as clearly as though it were all on film.

I'm Active Enough

the way it is. I can keep the effects of my smoking in check. The sports and fitness training I enjoy are enough to offset every ill-effect I associate with smoking.

If you enjoy sports and other leisure activities while your heart beats like mad, think of how much more enjoyable these things would be if your heart were beating normally. Smokers' hearts at rest can easily clock in at 90 beats a minute. Playing football, tennis or swimming accelerates this rate considerably. The hearts of athletes, beating at 60 when they are at rest, speed up to the rate yours has when you are loafing. When you are both playing a match, their heart rate speeds up to the rate yours has when you're at rest. Obviously, it is easier for them to win than it is for you just to keep up with them!

It follows that when your heart rate returns to normal, nature guarantees you will start looking at people who smoke with something like blank incomprehension, say nothing of incredulity. You will find imagining your past, when you were one of these pathetic, gasping, things becomes increasingly difficult to do. The bleary look is a theme smokers would prefer not to dwell on. The consolation is that for nonsmokers these blurs are a thing of the past; and even if it once was your reality – at present just the thought of it is enough to make you sweat with embarrassment!

The poor things wear such diffuse faces! When you see smoke plumes exiting their mouths and nostrils, it makes them seem like cartoon characters – but there is no message in their balloons at all. Goofy's, at least, have him saying something funny! The preoccupied look smokers wear while they fuss with their smoking paraphernalia makes them look crankier than it does glamorous or sophisticated, as they would like to make themselves believe it does.

Interactive: Please turn your attention to times when you took a pass on invitations from friends to participate in activities – this time not sports, but all sorts of other activities. How many of your interests have fallen by the wayside? Weren't they things you formerly loved doing? What, if not smoker's apathy, explains why you let them go?

I Feel Fine the Way Things Are

ignores how often you wanted to stop smoking. Feeling well is a gift of nature, her most generous gift; it solves problems before they even arise.

Rarely do people smoke without compulsion. In my life I have had only three companions who were able to deal with tobacco with a free hand; they sociably smoked, say, two or three cigarettes, and then none for weeks on end. However, this book holds no interest for them. They know if they smoke more than three cigarettes in a row they will wake up in the morning with a scratchy throat; it is knowledge enough to make them leave smoking alone for a time. People like these are like the legendary Chinese sages who made a mockery of the Opium wars by smoking a pipe of opium a day – no more. They found a bowlful relaxing and, relaxation, as is well known, leads to a long, happy life. Non-addictive smoking is rare enough to be a law unto itself; for people like them, tobacco presents no problem at all. I have no doubt this ability is the expression of a genetic disposition; one that is extremely rare.

For those of us who lack such generous genes, the normal laws of drug addiction apply to the way we use tobacco. Experts testify persons withdrawing from heroin have a higher success rate than those who want to kick tobacco, which means there are actually two problems involved and not just one. The effects of tobacco on habitual smokers are one thing; the mechanics of their addiction is another. The question “why?” that has dominated this chapter, relates to what the effects of habitual smoking are. The next section, entitled “When?” addresses the causes of addiction. Whoever began smoking innocently (as most of us did), believes (s)he can stop any time – as innocently as they started. Whoever has discovered this is very like a convenient lie should continue reading.

When one considers the mechanics of one’s own addiction, the question “How?” is more important than the question “When?” The crucial consideration for understanding the two important dimensions of one’s habit is to realize that knowing how to drop an addiction changes nothing. It allows one to continue smoking or to shoot heroin with a clear mental grasp of what one is doing. All it takes for addicts to clear their consciences is to convince themselves that “I can quit whenever I like!”

I Have All the Time in the World

is procrastination. Putting things off is pleasant when you are feeling good and anyway, you are determined to have your cake and eat it, too. In a rush of voluptuous detail you anticipate how much better you will feel when you add superb health to your present joy. The problem with giving yourself all the time in the world is that this is what you have been doing all along, for exactly as long as you have been hooked – quite conceivably for years! Whatever is not present time is either memory or anticipation; the only time you will ever succeed in quitting is now, which means everything but actually quitting boils down to fantasy and, finally, pure self-deception. ‘Now’ has a way of turning up in your fantasy world as something already past; fudged achievement is the mainspring that drives your vision of a better future. What is very disturbing about this is how long this has been going on, in happy, carefree repetition. ‘Now’ mocks your noblest dreams because now is a permanent possibility – in fact one’s only possibility, for action. People love to praise action. “I’m all for it!” But the prospect of actually doing something makes their enthusiasm fade. They suddenly go shy and sulky.

“Something might go wrong!” you hear yourself lament. “Maybe I can’t do it, not really! What if I can’t?” Worries pile up in infinite variation. They all boil down to, “I shall fail!” The theme of failure in anticipation of making the very first move is like an express invitation failure herself had sent out to you – flowery, and hand-engraved. The secret of procrastination is simple: it guarantees the future will continue to resemble the past and that nothing will change. The joy one presently feels will come again. Meanwhile, you continue smoking and smoking as though it did not matter. But you know it does.

Interactive: Think over the times that you have felt similar joys. Did these moments of supreme contentment, by any chance, melt shortly after you decided you could afford to wait a while longer? Note: not quitting smoking is what spoiled the moment. The joy was there and you might have built on it. Instead, you did nothing except to preserve your habit intact. The joy had no choice but to fade.

We Shall Quit Together

is the most sociable of all the variations of postponement. The cover story is that unless my girlfriend (wife, boyfriend, husband or whoever it may concern) quits too, success will remain permanently beyond my reach.

Rarely do two people succeed in quitting together – never mind more! It is like what happens to housekeeping in a commune: the standard of cleanliness sinks to the level of the laziest person there. Who wants to spend time and energy walking around behind sloppy Bobby picking up things his limp wrist lets fall?

Quitting-smoking pacts typically perk along up to the first crisis. Sally arrives three quarters of an hour late. She snarls, “Well, Joe, I see you’ve started smoking again!” Joe, suffering this as an insult piled on top of injury, responds by tapping his cigarette against the rim of the ashtray. Favoring Sally with his best warm grin he drawls, “Please Sally, please simmer down! You are three quarters of an hour late you know; so don’t play the innocent! I figured if you’re going to make me suffer I might as well go all the way.”

Willpower, social contracts and other gimmicks are insufficient to reverse firmly rooted habits; exterior considerations will never overturn the crowd of supporting lies, the self-serving rationalizations that form the independent, sovereign nation your addiction has become. Perfectly constructed to flatten any gimmick you can throw against it, your capacity for inventing excuses will surprise you with its energy and its resilience.

Cigarettes are physical entities; they cohabit with our psychological capacity for avoiding responsibility. “We shall quit together” really means “Let Sally do it.” This is where the housekeeping analogy comes in. It is easier to blame everything on Bobby than it is to clean a filthy house. As mentioned before, to admit you have been deceiving yourself for years is replete with the menace contained in realization: “If I have been deceiving myself all this time, doesn’t it basically mean I’ve wasted my life? I’d rather die than think of my life as being nothing. It simply isn’t true!”

What hangs in the balance is how to avoid the primacy of dictatorship: the dictatorship of your deteriorating physique. What makes it a such a must? Nothing! Freedom is worth reaching for!

Smoking at Parties

I have vivid childhood memories of parties my parents gave for their friends. How eye-bitingly harsh the smoke was curling through the air from the ends of the guests' cigarettes! These wisps were radically different from the big plumes of smoke they exhaled. Why? Exhaled smoke is smoke well-filtered by the bodies of the smokers. Their moist mouths, nostril, throats and lungs absorb most of the harshness before they exhale it, is why.

Adroitly dodging the wisps of smoke that curled through the air from the cigarettes that guests' fingertips and ashtrays held, I remember enjoying the clouds of smoke they exhaled. They had an interesting aroma. I could associate no pain with them.

Neither gaining weight nor hating people because they smoke logically follows from quitting. The trick is to cut smokers' thinking loose decisively when you stop inhaling smoke. The physical habit of smoking, because it is a conscious activity, affects your mind along with the cells deep inside your body. Habit is more than the cries neglected brain cells squeal in their need for another blast of nicotine – to offset their pain and boredom, mind. It is a mind-set, a group of conscious habits clustered around your smoking behavior; they relate to your habit because they support it.

If you are willing to recognize the possibilities a normal pulse rate carries with it you can still get fat – but only if you want to! You do not have to get fat any more than you have to smoke.

Interactive: Why not mull over sports and the other activities you used to love? I am thinking of things you used to do that in time lost their attraction for you. Please trace your feelings back; they will make sufficiently clear to you why you left the activities you formerly loved by the wayside.

Reasons to Continue

smoking exist for persons who are schizophrenic or manic-depressive; persons with these diseases are clinically known to respond positively to tobacco consumption. Why this should be so is scientifically unclear. Yet, for those who suffer wild mood swings – characteristic of both illnesses, tobacco and alcohol are self-help, mood leveling medications. A complicating factor in this situation is that the medical community regularly misdiagnoses manic-depressives as schizophrenic, and (more rarely) visa-versa; science, adding malpractice to the torments the patient already has, compounds a problem that was formidable enough already. To confuse these disorders with one another means treating one disease with medication that works for the other one; the effects of such malpractice are predictable the patient's need for alcohol and tobacco arises to new levels – because the patient knows they work. Who suffers the effects of bad medication one can hardly blame for reaching out to home remedies of proven effectiveness: booze and cigarettes!

The potentially lethal combination of alcohol with tobacco and sleeping pills effectively helps control mood swings. Not only very dangerous, on the long term self-help treatments of this sort make things worse by intensifying depression, a fact of smoking that every smoker knows. With informed and accurate diagnosis, long-term treatment employing precise doses of the right medicines reduces the need for alcohol and tobacco and, once they bring the painful symptoms of these illnesses under control, normal rules of nicotine and alcohol dependency apply as much to manic-depressives and schizophrenics as to anyone else.

Reasons for Stopping

everyone knows. Staying a safe distance away from cigarettes increases your health and your fortune. It makes you better looking, too; nor is it too late to stop. No matter how old you are, no matter how long you have smoked, the results of quitting are positive; turning off the spigot of daily pollutants contributes immediately, importantly and constructively to your health and well-being. The clock is ticking. You will feel better within a matter of hours. You will become less cranky and you will sleep better – taken together, these things cannot help but make you better looking. You will notice that attractive people who used to ignore you, more or less, back when you smoked now look your way with interest. Puzzled, they will do double-takes such as you had thought were gone from your life forever. Smoking, taken together with the self-deception that supports it, will mentally and physically isolate you; it will muffle your eyes and your ears. Real life is vivid, not blurred!

In defense of smokers, let us support them in their struggle against a form of isolation profounder than the one they impose upon themselves. A remarkable and unanticipated effect of the great drive against smoking at the turn of the century in the United States was that the rate at which teenagers started smoking increased by something like thirteen percent – instead of falling, as the leaders of the anti-smoking drive had anticipated. Teenagers were inclined to accept the known risks of smoking over blindly embracing orders. They rebelled against what they perceived to be an overbearing form of authority. It is commendable that they did so. To tell a young person freedom is equivalent to mindless obedience demeans them; it insults their intelligence and even worse, manipulates their freedom to its very essence. Sensing this, the youth sent their own strong message: “We would rather die of lung cancer than let you treat us like morons.” Mobbing others into doing what is good for them is not only counterproductive; it cheapens the very freedom authorities are pretending to support.

Years ago when we were still in High School, Jerry said “Next week is mental health week, Thomas! Help me, will you please? Walking door-to-door, when someone answers we’ll say, ‘Support mental health or we’ll kill you!’” Who rebels against excessive authority is heroic; however, consider how badly self-inflicted pain fits in with this scenario. Remember, the primary why of quitting is that smoking hurts!

I recall dining in a restaurant with friends back in the days when I still smoked. As we waited for our pizzas, the hostess

escorted a party of four into our dining room, seating them across the room from us. When the hostess left, one of the newcomers asked us if they might join us at the table next to ours. With puzzlement we looked briefly into one another's faces and with a nod decided "Yes, why not?" and on they came. No sooner seated, the woman who had invited herself over hissed, "Will you please put out your cigarette!"

I was about to anyway since I saw the waiter was bringing our pizzas; like a Statue of Liberty in motion, pizzas where the torch should be, the waiter was acrobatically weaving his way through the pattern that the tables made so I stabbed my cigarette out in the ashtray. "Fine," I said to the woman. My compliance brought a ghoulish grin to her face and it became clear to us all: her real interest was not to share the dinner hour with us but to dominate our lives by imposing her own particular sense of justice.

After dinner, I spotted the waiter dancing our way with the coffee. I fired up a fresh cigarette with a happy sigh of anticipation. The director of our destinies swiveled, her eyes ablaze. "I thought you promised that you wouldn't smoke!" She hissed, bobbing her head, it seemed to me, rather oddly.

As cool as I could manage, I said "I won't smoke while I'm eating; but with coffee, well – you know how nice a fag goes down with the coffee! If you stayed by the wide open windows, the lovely breeze blowing this way would have protected you against my smoke and we wouldn't be having this conflict, now would we? As things turn out, far from seeking our company, you loathe smoke and you loathe smokers. It is perfectly ok with me if you don't like these things but I have a problem, too: I'm far from crazy about moral reformers!"

To dislike smoke and smoking is one thing; it is another to go out of one's way to seek out the very things one hates. What is the point? The point is subjecting others to one's will, a passion at least as destructive as smoking is. Called tyranny, it has killed as many people as smoke poisoning has – maybe more, with a decisive difference: the victims of tyranny had no control whatever over the forces that wrecked first, and then ended their lives. Smoking is easier to cure than a frenzied tyrant's bloodletting is. Stopping smoking, once you are clear about why you want to do it, boils down to the question of "when?" The solution to tyranny is another matter.

The Most Painful Thing

no matter what other problems you may or may not have, is realizing “How stupid I have been, how self-destructive and disappointing my actions have been for my own well-being, and for everyone who loves me! I have been inflicting destruction not only on myself but on everyone close to me. Appalling, particularly for those who mean me well, my forcing them to put up with the effects smoke has on them – all for no real reason! Nonsmokers can smell me upwind at an arm’s length! I can see them recoil at the scent my body; I can see looks of concern cross their faces when I go into one of my coughing fits!”

Humbling, the fact of human nature that no one, simply no one, wants to discover an idea one has allowed to guide one’s life is not only false but hopelessly stupid to boot. You have allowed an error of judgment to guide you for years! This means that what you have now discovered to be a mistake was so from the very beginning; the longer you have clung to it the more aggravating it becomes to realize how stubbornly you have clung to a sheer stupidity. If I have come to admit after five, or after thirty years that I was wrong from the very start, what hits me next is that I have lived the last five, ten, fifteen – thirty, or however many years – in vain.

One instinctively cries out “This cannot be! I shall have another cigarette and think the matter through from the very beginning; and this time I will take care to be completely clear.”

The idea that quitting must be painful is rooted in one’s illusions conjoined with the constant pain smoking inflicts on smokers. There is more to it than just inhaling tobacco. The illusions you have spun around your habit psychologically to justify your smoking – in the face of medical fact, translate into a person’s easily identified feelings. A single word sums them all up: pain. Not only is the pain constant, equally humiliating to come to terms with is the fact that one has insistently, dogmatically been making the same error for years on end on an every-day basis. Obviously, persisting in the mistake will not fix it. The pains associated with smoking will inevitably worsen and one’s myriad discomforts will inevitably develop into illnesses of various sorts.

Admitting to, and understanding one’s self-deceptions in detail will make you feel much better, both physically and emotionally. First, though, you will have to get over the jolt. It is profound. Feeling continually worse is what pretending nothing has been happening all these years was all about. It is literally

humiliating, in light of this, to continue smoking. Not only that, it means you cannot run very fast, there is no joy in climbing a hill, the pleasure of swimming is a distant memory. Humiliation means being humble. The sorrow of admitting to yourself you have been hurting yourself continually, tinkering with your well-being all the while for nothing – is the beginning of joy. The reduction smoking puts you through is humiliation and worse.

Interactive: Imagine yourself in a crisis without reaching for a cigarette. While you are actively engaged in this, take three deep breaths.

Why?

has two sides to it: One is physical, the other emotional. The ill effects smoking has on you have been clear to you before you read a single line of this book: reasons for stopping are among the most highly publicized in the world. The emotions tied up in smoking and in quitting, however, consist of such thoroughgoing, complete self-deceptions that to explore them completely would be the work of a lifetime. What makes it all worse, it is a theme you have forbidden yourself to allow yourself to become conscious of, a theme you can suppress, distort, change and add to at will. Addicts are more inventive than even they themselves are able to foresee. If you have woven your lies into an effective shroud for years now, what about tomorrow's new, unpleasant facts? You will invent lies you have not yet conceived of to blind yourself to them. Have you not often astonished yourself with the brilliance of some of your excuses? Smoking rests on a series of self-deceptions so unbelievably creative the last thing any smoker wants to do is to become aware of them. Let us praise the emperor's new clothes!

The most honest of all the smokers I ever knew was Ruth; she tried quitting in a thousand different ways and wound up switching from cigarettes to little cigars instead. Waving one in the air, she gazed at me owlshly and said, "I know, Thomas. I'm not fooling anyone but myself!"

Self-deception

is a form of lying and lying is theft. The favorite illusion liars coddle is the ridiculous fear of being found out. The irony that highlights this small-time, gangster fear is that it completely overlooks the real danger of lying: lying undermines liars in a way they are completely unaware of; for in their scramble to avoid detection they assume everyone else is lying, too.

When I lie to you I keep the truth for myself, which is theft. I keep what is good and feed you whatever line I believe you will accept; and, since I am afraid you might find out, I am never quite sure whether you actually believe me or not. Maybe you are only pretending to – a thought that heightens my fear of detection. Chief among my motives then, is self-protection. It is possible you have seen through me. In such an event, it is no stretch to imagine that you are stringing me along to find out what will happen next. When the time is right, you will show me what it means to have deceived you.

Since lying is theft, theft is the first and final motive for lying.

By contrast, whoever means you well tells you the truth; this means whoever credits liars with truthfulness is only fooling himself. Who disbelieves a liar threatens liar's standing in the world and, as robbery fills robbers with contempt for anyone stupid enough to permit them to do it. Robbery, in effect, impoverishes its victims twice – both physically and psychologically. This, anyway, is the way it looks from the perspective of the thief.

If lying is theft and theft impoverishes its victims emotionally and materially, liars degrade those whose ears they fill with fairy tales. Moreover, since victims are at fault whenever a robber is able to rob them, liars cannot conceivably trust their victims ever again. They not only rob them; they make them into living jokes that stop being funny only when a victim becomes a threat. Lying is the same. Both actions turn friends into liabilities. The more one lies the worse it gets; with every lie the likelihood of revenge increases. Finally, when the number of one's lies becomes unsustainable, the liar's only rational recourse is to trust no one at all. Maybe the people you have been lying to are more skillful than you are!

In God we trust all others pay cash!

What happens, then, when you are both the liar and the victim of your lies?

The Psychological Foundation

of smoking is self-deception, less evidently so in the form of procrastination, more obviously so in one's host of glamorizing lies. The subtlety of the situation derives from the fact that you are both liar and victim rolled into one; what unites the two of you is the single person who goes on smoking. To say Jack makes you do it is ridiculous. Jack, when no one is looking, holds his magnum to your head and threatens to blow it off unless you smoke another cigarette? Yeah, sure! No one will believe this, or anything like it, because you cannot believe it yourself.

The next sections of this book help define further psychological consequences of your physical addiction to smoking; addiction, taken together with the biological damage it does, leave psychological traces. The first and most far-reaching of these are the modes of self-deception we have been examining. How effectively you deal with them determines when you will be able to stop smoking.

Interactive: Please remember that your remorse will grow with your deepening recognition of how agonizingly silly all your rationalizations are. Your rationalizations are in perfect equilibrium with the physical pains habitual smoking creates. What makes this more remarkable is the fact that these forms of torture are not only parallel with your pains but cumulative: the worse your discomfort becomes the wilder your lies will be!