

MY LOVE, PLEASE STOP SMOKING!

Your Way Out of the Labyrinth...

by

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Foreword by Kim McElroy, MD

Smoking annually 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 their friends and loved ones to second-hand smoke containing the same harmful toxins smokers regularly inhale. Passive smoking 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, lowering the body's ability to protect the heart. Parents' smoke significantly raises the risks of asthma, bronchitis, pneumonia, ear infections and eczema in their children. With this, I shall end my litany of human suffering and sorrows!

The good news is most of the effects of inhaling tobacco are reversible, and it 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 regenerating. By the third day, lung capacity begins to increase. In 2 to 12 weeks, the 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 along with their development. The greatest long-term benefit is a steady decline in the risk 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 a guaranteed help for 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; and in the process, you will happily rid yourself of

the mental habits, the self-deceptions that supported your smoking habit.

The last section of the book guides you through the first two critical weeks of overcoming your addiction. Most importantly, you will discover that what many consider a painful, arduous process is a liberating journey of self-discovery filled with joy.

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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 and about its destruction.

Interactive, the text solicits your thoughts; you help define your smoking habit by identifying its needs, goals and defining wishes. 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 sorts of 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. Savings start the day you stop. Multiplying what you spend daily on cigarettes by 365 and you will know how much of your money goes up in smoke.

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

Chapter Two: When?

If I Carry No Tobacco

with me, the problem is solved: my smoking habit will wither away for the simple reason that I have nothing to smoke! This is wonderful in theory but it is a joke in practice! In no time at all, the habitual smoker will find an easy way to triumph over this little jest. No cigarettes? You have to be kidding! If despotism tends to trigger rebellion among the oppressed, what a romp it is when you are victim and the oppressor all in one!

What happens first is one of your normal unruly conversations with yourself. "This is no problem at all!" You will remind yourself,

“True, I have no smokes with me but look at the fellow over there! He has just lit one. Surely if I tell him the truth, he will feel my need and help me. Ok, they are not my brand, but what the heck. Difficult situations call for creative solutions. I shall ask him nicely. How could he possibly refuse a fellow smoker in need? Certainly I intend to quit smoking, but I’ll be damned if I am going to go down because of something as stupid as the old ‘you can’t smoke one because you don’t have one’ ploy. Come on!”

If you are thinking, “this conversation is more than just a little bit crazy,” right you are and that is not even the half of it.

Chapter Three: How?

Although Your Craving

is physical and involuntary, you are very much aware of it, which is to say it is also a conscious craving. Every step you take to satisfy it is voluntary. Planning is involved. When you feel a need to smoke you instantly recognize it for what it is and act upon whatever sensations are at work in a detailed response tailored to gratify them; you do this with consistent intricacy. You can find your way to a cigarette machine under the most trying of circumstances – need I say it? – walking a mile, if need be. During the course of a normal day, particularly when something unpleasant has happened or is about to happen, the idea how pleasant it would be to have a cigarette steals over you. This has infinite variations: “My God, it’s Jim coming over. I’m sure he wants his money back. ‘Well, hi Jim! Please sit down! Would you like a cigarette? My God, I hate to say it but I’m flat broke all over again!’ How are you?” Hopefully, smoking together with Jim, telling him right off that the car’s in the garage and that they want heaps of money to fix it will help him forget the ten dollars you owe him, at least for a couple of days, whew! Or, you open the bill from the gas company. First you gasp, and then – you guessed it, ‘console’ yourself with a cigarette!

Many of the cigarettes you smoke make up for some hurt you have felt. Notice the twisted logic of it. When you feel hurt, what do you do? You hurt yourself too! Alternatively, when you are afraid someone is about to hurt, or embarrass you, or lay some unwanted problem at your feet, what do you do? – preempt the dawning strike by dealing yourself a stab in the lungs. Before Jim has a chance to ask you for the money, you hide yourself, him and the problem in a smokescreen, literally!

Chapter Four: Results

You have done your homework. When you begin reading this, you will already have stopped smoking.

This chapter will firm up your resolve by alerting you to a variety of sensations and perceptions that go with stopping, sensations the habit would use to reclaim you as a smoker again. The chapter divides into the days of your first two weeks without cigarettes. When you read Day Fourteen your need for support will have faded. You will readily be able to identify the majority of the sensations you feel as bursts of joy. Success will have overtaken your doubts. The abundant good feelings that go with not smoking are the most powerful emotional and physical helps you can get and these will continue to grow. They will make you happy long after your divorce from the cigarette habit is a faded memory.

Nonsmokers' problems flow into the sections that follow in a normal course of one's development into a healthy nonsmoking person. The things that blocked your way when you thought of stopping (they are the reasons you gave yourself to keep going) will crop up again; not only that, they will return wearing new disguises, like some sort of mythical creature. If your favorite movie star fires one up at the close of an amazing love scene, your heart will throb as he/she inhales a luxurious puff. You can feel the smoke go down, which people who have never smoked cannot do; something your ability to identify with the star depends on. Your smoking experience leads you to pose the question, "If (s)he smokes, why can't I?" You are trying to justify having another cigarette, this time with somebody rich and famous.

Days Fifteen through 3,650

Since smoking is the celebration of your ability to breathe, what you have been doing during the years you smoked is to destroy what it is you celebrate by smoking – your ability to breathe. We are back where we started from: the book began with the words "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." Now that you have quit smoking here is a good way to return to your original ability to breathe.

Lie on your back on the floor. If the floor is of wood or stone, put a four-folded blanket down to cushion you. If it is summer, you can lie on your back in the grass and, after having inhaled as fully as

you can, start exhaling from your belly and let it fall as far as it will go. When you do this, what is happening is that your diaphragm rises to the top of your solar plexus. When your belly can fall no further and the diaphragm has reached the limit of its ascent, switch over to your chest muscles, contracting them to compress your chest continuing the process of compressing your lungs. Let your belly and your chest compress completely. What results from these coordinated independent actions is your lungs have contracted until virtually all the air they contained is gone. Hold the air out for a moment or two, keeping your chest fully contracted.

Now, to let air back in, keep your belly compressed and let the air enter your chest first. Your chest will rise from the top to let in a fresh draft of air. When your expanding chest muscles stretch your ribcage out as far as it will go, the process of inhalation will cause your diaphragm to sink and, continuing to expand your chest, you will feel like the cobra Mucilinda spreading its hood; you will feel the air inside you forming a firm column. Once you get past the creaks you feel in the beginning, this turns into a very enjoyable experience! Exhaling from your belly again, you proceed in the two distinct steps (belly contracting first, your chest next and last) until all the air is all expelled from your body. Then you repeat the cycle.

The first effect of breathing this way is it eliminates lower back pains from your life forever! Why? Lower back pain is the result of a passive relationship superficial breathing forces you into with respect to your lower back (the lumbar region). When you breathe fully, exhaling from the belly, you put subtle pressure on the spine starting at the bottom of your spinal chord and ending (when you have mastered this sort of breathing) at the brain stem, also known as “the brain’s brain.” Deep breaths, in other words, massages the spine completely with every breath you take. When you have exhaled completely and then stretch your spine upwards, you will discover that the bones that were out of line in the spinal column will automatically slip into place. Not only are lower back pains history, so are pains in the rest of your spine up to and including your neck. Imagine! Full cycles of breathing massage the spine. They activate and serve to regulate the autonomic nervous system. Such respiration stimulates the spine and all its nerves. The positive results of this are easy to imagine.

You can breathe in this manner anytime you like, any time you have sufficient leisure: in the train, driving a car, sitting in a boring meeting. With steady practice, unnecessary pains become outdated with a nervous system that has come to life.

Breathing is well worth celebration. It is what your secret self did when you smoked only now you can do it openly. Celebrate, but please not with a cigarette!