

Joel's Reinforcement Library

NEVER TAKE ANOTHER PUFF!

"Just One Little Puff?"

It is hard for many people to grasp the concept of how just one little puff can result in full-blown relapse. It just doesn't seem logical to some people. But should you ever find yourself debating the thought of whether or not you could possibly get away with smoking "just" one, think about what advice you would give to a family member or friend who you cared for tremendously, while knowing that they were a recovering heroin or cocaine addict who was for the first time in months or years considering attempting recreational use. Imagine your shock and horror at even the thought of it, especially if you were with them back during the peak of their addiction when it was ruining almost every aspect of life and maybe even putting his or her very life on the line.

Would you say to him or her, "well, maybe you are better now, maybe its worth finding out if you could handle just one?" Would you feel the need to do a little research in current journals to see if maybe "one" is an option now? Would you maybe even delve into a few neurological journals to see if the scientists now have a better grip on neurotransmitter pathways that could explain why addiction happens? Then maybe you could say, "Well they are starting to understand a little more of how addiction works and maybe soon they can alter your brain physiology. So now, if you relapse it may not be a big deal for a cure is just around the corner--maybe even only a few years away."

It is more likely that you would you cut through the rationalization and say, "If you do it, you are going to be back where you were when you first had to quit. You are going to mess up your life and everyone around you."

The odds are you would go the latter route. You would be horrified and take a firm stand that he or she shouldn't do it -- it would be stupid and even worse, suicidal. Well there is no difference between this scenario and the concept of, "Maybe I can have just one, now."

Well there is actually one difference. It is not medically or physically based, but rather societal. Our societies have not been taught about nicotine addiction. People have been taught about addiction and other drugs. Even though nicotine is more addictive than most any other addictive substance, and maybe even the most addictive of all, people still don't grasp how any administration of the substance can cause a relapse, even though they are taught this about most other addictive drugs.

How often has someone asked you after he finds out that you have quit smoking the question, "You mean you haven't even had one?" This is such a ludicrous comment, and yet so common. Or how many times have you seen literature put out by medical organizations advising a recovering addict to not let a slip put them back to using? The message has been clear and consistent with other drugs, the message being don't slip.

Everyone here has been exposed to this discrepancy, not just since he quit, but also for years and decades while he still smoked. You now have to alter a way of thinking that is part of your culture, no matter what culture you are from. The pervasive attitude of the society around you is wrong.

The society may accept the danger of smoking but they do not yet grasp the concept of the addiction. You have to be smarter and more informed than the society around you, maybe even your health care provider. It is asking a lot of an individual to think differently than the society as a whole, but in regards to smoking it has to be done.

The consequence of not becoming fanatical against a puff is too serious to just dismiss. It will be the loss of your quit, and that can easily translate into loss of your health and eventually loss of your life. You have to be vigilant at all times, to keep reminding yourself that you are a recovering addict.

Over time there may be no signs of the addiction; thoughts of cigarettes may have become rare events now and maybe even non-existent. But even at this stage of the game, there is a silent addiction still there that can take you down with full force for making one miscalculation -- thinking that maybe you are different.

You are no different than any other drug addict, whether the drug was alcohol, cocaine, heroin, etc. You are an addict for life, but as long as you get the drug out of your system and never administer it again, you will never be set into the downward spiral that the drug sets into motion to its users. In regards to smoking, that spiral is loss of your freedom, your health and your life, which means you can lose everything.

To keep what you've got, always remember that to stay smoke free you must NEVER TAKE ANOTHER PUFF!

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