

## *Joel's Reinforcement Library*

**NEVER TAKE ANOTHER PUFF!**

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# *Frightening Trends in Teenage Smoking*

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Smoking has been declining in adults for the past 30 years. In 1964, over half the men (52%) in the United States smoked. Thirty-four percent of women were smokers at that time. Today only 25% of adults smoke cigarettes, (28% men and 23% women). While the battle to combat smoking seems to have made major strides in the past three decades, the war on tobacco is far from over. For now the war on tobacco needs to be redirected at a new front. For kids are being targeted by tobacco advertisers and now kids are starting to smoke in record numbers. The statistics are frightening, and if steps are not taken to reverse the trends, the medical, economic and social costs to our children as well as to our country will be staggering. Consider the following:

- 82% of adults who ever smoked had their first cigarette by their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. More than half became regular smokers by that time.
- Smoking among 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders has risen 50% since 1991.
- Nationwide, 71% of high school students have tried smoking.
- About 1/3 of high school students are current smokers (smoked at least one cigarette in the last 30 days).
- Although only 5% of daily smokers surveyed in high school said they would definitely be smoking five years later, close to 75% were smoking 7 to 9 years later.
- Each day, nearly 3000 American youngsters become regular smokers. Of these, 1,000 will die from early tobacco-related diseases.
- Of 1,000 20-year-olds who continue to smoke, 6 will die prematurely from homicide, 12 from car accidents, and 500 from smoking.

Kids are smoking more. Are they being taught and do they understand the long-term implications of smoking? Do they understand the relative health risks of smoking compared to other dangerous activities? Do they

**understand the addictive nature of nicotine? Do they realize that if they innocently experiment with tobacco and have no intention of smoking, that they just may get hooked and not be able to quit?**

**From the above statistics, it sure does not seem they know these facts. So what do kids know about smoking? We know that 30% of three-year-olds and 91% of six-year-olds can identify Joe Camel as a symbol of smoking and we know that kids are starting to smoke in record number. We know kids are effectively being targeted with a smoking message but it is not the message they need to hear. We must undo the influence of the multi-billion dollar advertising campaigns aimed at our youth. We must counter misinformation with facts. We need to relentlessly spread the message far and wide that cigarettes are deadly and nicotine is addictive.**

**Always remember that one way you can influence the people most significant in your life in regards to smoking is by example. Spread the unique perspective of your nicotine addiction and your triumph of cessation. For the smokers you know, spread the word that there is life after smoking. For ex-smokers, share your understanding of the potential of relapse. Most important, to kids you know share your experience of how you got addicted and how you now must constantly be on your guard to stay off. Most smokers wish they never started. Make kids aware of this from your personal perspective. Be aware of your position as a potential role model and - NEVER TAKE ANOTHER PUFF!**

**Joel**

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