

HOW I QUIT SMOKING THROUGH HEALTH COACHING

Thoughts of a smoker

I smoke after six in the afternoon; I'm not a fanatic smoker. I will quit it when I get pregnant. I can quit it whenever I want. What harm can five cigarettes a day do? I will quit it when I grow older. Let's smoke now that we don't have any health problems! But I can't quit it, smoking calms me down. I will gain weight. I will be eating more. I prefer dying of lung cancer than getting fat! (If this claim is true, things are really serious!) It's only with a cigarette that I enjoy my coffee! What will I do when I go out? A cigarette after food, perhaps? How will I take a break from work?

A smoker has many delusions. A smoker believes that a cigarette a day does no harm. A smoker believes that five cigarettes a day is the limit. From thereon there is a problem. A smoker sees the cigarette as necessary in one's life, such as food, water and friends. A smoker thinks it is impossible to quit smoking. A smoker thinks one can quit whenever they want. A smoker thinks it's cool to smoke. A smoker believes that smoking is relaxing. A smoker thinks he or she knows how harmful smoking is. The list is long.

Everyone smokes for their own reasons. And I was smoking for my own ones. Twelve years. For the most part of those years, the thought to quit or that I was harming my health in some way, never crossed my mind. I remember all the reasons why I smoked and how much I enjoyed it. Yes, I enjoyed it. Could you imagine that reading such an article you would come across someone who hates to smoke? So I'm telling you, that yes! I remember how enjoyable a cigarette is but today, a year later...this pleasure doesn't even cross my mind. I don't miss it. I'm not saying: "Ah I'm bored; I wish I had a cigarette". I have forgotten about it. I remember the moments I smoked and how much I liked it, but that is a thought that does not come automatically anymore. Maybe I will find myself around people discussing it and it will come to mind. Or now that I'm writing these lines.

What I want to tell you is that I quit it, I don't think about it, I don't miss it, I don't envy smokers. I'm done. The End. As if it never happened. Like a childhood love. You sometimes remember how nice you felt but you no longer feel anything. You grew up. You have matured. You

changed. It's possible. You can change. You can quit it. But to do that, definitely, you have to be ready to change from the inside out. You may already have tried to quit it and succeed and then start it all over again. I've done that in the past. I had quit it from sheer nerve; to prove to myself that I can. I could. But I hadn't found a deeper motivation for this act of mine. Thus, I started smoking again.

Quitting smoking was something I had in my mind indefinitely, long before I decided to actually do it. However, I did not want to try it at all. Any change that one may make, any decision one takes, includes a dozen other decisions within one's routine, which then seemed like a burden. I did not want to step out of my comfort zone.

When I started my training in Health Coaching, we were asked, if we wanted, to work towards a health goal of our own, according to the principles of Lifestyle Medicine; all of this during our educational process. I decided to work on smoking cessation. It really was a challenge for me; everything that I was learning to apply to others, to try applying it on myself first. I would get to see from the inside how my new training work would launch. I would come to understand exactly how it works and how effective it is, starting with me first.

I really had no expectations. I started completely experimentally and without actually being in some smoking cessation process. I hadn't reduced my daily cigarettes, neither had I tried nicotine substitutes, nor had I made any substantial thought or action in this direction. I started while at the same time I continued to smoke regularly!

Training in Health Coaching was theoretical however mostly experiential. Whatever we learned, we applied to each other on the very same day. I instantly started to talk and discover my relationship with smoking. Leaving the first lessons and having talked so much about that issue, I found out why I smoked, what drove me there, what was and is my relationship to it. This knowledge is very important. Understanding this relationship made smoking much smaller in my eyes. Suddenly, smoking itself was not so important. The reasons leading me to it were important.

A Coaching session does not simply offer you the opportunity to understand the reasons that lead you to an action. You come out of it, having chosen some action to perform until next time, towards the achievement of your goal. Acting is very important. Doing this one act you have chosen, you remain focused on your goal for the whole week, until you meet your Coach again. This one targeted line of action has already triggered emotions and changes.

My first action was to read articles and watch videos about smoking cessation. I would watch shows daily and read articles about how harmful smoking is, how it affects

the body and what happens when you quit it. At first all of this had no impression on me, so I continued to smoke normally. Part of this information I already had. However most of it, even if I had heard it, had not been realized yet.

This stage was very important. I trained myself and got informed of exactly what I was doing when I would smoke. Every cigarette I lit, I knew exactly how it would affect me and the reason why I lit it. I became conscious. This consciousness of my act made me start to lose a piece of my pleasure. Thinking about what I was doing in my body every time I smoked, had me wondering every time about this choice and gradually led me not to enjoy it at all.

I was pretty close to stopping. But there still existed some factors that needed to be worked on. During the next lessons I discussed again the reasons why I smoked but also the reasons I started not to want to smoke. Before you decide to quit it is very important that you have clarified both reasons. This is the mast to which you will hold onto the times you want to smoke again.

For me one very important reason I smoked was because I was afraid I would gain weight if I stopped. In the process of Coaching I realized that I was putting weight on anyway, whether I smoked or not. My eating habits were another piece I should work on independently or in parallel with the smoking cessation. I realized that the bad habit of smoking was no reason to be replaced it with a new one, like eating more junk food, sweets or drinking alcohol. I can replace it with a healthy habit, such as eating more fruits and vegetables and for sure more walking. All this is different for everyone. Each person has their own reasons and their own fears that lead them to a choice.

A very important point in the process is when you connect your goal with your values. Our values are very important; upon them we build our lives. When you say how important health or beauty is to you while at the same time you smoke, you realize that something is going wrong there. When you consciously connect the goal with the values for life, then it becomes solid and nothing can unsettle you.

Somewhere that time, about a month later, I decided that I will never smoke again. I said "Never", inside of me. To the rest of the world I announced that I decided to give it a try to quit smoking "and we'll see how it goes". I didn't want to I commit to something I couldn't abide by. In some theories it is important to define one date for your quitting and announce it in the friendly and family environment, so you commit more in your decision. For some people it works. For others it does not.

In the following meetings, I discussed the reasons which may have made me smoke again in the past and all the symptoms I had during the break. Everyone who quits smoking should know beforehand what can happen to them during this effort. Smoking is an addiction. It is

something that affects your body for years and it should be treated so. Symptoms such as irritability, sadness, insomnia, constipation and increased appetite may occur during the cessation. I knew all of this and had the knowledge, as a pharmacist, to deal with it.

I tried Bach Flower Remedies and especially the well-known "Rescue Remedy" in moments of tension. There are other personalized remedy combinations to emotionally support this change. I tried phytotherapeutic preparations for detoxification, probiotics and increased my consumption of food with prebiotic fibers. I knew that the severe symptoms of deprivation are reduced from the third day of cessation. They are much less after a week and almost non-existent after one month. I had knowledge, I was watching me and it happened just like that.

After two months, I didn't recognize myself. All my functions had returned to normal I had no irritability or increased appetite, no desire for cigarettes and no envy at the sight of other people smoking.

After six months, I could not believe I was once smoking. It's shaking and yet it can happen. So it is with smoking. You can quit it and not desire it. It is true.

Coaching fully supported this change in my life. That very change, before I even think about it. It made smoking cessation a journey of self-knowledge and learning. It was there at all stages of change and I know it will be there should I ever relapse.

Health Coaching is the most complete way to cease smoking. It cultivates the soil for it to happen and stays there to take care of you and support you, when that takes place.

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