



CHOOSE NOT TO SMOKE

by Ian Hope

Change your mind set when it comes to cigarettes

I smoked for 28 years and I finally did quit. But how? During that time I must have tried to quit a thousand times. In my mind each pack was my last explaining why I never did buy a whole carton. "What would I do with the other seven packs?" I reasoned.

As well, I openly admitted I didn't smoke because I enjoyed it, but instead smoked because I was hooked, or addicted... and I never let go of the intention and the hope that I would one day quit forever. It seemed like such an unreachable dream though!

Like many smokers I always looked at the prospect of quitting somewhat forlornly, as if it would be like saying goodbye to an old friend or something enjoyable that I would no longer have in my life. The truth of course was that what entered my lungs was not a friend, nor bringing me pleasure or any other form of benefit. I wasn't as much sucking on the filter, as the butt was sucking life from me and I could feel it every day.

What changed things was hearing one day about the simple concept of "choosing not to smoke." The wisdom in this went along the lines that one shouldn't think of it as "quitting" but instead of simply "choosing not to smoke." When someone

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asks if you want a cigarette for example, instead of saying "no thanks I quit" which can make you feel the pressure of a commitment that you may not be able to keep, you simply say, "no thanks, I choose

not to smoke." Say it again... do you hear the difference in that? Your emphasis is not on any commitment or attempt to go "over the wall." Instead you have stated something that is now, at this moment, completely doable.

How that worked for me is that I was about to go to a spring meeting in the mountains where I knew that I would be with a number of folks in a social situation, many of them smokers (it was the early 90's). It was a five-day event and I had the mindset that I would choose not to smoke for those five days and see how that went. With nothing in my mind but a long list of the many positives that would come into my life by choosing not to smoke, I got through it without too much angst and then thought, "hey, that was pretty easy, let's choose not to smoke for the next five days also." And so it went until 10 days became 20 and eventually 100 and 200. By now it's been 22 years and I still tell people who offer me a smoke that "I choose not to smoke." ►



Top 10 Reasons To Choose Not To Smoke

1. Live longer.
2. Improve your health.
3. Have more energy.
4. Save a ton of money.
5. Be more attractive to others.
6. Breathe, smell and even taste better.
7. Reduce stress and facial lines.
8. Have more time in your day.
9. Provide a positive example.
10. Increase your confidence by feeling empowered.

As a leadership speaker and trainer, I always want to help people—it's no different when it comes to smoking. When I get on an elevator with a smoker or get near them in a line-up at the coffee bar, I wish they could observe what others do about them. The smell or even stench of smoke in their hair and on their clothes is indescribable.

This is so unfortunate for smokers since it subtracts from the attraction they could otherwise have. Dating is a clear example: most smokers would not reject out of hand dating a non-smoker but the reverse is certainly not true! Do smokers see that their date may note their kiss is like tasting an ash tray?

It is a negative in the workplace as well. For example, I recently had my hair cut and styled by a hairdresser I had gone to for the

first time; and honestly, she reeked so bad of smoke that I barely got through the experience. She seemed unaware of how her habit was impacting her customers and her own career.

It's the same with virtually all other forms of employment. The simple fact is that most employers faced with choosing between an employee who smokes and one who doesn't smoke will consistently choose the latter. Whether correct or not, their view is that non-smokers don't take as many breaks or at least when they do break, the breaks are usually briefer. As well they expect non-smoking employees will experience fewer sick days while being more alert and energetic on the job. Sorry smokers, but that's the way many employers see it.

For me, I found it helpful to keep daily

track of the many benefits that were now coming into my life as a non-smoker. That included marking off the days, weeks and months since I had last smoked. I also ran a total of how much money I was saving as a result of my choice to not smoke. The numbers added up pretty fast and I was impressed when each time I looked at my results on a sheet of paper it added to my determination to continue the next day with my choice not to smoke.

In closing I want to say that if you really do want to quit smoking, you will. If not this time, then next time or the time after that. The smokers who never quit seem to be those insisting they smoke because they enjoy it... yeah right. The main thing is to not give up on yourself. ♦

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IAN HOPE | BCOMM, CMA |

Ian Hope is a management consultant, certified facilitator, speaker, and writer, who trains others in people and leadership skills that are highly valued in today's workplaces. www.ianhope.com