

## **KICK THE CIGARETTE HABIT**

Former United States President Dwight D. Eisenhower lit a cigarette one day and then saw that he already had one burning in the ashtray he had lit a minute before. He became so angry at his habit that he quit smoking.

When asked if he would ever smoke again, president Eisenhower replied with a grin, "I don't know, but if I do, I know I'm going to quit again."

A study of 3000 smokers at the University of Ottawa shows that the best indicator of permanent quitting is having tried to quit 3-5 times.

Cigarette smoking is the most important preventable cause of disease and death in the US. An estimated 325,000 people die prematurely each year because of cigarette smoking. Life expectancy of middle-aged, two-packs-a-day smokers is eight years shorter than for non-smokers.

Approximately 25% of all deaths from coronary heart disease each year are attributed to cigarette smoking. For those smokers younger than 65 years quitting smoking will substantially reduce the risk of death from heart disease even within the first year after quitting. However, it requires 10-15 years for the risk to decline to that of a non-smoker.

An estimated 2 million smokers have quit since 1964, but 30% of women and 40% of men still smoke. You don't see heroes and heroines smoking very often on television shows, but the newspapers and magazines are loaded with tobacco advertisements. The U.S. tobacco industry spends more than one billion dollars a year perpetuating the social acceptance of smoking. All of that seductive advertising is being bought to

influence you and 56 million other smokers, because cigarettes are still the most profitable product of the diversified tobacco companies.

Scientists were aware that the drug was psychoactive (it affects mood) and had a variety of physical effects; however, no authority would say it was addictive. Only in the past few years have the American Psychiatric Association and the National Institute for Drug Abuse officially identified smoking as a true addiction in the majority of cigarette smokers, a psychological dependence on nicotine complete with withdrawal symptoms similar to that of narcotics. Like any drug addiction, it becomes embodied in a tangle of chemical craving, emotional need, and lifestyle.

Nicotine has a paradoxical effect on the mind, body, spirit system. The first jolts of nicotine sharpen thinking processes allowing us to perform memory and learning tasks better. However, with continued usage, smokers feel tired, depressed, and their thinking suffers. In addition the first jolts of nicotine galvanize nerve connections, but continued dosage blocks these synapses. It stimulates by evoking the discharge of adrenaline and similar energizing catecholamine then later doses shut them down producing a soporific, lethargic, depressed-like feeling. Nicotine in small dosages excites nerves in muscles, but this very quickly turns into an opposite impact. A small dosage of nicotine causes tremors, and a large dose causes convulsions.

Nicotine tends to block the flow of urine, while initially it stimulates the intestines. This explains why so many smokers depend on their first cigarette of the day for bowel regularity. Later on nicotine slows down the digestive system.

Addiction to nicotine is a disease--a signal that a person is using maladaptive responses to cope with the stress of life, a

cry for change. Addiction is a sign of both emotional and spiritual bankruptcy--a pathological attachment to substances which alters our moods and has life damaging consequences. The smoke thus becomes a screen between us and others and even more dangerous, alienation from our Self. In our symptoms our disease is also our soul and our gift. If we dare to penetrate our silence, embrace our pain, the darkness will become light and joy. Nicotine for many equals relaxation, medicates anxiety and fear, and teaches the need for courage, safety and nurturing.

What happens when you quit smoking? The Diagnostic & Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder states that abrupt cessation of, or a reduction in tobacco use, followed within 24 hours by at least four of the following:

1. Craving for tobacco
2. Irritability
3. Anxiety
4. Difficulty in concentrating
5. Restlessness
6. Headaches
7. Drowsiness
8. Gastrointestinal disturbances.

Quitting smoking for some is not an act, it is a process. Just knowing that helps smokers to overcome the sense of failure that previous abandoned attempts usually have.

Hypnosis has been recognized by both the American and British Medical Associations as a therapeutic tool. I have found hypnosis to be an important adjunct to counseling in the treatment of nicotine addiction.