

## Chapter I: Smoking

Why are tobacco companies keen to get teenagers to buy cigarettes? Because so many older smokers are quitting – or dying – and they need to get replacement customers. If they can persuade youngsters – teenage or under – to start, they can squeeze the maximum amount of money out of them, assuming they become addicted and keep on smoking. They know teenagers like to experiment, are highly vulnerable to peer pressure and want to appear grown-up. Tobacco companies use all this information to their advantage.

Until recently tobacco companies had their own way about where and how they advertised. Their advertisements were prominently displayed at sporting events, especially on big billboards around the playing fields. Recently there has been a crackdown on this and it has been made illegal, except in the case of Formula 1 where Marlboro still gets its name in front of the live crowd and TV viewers.

One tobacco company executive wrote, “They got lips? We want them!” His ads targeted junior high students but were made to appeal also to children as young as **five**. Doesn’t that make you furious, that little children – and teenagers – are being enticed into a habit so detrimental?

A fairly recent addition to cigarette packages is a noticeable white panel. No one about to open the pack could possibly miss the large lettering that carries various grim messages such as “**Smoking kills**”, “**Smoking causes fatal lung cancer**” and “**Smoking clogs the arteries and causes heart attacks and strokes**”. On cigarette packs in Canada are pictures of hearts and lungs damaged by smoking. The authorities here are considering using this shock-tactic.

Here is a manufacturer who obviously wants to sell you his product, cigarettes, but who is legally bound to warn you how dangerous his product is! You might think that a person who ignores such warnings must want to commit slow suicide! And it makes you wonder why people smoke despite these cautions.

### Why do people smoke?

- To relax, but this is silly because a cigarette only relaxes you if you’re craving nicotine. If you never smoked, you don’t need to stop the craving. Nicotine is actually a stimulant.
- For the taste. Some companies are now adding sugar, honey fruit extracts, liquorice, cocoa and chocolate to appeal to young smokers. These flavours mask the harsh, bitter taste of nicotine. (Maybe you’ll forget it’s there??)

- Boredom.
- To avoid gaining weight.
- “It makes me feel macho (boys) or sophisticated and glamorous (girls).”
- “My parents smoke.”
- “It gives me something to do with my hands.”
- Curiosity.
- “It feels good to have something in my mouth.” (Could this be a left-over from a baby’s response – sucking – which is rewarded with milk that equals satisfaction and comfort?)
- “I want to be one of the crowd, and my friends smoke.”

### **Points to ponder**

- Out of every ten boys and girls who start smoking as teenagers and carry on, it is estimated that five of the ten will die earlier than they should from smoking-related diseases. Nine out of ten heart bypass patients smoke or are ex-smokers.

#### *Inscription for a Headstone*

*Here Lies Ivan Offlecoff  
I always did enjoy a fag.  
Lung cancer? No, not me!  
But here I am at 39  
As dead as I can be.*

- About 120,000 people in Britain die every year from smoking. This is nearly twice as many as died each year of World War II.
- Asthma attacks can be triggered by tobacco smoke – attacks serious enough to need emergency treatment.
- Bronchitis and pneumonia are also risks from smoking or breathing someone else’s smoke (passive smoking).

- Nicotine is the most important active ingredient in tobacco. So – tobacco companies are selling a drug, and cigarettes are the way that drug is delivered.
- Tobacco smoke contains about 4,000 chemicals; 43 are known to cause cancer.
- Chief Medical Officer Sir Liam Donaldson said “ Tobacco has had an unrivalled unchallenged run as the major killer in this country over the last 50 years. It has been the David of health against the Goliath of tobacco. This ban (on smoking in public places) would give us another stone to put in David’s sling”. (Daily Telegraph, July 4, 2003) The suggested ban would curtail all smoking at work and in bars, clubs, pubs and restaurants.
- Chief Medical Officer’s warning: “Tobacco Seriously Damages Health”.
- A new study shows that among a large number of 12 and 13 year-olds who had ever tried smoking – even just a puff – 40% reported symptoms of addiction. Girls become addicted more easily; on average, they were “hooked” in three weeks after they began smoking even occasionally.
- Currently there is an increase in the number of teenage girls who smoke. If they become firmly addicted, they may find it nearly impossible to quit later when pregnant.
- Women who smoke while pregnant are more likely to have premature/underweight babies or to experience a stillbirth (baby born dead). After birth there is more risk of cot death.
- Women are more at risk from the most dangerous lung cancer – the small-cell type. Seven out of ten cases are inoperable. Women smokers are also at greater risk from breast and cervical cancer.
- As for you fellows, smoking can contribute to male sexual impotence. Also, men who smoke make about 25% fewer sperm and these sperm are more liable to be damaged, which can result in babies with problems.
- In the UK nine out of ten lung cancers are caused by tobacco.
- Lung damage from cigarettes cannot be reversed, even if the smoker quits, but the sooner he quits, the less damage.
- Low-tar cigarettes offer false hope. They tend to produce deep lung cancer, a more devastating type.
- Smoking tends to keep weight down because it causes the body to waste some of the energy in food. Smoking is **not** a safe way to diet!

- A 20/day smoker spends about £1400 yearly. Just think what you could do with that money if you did not smoke!
- Quote from a 15-year old: “It’s a lot cooler **not** to smoke. Most of my friends think smoking is really stupid – harmful, expensive, gives your body and clothes a bad smell, dulls the taste of food and is just generally disgusting. You probably wind up with a cough (if nothing worse), stained fingers and a wrinkled face.”
- If you are a sportsperson smoking will impair your performance.

Clearly not every smoker dies from heart disease or lung cancer and everyone who smokes hopes he’ll be the one to survive. You yourself probably know some old geezer who’s 94, has smoked two packs a day since he was 12 and still zooms up the Alps on his mountain bike. He’s the exception.

### **You want to quit? Slogan? I’m a quitter!**

Are you serious about quitting? It is one of the most difficult things you will ever do but it is possible. There are lots of ways you can get help:

- Help lines
- Your GP
- Acupuncture, hypnotherapy and psychotherapy
- Patches and gum

However, the single biggest factor in quitting is the strength of your determination. It will bolster your own determination if you can get a few friends to quit with you.

## Case Study 1 (based on a true story)

### I could have said “No, thanks”. Now I do!

When I was four I started having asthma attacks. They were fairly mild at first, but bad enough to worry my parents. The doctor said I needed an inhaler. This wasn't so bad when I was little; actually, I was sort of proud of it. But as I grew older, and especially as a teenager, I found it really embarrassing. Other kids used to notice it and make derogatory remarks. Being around cats and dogs made my asthma worse. So did the mites in house dust. The other big problem was cigarette smoke – other people's and, unfortunately, my own.

When I was fourteen most of the girls were smoking. It was the “in thing” and really cool to light up a fag on the way to school, then stamp it out just before going in. I always walked with the same bunch, and they all smoked. I knew I shouldn't smoke, especially because of my asthma, but everybody else was and they said things like, “C'mon, one fag a day can't hurt you!” Silly me, I believed them.

But it got to be a lot more than one a day.

Then I noticed that every time I got a cold, it went straight to my chest. I'd get really wheezy and have to use the inhaler more often. One winter I had bronchitis – a fever, a pain in my chest and a bad cough. I was on antibiotics, of course, and out of school for three weeks. It wasn't much fun.

Somehow I managed to conceal my smoking from my parents, but when I was sixteen they found out and took me to the doctor. Didn't he read me the riot act! This was when I found that I was really addicted, so when I tried to stop, I felt terrible. I cut down but didn't give up.

Then one night I'd been smoking and had been at a party where a lot of other kids were smoking too. When I got home, I had trouble walking upstairs and was struggling for air. My heart was racing and I felt weak and funny. My parents took one look at me and called an ambulance. Luckily it came in minutes. I was popped inside and felt a little better as the oxygen started. They rushed me straight to a cubicle in the resuscitation department. A doctor came running (which told me a lot!). After listening to my chest, he ordered blood tests and an injection. He decided to keep me overnight, and my parents stayed with me. It was not until months later that they told me how close I had come to not pulling through. Somewhere in the back of my mind all along I had known you can die during an asthma attack. That night made it seem a real possibility. **I WAS SERIOUSLY SCARED!**

That did it. No more fags for me. And I want to tell you **it was tough** quitting. But I did it and I am proud of having quit. I feel so much healthier. Now I'm on my soapbox, trying to get all my friends to quit.

## Case Study 2 (based on a true story)

June 20, 1999

Dear Dad

Today I'm thinking about you more than usual because it's Father's Day. I'm remembering your life and wishing you could be here today.

I recall your telling me how you started smoking. You were thirteen and the other boys were doing it. "I wanted to feel grown-up", you said.

That's what it was, wasn't it, Dad? Peer pressure? You didn't want to be different.

And then in your late teens when you became a salesman, you felt insecure at first and smoked hoping to relieve the stress. A pack a day at that time but, as the stress built, it crept up to three packs a day. I remember times when you were trying to stop and saw the agony you went through. I hated seeing you try and fail – and start smoking again.

Then there was the day the doctor said you needed a triple by-pass. Your heart had been giving you trouble for a while and we were worried, but somehow we never thought it would come to that. You survived it, though, and the two other by-pass operations that followed. I remember the specialist saying your arteries were narrowing, your blood pressure was high, and your circulation poor.

What I remember most was the terrible pain you had in your toes because of poor circulation, Dad. I recall so many nights you couldn't sleep for the pain and how you had to get up and walk around.

Gangrene? It never entered our minds that this could happen from impaired circulation. When it spread up your leg and the doctors decided you'd have to have it amputated, we were stunned. Eleven months in hospital. I'll never forget it – almost a year away from us.

Then the final blow – having to lose your other leg. All of us were heart-broken. And even after your legs were gone, the terrible pain in your feet and legs didn't stop. "Phantom pain" the doctor called it when he finally gave you morphine. I'll always remember the day when you sat in your wheelchair, both legs gone. You had a faraway look, remembering, "I did love to dance".

You've been gone a few years now, Dad. I'm still missing you and thinking – if only you hadn't taken that first cigarette.

Your loving son,

Rick