

Give up smoking

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They say that smoking relaxes, gives you pleasure, helps you concentrate, alleviates boredom. All false. Smoking does none of these things. All illusions caused by an addictive toxin.

Our nature is to love others and love ourselves. No one really questions this; we just feel it.

When you go to a temple, you don't make anything dirty. You don't make a noise. You don't damage anything. And by the way, you don't smoke.

But also your body is the temple of your soul. (And your eyes, the windows of your soul.)

You don't smoke a single time without it passing through your head the damage you are doing, and the danger you are running. Because we know perfectly well what are the risks. And you hate yourself and fear for yourself and for how you could hurt your family and friends, entirely unnecessarily.

If you could give up smoking you would love yourself more, and you wouldn't lose absolutely anything. Indeed no smoke ever has given you, or ever will give you, anything at all. It is all subtraction; sometimes more and sometimes less, but always taking away at least just a little, because tobacco smoke is a cocktail of poisons.

How does it work? When you smoke, you introduce nicotine into your body. Immediately after you finish, through biological processes, the nicotine level starts dropping, on a course of half-life decay. Because it is addictive, you have withdrawal symptoms, and you will want to smoke again. When you do, the nicotine level shoots up again, in a U-curve, and you may have some impression of elation, or euphoria, but it is really only a partial *relief* from a shortfall that can never be fully appeased. The nicotine from the smoke you inhale passes into your blood and up to your brain faster than heroine injected into the arm. If you

know anything about stimulus-response psychological conditioning, you will know that the shorter the time-gap between the two, the stronger the operant effect. This immediacy is an important reason why smoking is so addictive.

It is the dynamics of the reversal of the direction of change of nicotine levels which makes you think you are getting something out of smoking. The addiction is 95% psychological. The physical addiction is practically negligible. (I went from thirty cigars a day to zero overnight, with only a slight desire, not hard to resist, that evening: it is all a question of mentalisation.)

If for several days you do not smoke, your nicotine level will have gone on dropping until it is basically zero. If you smoked again then, there would be no U-turn because the level would have been persisting at practically base-line. The level would go up, but there would have been no contiguous change from fall to rise. And but for the psychological conviction that it must be giving you something, you might well ask yourself: "Why am I doing this? Because it is doing absolutely nothing for me." It would only be the second smoke after *that* which might seem to be doing something for you, ... but then of course we would be back where we started, with each smoke causing the next, in an endless chain reaction.

It's like a rat on a wheel, running and running, each profitless stride moving the wheel backwards instead of you forwards, and creating the next hopeless urge to try again, forever going nowhere. All you have to do is step off the wheel, and you are free.

In memory of Allen Carr