

THE
7-STEP PLAN
TO STOP SMOKING

By Dr. Lon Peckham

INTRODUCTION

1. UNDERSTANDING THE TOBACCO HABIT
2. DIET
3. EXERCISE
4. DEALING WITH STRESS
5. PICK A DAY
6. GETTING THROUGH THE URGES
7. LIVING TOBACCO FREE-LEARNING TO LIVE

INTRODUCTION

Congratulations! Your purchase of the 7-STEP PLAN TO STOP SMOKING is the first step on the road to a new tobacco free life. Based on my own personal experience helping people (both in and out of my dental practice), quit smoking as well as years of research and experience by minds much brighter than my own, the 7-STEP PLAN is one that works. If you will follow the plan, step-by-step doing everything I tell you to do, you will quit! And when I say everything, I mean EVERYTHING. The minute you start thinking that you are the exception and that you are going to do it your way or Joe's way, then that is exactly what you will be doing, following "Your Plan" or "Joe's Plan". Just how successful has your plan been so far? And if you really believed Joe's plan would work, you would have paid him instead of me to help you quit. But you didn't. Instead, you made a very wise decision and paid me. Now all you have to do is follow the plan, irregardless of whether or not it makes sense to you. Remember the story of Naaman?

Naaman was the twenty star Syrian general with leprosy who went down to Israel to see the prophet Elisha and be healed. However, when Elisha told him to go wash in the River Jordan seven times he said "I've got better water back home, why should I wash here"? It wasn't until his servants asked him, "What do you have to lose, why don't you **just do it?**", that he finally did and was healed.

While it is vitally important that you follow the plan as I have outlined it, you will find that there is ample room to customize it to your own needs. In fact, I insist that you do just that. You may complete the program in as little as seven days, or you may take as long as a month to finish. However, you must complete each exercise before continuing on with the next one. If you need more than one day to complete an exercise, that's OK. Just remember, the important thing is that you do it completely, and in order.

The 7-STEP PLAN works. As they say at Nike and in Syria:

Just Do It!

STEP 1

Understanding the Tobacco Habit

The better you understand a problem, the better equipped you will be to successfully deal with it. Our objective today is to gain a thorough understanding of both the physiology and the psychology of tobacco addiction.

Physiology

Aside from nicotine, tobacco contains over 2,550 compounds including the highly toxic carcinogens nitrosamine, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbon, arsenic, and polonium 210. It is a major contributor to 4 of the 5 leading causes of death in the USA. These include heart disease (36%), cancer (30%), cerebral vascular accidents/stroke (7%), chronic obstructive pulmonary/lung disease (4%), and accidents (4%). Of these 5, only accidents are not majorly contributed to by tobacco.

50% of smokers die of smoking related diseases. 20% are diagnosed with cancer. 10% develop debilitating emphysema and 20% get heart disease. 1 out of every 5 deaths is attributable to tobacco.

Nicotine itself is probably the most addictive substance known to man. Nearly 100% of users are addicted, even more than alcohol, cocaine, crack, or heroin. A typical smoker lighting up 20 times a day and taking 25 draws per cigarette is getting 500 hits per day. And this can go as high as 3200!

It is no wonder that the nicotine withdrawal symptoms can be quite severe. These can include headache, nausea, fatigue, irritability, anxiety, depression, diarrhea, and constipation. However, they will be gone in three to seven days following cessation.

More people are addicted to tobacco than to any other drug. When ranked in terms of difficulty quitting, tobacco consistently places at the top. This is because, not only is nicotine itself highly addictive, but the tobacco habit becomes such an integral part of who you are and how you deal with life.

Psychology

As a matter of fact, the chemical addiction is not the hardest part of smoking to overcome. The hardest part is learning to think and act like a non-smoker. You can lock yourself in a room and in as little as three days all the physical withdrawal symptoms will be gone. However, you will still be left with learning how to live without your mind altering crutch.

That's right, mind altering. Nicotine is a psychoactive mind altering stimulant. It is in the same classification as cocaine and amphetamines known as Uppers, Ronnies, Speed, Crack, Meth, Crystal, Ice and more. Stimulants transport your mind out of the present reality, thus helping you to ignore rather than constructively deal with the real world. Consequently, learning to live tobacco free really involves learning to live. Period.

The first step to learning to live in the present reality of your life is to identify the precise benefit you currently get from tobacco. You wouldn't have this addiction if it did not do something good for you. Some examples of possible benefits include:

Stimulation-

- To feel good
- To pick me up
- To clear my head
- To enhance my performance

Stress Reduction-

- Helps me relax or wind down
- Helps me stop worrying
- Helps me forget
- Helps control my anger
- Helps me feel confident

Physical Addiction-

- It kills my cravings
- It kills my headaches
- It kills my tremors

Pleasurable Relaxation-

I like the taste
I like the glow
I like the comfortable relaxed feeling
I like the good memories

All habits develop for good reasons. They solve a need in your life. The problem with bad habits is that they eventually cause more harm than good and often either quit producing the original benefit or require continually increasing amounts to get the same benefit.

In the meantime, however, we literally get ourselves “stuck in a rut”. I live in the mountains of North Idaho where we get quite a bit of snow each winter. Each morning after a fresh snow fall the first car on the road slowly works its way into town being careful not to get stuck in one of the ditches on either side. Pretty soon the second car comes along and slips right into the tracks left by the first car. As long as he stays in those tracks he can safely move right along, going much faster than the previous car. And so it is with each car that follows. Soon the tracks become ruts. Even a car going the opposite direction benefits by planting its left tire in the left, or center, rut of the other car. This all works quite well. Until, that is, two cars find themselves meeting head on. The only way to avoid a fatal accident is for one or both cars to slow way down, even slower than the first car, and very deliberately jump out of the existing ruts and start making new tracks down a different safer part of the road. Habits work exactly the same.

How often have you “woke up” finding a cigarette in your hand and not known how it got there? When was the last time you actually tried to satisfy one of your needs, to get the benefit smoking gives you, by trying an alternate healthy behavior? Do you see the rut you are in?

How can a person get out of the smoking rut?

There are basically 4 steps to developing a habit.

1. Feel a need
2. Try different behaviors until you find one that works
3. Stick with that behavior
4. Stop looking for new behaviors

This is how you became a smoker and this is also how you must become a non-smoker. It is impossible to just quit any habit or behavior. It must be replaced with new, more desirable behaviors. Thus the steps to becoming a non-smoker are nearly identical.

1. Recognize that smoking is a habit with a down side that far outweighs any positive benefits you may be deriving from it.
2. Identify new behaviors that will enhance your life much more effectively than smoking ever has.
3. Put these new behaviors into practice.
4. Commit to a life time of growth and self improvement.

Identifying and starting healthy behaviors is what the next three chapters are all about.

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ASSIGNMENT #1

Your assignment for the next 24 hours is to keep a log of every cigarette you smoke. Write down the time, place, concurrent activity and the resulting feeling or benefit.

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Just Do It!

STEP 2

A Diet for Success

The next three steps are going to prepare you for the day you choose to quit. If you can start new behaviors which will make the withdrawal process easier before you actually stop smoking, you will both reduce the physical symptoms and make the psychological process much easier as well by actually crowding cigarettes out of your life. In other words, you will miss them much much less.

Today we are going to take the first step in this preparatory process by learning how to eat right. If you follow the dietary guidelines I lay out for you as well as tomorrow's instructions, **you will quit smoking.**

Guaranteed! Not only that, but you will also minimize your withdrawal symptoms and maximize the speed at which your body heals the damage caused by the abuse it has received from your tobacco habit. *The instructions in Step 2 and in Step 3 will also assure that you do not gain weight when you quit.*

The essential characteristics of this healing, healthy, supportive diet are that it will:

1. provide ample nutrition
2. contain no smoking triggers
3. be strongly alkaline in nature

I am not a dietitian and I am not going to debate the merits and drawbacks of the many and varied diets being promoted today – high protein, vegetarian, lacto-ovo, macrobiotic, etc. However, there are a few common sense guidelines that you need to follow. Perhaps I should call them rules rather than guidelines because as sure as I'm sitting here, you will rationalize away more than half of them unless I spell them out as definite rules. So here they are, Dr. Peckham's dietary rules for success:

1. Eat a balanced diet with a wide variety of foods.

- This needs to include 2-3 helpings each day of fruits, grains, vegetables and legumes.

- One of the major long –term goals of your diet should be to repair the damage done to your body. Fruits and vegetables contain a number of compounds known to both suppress and prevent a wide variety of cancers.
- Foods high in fiber, water and micronutrients are especially helpful in weight management.
- Acidic foods increase and intensify withdrawal symptoms. In contract, due to their alkaline nature, fruits and vegetables decrease and minimize tobacco withdrawal symptoms. Juices are especially helpful.

2. No red meat until you have not smoked for 7 days.

- Meat, especially red meat, is highly acidic and therefore will increase your withdrawal symptoms.
- In contrast to fruits and vegetables, meat is closely associated with certain cancers and other debilitating diseases.
- As a maintenance diet, I recommend a maximum meat consumption of red meat 1-2 times per month and fish or fowl 1-2 items per week.

3. No sweets until you have not smoked for 7 days.

- Also highly acidic.
- Recommended maintenance diet the same as for meat.

4. No coffee or other caffeinated beverages until you have not smoked for 21 days.

- Coffee is a major smoking trigger. The sight, smell, or taste of coffee is one of the most common cues to smoke. Don't!
- Like nicotine, caffeine is a psychoaddictive drug.
- Nicotine inactivates caffeine. Thus to drink caffeine after you quit smoking can cause symptoms of caffeine excess.
- Caffeine decreases the absorption of essential nutrients.
- The relapse rate is significantly higher for coffee drinkers.
- Once again, I recommend the same maintenance as for meat. 1-2 times per week maximum.

5. No alcohol until you have not smoked for 21 days.

- The relapse rate is also much higher for drinkers.

- Performance and judgment are significantly impaired with a blood alcohol level as low as 0.025%.
- Alcoholic beverages increase appetite and are high in calories, not a good combination for weight control.
- Again, maintain with no more than 1-2 drinks per week.

6. Drink 8-12 glasses of water per day.

- You need all the help flushing the nicotine and other impurities out of your system as you can get.
- It will decrease your withdrawal symptoms.
- It will decrease your appetite.

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ASSIGNMENT #2

Eliminate all dietary “contraband” from your home and replace it with healing alternatives.

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Just Do It!

STEP 3

Exercise

While the benefits of a healthy healing diet are mostly physical in nature, exercise provides tremendous mental as well as physical benefits which are very desirable when one quits smoking. In fact it is not at all an exaggeration to say that smoking and exercise are incompatible.

Smoking constricts the blood vessels, increases blood pressure, increases the adrenaline flow and speeds up the heart rate. It is this combination that gives the smoker his or her “lift”, the feeling of being energized and ready for action. At the same time it diminishes the body’s ability to deliver oxygen which seriously decreases a person’s stamina and endurance. In other words, it leaves you feeling energized but in fact unable to deliver.

In contrast, exercise increases ones feelings of self-control, self assurance, inner peace, mental alertness and clarity of thought, not to mention increasing stamina, endurance and muscle tone. Two major factors in this process are the stabilization of blood sugar levels and the secretion of endorphins, natural morphine like chemicals which give a natural “high”, or feeling of well being without the loss of control.

The greatest production of these depression-beating energy-producing endorphins comes from aerobic exercise. This is active exercise which raises your heart rate for at least 2- to 3- minutes. The greatest benefits come from a program of **3-4 workouts per week** with no more than 2 days in between workouts.

Plan a routine which you will enjoy and that will keep you from getting bored. I like to mix-up a variety of activities such as bicycling, jogging, cross-country skiing, racket ball and hiking. I also enjoy what I consider useful activities such as chopping wood, shoveling snow, bucking hay and mowing the yard.

In between aerobic workouts, keep active with other forms of exercise such as weight lifting, yoga, gardening or your favorite hobby. **The worst thing you can do is lie around. Turn the TV off and get active.**

Do not underestimate the importance of exercise in helping you to successfully stop smoking. *People who exercise are twice as likely to give up smoking!*

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ASSIGNMENT #3

Design your own exercise program and begin now!

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Just Do It!

STEP 4

Dealing With Stress

One of the major smoking triggers is stress. Of course, no cigarette has ever really solved a problem. Although it made you feel better, the problem was still there. Without effective methods for dealing with stress, your stop smoking efforts are doomed to failure. One of the major problems in managing stress is recognizing it. The following test will help identify areas where you may be feeling stress.

* * * * *

1. Does everyone in your home have shared chores/responsibilities to do?

Yes	10
Sometimes	5
No	0

2. Are there arguments over household duties?

No	10
Occasionally	5
Frequently	0

3. Do you and your spouse talk openly and freely about problems and concerns?

Regularly	10
Sometimes	5
Rarely	0

4. When you get angry with your spouse, can you calmly discuss the problem and solve it?

Usually	10
Sometimes	5
Rarely	0

5. Does the children's behavior make you angry?

Hardly ever	10
Occasionally	5
Frequently	0

6. Do you and your spouse agree on how to handle the children's behavior?

Always	10
Usually	5
Rarely	0

7. Do you have enough "Me" time....to do things you want to do?

Always	10
Usually	5
Rarely	0

8. Do you feel guilty when you take time to do things you want to do?

Never	10
Sometimes	5
Often	0

9. Is there enough money to pay the bills?

Always	10
Usually	5
Rarely	0

10. Do you and your spouse discuss how money should be spent?

Always	10
Usually	5
Rarely	0

Test Scoring

80-100 Your family appears to be dealing with stress effectively

50-80 Your family probably is coping, but has some areas that need some attention

0-50 Your family stress levels are probably high. You may need to look for ways to help cope with stress better

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Over 90% of all stress comes from some form of interpersonal relationship that is not meeting your expectations. The following four tips will definitely help you more effectively deal with interpersonal stress.

TIP ONE

Learn to recognize your own sphere of influences. In other words, learn to recognize and accept more things over which you have no control, especially in relation to other people. You probably aren't going to fix the ozone layer today and you certainly can't control anyone else's thoughts or feelings. The only real control you have in this life is over yourself. So if you are having a problem, *change yourself, not the other person.*

Another way to look at it is to learn to differentiate between who or what you are responsible for and who or what you are responsible to. There are some people, such as your children, whom you are responsible for. And there are others, such as your boss, whom you are responsible to. However, even with children you may be responsible for their safety, nutrition and education but you are never responsible for their feelings, actions or reactions. This process is called *setting your boundaries.*

Yet another side of this issue is accepting the fact that you have total control over your own thoughts, feelings, actions and reactions. Most people view the world as a coercive environment with a carrot-and-stick mentality where "they make me..." and in order to gain control I need to "make them..." Reality though is that no one can make you think, feel or act in any way you have not already chosen to. And the reverse is also true, you can not make anyone else think, feel or act in anyway they have not already chosen to. So, if things are not the way you want them to be, the only way they will ever change will be for you to choose to change. This way of seeing things is called Choice Theory and the more you accept and utilize it, the less stress you will have and the less you will be driven to smoke.

TIP TWO

Choosing to change yourself is a process that must begin with **recognizing who and what you are.** To a greater or lesser extent all of us have undiscovered feelings which subtly and nearly unconsciously drive our

attitudes, actions and reactions. You can begin to discover who, what and why you are by learning to identify these feelings. One of the best ways to do this is to learn to regularly use a wide variety of “feeling words”. “Fine”, “tired”, and “angry” are not enough. If you have trouble thinking of new words, use the following list to help get you started.

* * * * *

FELLING WORDS

Happy

Excited, terrific, energized, enthusiastic, loved, valued, encouraged, joyful, proud, relieved, assured, grateful, appreciated, respected, fulfilled, content, relaxed, peaceful, hopeful, fortunate, pleased

Sad

Hopeless, depressed, drained, exhausted, helpless, worthless, empty, deserted, burdened, condemned, terrible, disappointed, upset, inadequate, unappreciated, lonely, abandoned

Angry

Furious, abused, humiliated, betrayed, jealous, used, frustrated, irritated, coerced

Scared

Fearful, overwhelmed, desperate, vulnerable, defensive, insecure, suspicious, reluctant, anxious, shy

Confused

Bewildered, trapped, disorganized, torn, misunderstood, uncomfortable, surprised, unsure

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Learning to effectively express your feelings is vital for interpersonal stress control. **ALL UNSPOKEN FEELINGS WILL BE ACTED OUT.** They always affect your attitudes, actions and reactions. Even in ways that you are perhaps not aware of. This is not to say that any of your feelings are wrong. In fact feelings are neither right nor wrong. They just are. The only wrong is in the damage you do by not expressing them.

Hint: Anger is always a secondary emotion. It is a reaction to another primary feeling, usually a fear or insecurity. Learn to recognize and deal with the primary emotion.

TIP THREE

Some of the most fascinating research done has been in the area of **the healing power of doing good**- helping others. There is even a book written with that very title. It is impossible to say too much about the power of getting your attention off of yourself and onto the happiness and welfare of another. It is the force behind immeasurable miracles and stopping smoking is no small miracle. If you are really serious about becoming smoke free, start regularly looking for ways to extend yourself in altruistic acts of pleasing others.

TIP FOUR

Conversely, if you do not take proper care of yourself, you will have nothing to give others and will end up feeling completely overwhelmed, i.e., **STRESSED OUT!** We have already talked about diet and exercise which are a vital aspect of taking care of your self. Now, to that add **time for personal renewal**. This can take the form of meditation, walking, gardening, hot tubing, reading or anything else that you find relaxing and also enables you to put things back in perspective.

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ASSIGNMENT #4

Set aside ½ hour a day to be by your self and use it to:

- a. Relax
- b. Write one positive and one negative feeling word to describe how you felt at some point in the day.
- c. Plan to do something nice for some else in the next 24 hours and
- d. Identify one time you succumbed to coercion mentality and one time when you practiced control theory.

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Just Do It!

STEP 5

Pick a Day

Ok, if you have followed my instructions so far, you now have all of the tools in place that you need to successfully stop smoking. You are ready. Remember, millions of people have quit smoking with far less information and preparation than you now have. You can too. Just do the next four projects.

ONE

Remember that smoking log I had you keep? Go get it. You are now going to design your own “**Master Plan for living smoke free**”. Go over that list and for every cigarette you smoked write down an alternate activity, something that a nonsmoker would do in similar circumstances. It should be something that will give you the same benefit that you recorded for the cigarette. If you have trouble thinking of healthy alternatives, ask your non-smoking friends. If you don’t have any, watch non-smokers even if it means renting a bunch of movies. The important thing is to pick healthy alternative activities that are appropriate to you. Some examples might be:

- Drink some water
- Doodle with pen & paper
- Hull sunflower seeds
- Chew sugarless gum

What you are looking for are activities that you can do as easily as smoking in the situations that you have documented that you habitually smoke.

Next, go back through that same list and look at the times, places and activities during which you were smoking. These are triggers which you want to eliminate from your routine. If you habitually smoke at a certain time, plan to be in a place where you can not smoke at that time. If you habitually smoke in a certain chair, sit in another chair. If you habitually smoke in the morning while reading the newspaper, read the paper at night. Be creative. Fill your life with new behaviors which you have never associated with smoking.

Now write all of your new life style choices on a piece of paper with the heading “Your Name’s Master Plan for Living Smoke Free” written at the top.

TWO

A very important part of starting your new life is promising someone that you are going to change.

Choose someone who cares about you and will support you in your efforts. Someone you trust, who will listen to you and encourage you. Write this person a letter. Tell this person that you will be quitting soon and for good. Tell him or her all the reasons you are choosing to quit, how tobacco has hurt you and the benefits of quitting that you are looking forward to enjoying.

After writing your letter, make a copy.

THREE

You have a plan. You made a promise. Now it is time to put some teeth into your decision. Now it is time to make a contract. You will find it on the next page. Fill in your name, sign and date it.

FOUR

Pick a day no more than 3 weeks away, but one in which the next week will not be complicated by major stresses such as moving, job change, or divorce. You can smoke up to the day you choose to quit, but on that day and every day thereafter, you will not smoke.

Hint: Have your teeth professionally cleaned. You won’t want to get them dirty!

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ASSIGNMENT #5

Deliver today’s paper work. Put your Master Plan in your wallet or purse. Mail your promise to your friend. Put the copy in your Bible or under your pillow. Tape your contract to your bathroom mirror.

ASSIGNMENT #6

On your chosen break free day go through your house, car, office, and any other place you might stash cigarettes and gather up all your tobacco and tobacco smoking paraphernalia. Place it all in a box or bag and get rid of it. Burry it, burn it or take it to the city dump. Some place where you will not be able to retrieve it.

* * * * *

Just Do It!

My Contract

I, _____, promise to quite smoking on _____.
I promise to follow all six of Dr. Peckham's Dietary Rules for Success. I
promise to exercise a minimum of 20 minutes at least 3 times per week. I
promise to set aside one half hour or more per day for personal renewal and
to use it as directed. I promise to follow my personal Master Plan for Living
Smoke Free.

I will teat this contract as a solemn oath, sworn this day. Date _____

Name _____

STEP 6

Getting Through the Urges

CONGRATULATIONS! You've done it! You are now smoke free! And you are also smack dab in the middle of what may well be the biggest struggle of your life.

Review your contract daily.

Carry your Maser Plan with you at all times and use it.

In addition, you will find the following twelve techniques very helpful in getting through the ruff times.

12 TECHNIQUES TO KILL AN URGE

1. Call a friend

Remember the person you mailed your promise to? The one who cares about you and will support you? Now is the time to let him/ her do just that. Tell this person how you are feeling (feeling words), why you want to smoke right now and all of the reasons you have chosen to quit. This may well be the single best urge killing technique there is.

2. Deep breathing exercise

- Place your hand on your diaphragm over the upper abdomen
 - Inhale deeply through your nose feeling your abdomen/diaphragm expand
 - Hold your breath for a couple of seconds
 - Relax
 - Exhale slowly through your mouth feeling your abdomen contract.
- Continue pushing air out until you feel like coughing.
- Slowly repeat this four more times

3. Drink fruit juice.

Prepare one of the following recipes before hand and have it ready.

Great Grape

1 part Concord grape juice, frozen concentrate
2 parts water
1 part sparkling water
Blend. Chill or serve on the rocks

Orange Smoothie

1 part Orange juice concentrate
2 parts water
1 tsp. Vanilla
1 fresh banana
1 Tbsp lemon juice
1 ½ cups Pineapple juice
4 each Ice Cubes
Blend smooth.

4. Calisthenics

Do jumping jacks, push-ups, deep knee bends, anything that will elevate your heart rate. Remember, smoking and exercise are incompatible.

5. Make a 10 minute promise

Don't worry about the rest of the day or tomorrow. You can deal with that later. Just promise yourself that you will not smoke for 10 more minutes.

6. Review your reasons for quitting.

7. Eat celery or carrot sticks

8. Brush your teeth.

9. Look at your watch and count to 300.

10. Go for a walk.

12. Take a bath

RELAPSE

Despite all that we have done so far, some of you will relapse. Either you will give in to an urge, or you will “wake-up” finding a cigarette in your hand and not know how it got there. Relapse is not failure! The only failure is in failing to try again. Sit down. Figure out how, when and for what reason you went wrong. Devise a plan to assure that you won’t make the same mistake again. Add this new plan to your Master Plan and start again.

It is also helpful to understand how relapse occurs. Rather than being a sudden event, something that strikes out of the blue, relapse is a process. It is the result of a whole chain of events which finally culminate in giving in to an urge. The warning signs that you need to watch for so that you can **H.A.L.T.** this process are:

H- Hunger. You need to eat regularly to keep your blood sugar stable so that your brain will continue to be able to function normally and rationally.

A- Anger. Built up anger and resentment is a sure way to start craving a smoke to break the tension. Use those felling words. And if all else fails, have yourself a “vowel movement”. Find a place all by yourself, then, as loud as you can, yell out the names of all the vowels; “A-E-I-O-U!” Try it, you just might like it.

L- Loneliness. Loneliness and self-pity can easily lead to justifying the comfort of a cigarette. Call or visit a friend.

T- Tired. You must get adequate regular rest. A fatigued body and brain is much more likely to over-react to stress. Get a minimum of 8 hours of sleep per day.

STEP 7

Living Tobacco Free – Learning to Live

Once again, congratulations! Doesn't it feel great? Don't you love it? In fact why don't you say it, right now, out loud? **I LOVE BEING FREE!** At some point in the next week, usually within 3 to 7 days, your physical withdrawal symptoms will be gone. From then on the battle will exclusively be in your mind. As you become better and better at living your life successfully without your chemical crutch, you will think less and less about cigarettes. This is why step 4 in the process of becoming a non-smoker is so important. Remember what it is? "Commit to a life-time of growth and self-improvement". Staying as you are is impossible. You will either slip backwards or continue to grow. There is no other way!

Purpose

By coming this far you have definitely demonstrated that you are a "grower". You are both willing and able to take responsibility for your life, to no longer be a victim of tobacco. This willingness to take "responsibility", to exercise your freedom of choice is what Stephen Covey calls Habit #1 of a highly effective person. Habit #2 is to know where you are going.

I don't care whether you call it your purpose, vision, mission or soul, but being aware of "who and why" you are is vital to living "on purpose". Anything else is merely accidental, or worse yet, terminal.

If you have not already done so, you will find that discovering what your true purpose in life is will take some time. Begin by asking yourself what it is that you would like to have written on your tombstone, what it is that you want to be said in your eulogy. For those of you who doubt how important this is, I dare you to read "Peace, Love and Healing" by Bernie S. Siegel, MD. For us left-brainers, I also highly recommend Covey's "The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People" as an excellent guide to discovering and putting your purpose to work.

Balance

Once you have discovered your purpose, you will find that living in harmony with that purpose requires living your life in balance.

The ancient Greeks recognized that human lives are composed of four main aspects – mental, physical, social and spiritual. A perhaps more modern way of looking at this to view your life as consisting of work, play, love and worship. The successful management of and balance between these four aspects is the key to lasting peace and joy – things once promised to you by cigarettes. What this balance is varies from individual to individual depending on each ones own circumstances and unique personality. Let’s take a closer look at each one of these areas.

WORK

Work is important for at least two reasons: to provide for the basic needs and desires of you and your family and to provide a consistent outlet for the fulfillment of your guiding purpose. Ask yourself if the following statements are true about you.

1. Do you do at least one thing you love to do each day?
2. Do you enjoy being around children?
3. Do you leave your work at work?
4. Do you devote one day per week to “re-creation”?
5. Are you physically able to do all the activities you like?

PLAY

Sometimes it seems as if this is the hardest area for people to balance. Either we “never grow up” and are playing all the time, or we become “workaholics” and never experience the joy of play. However, we all need an adequate amount of playful leisure time. Play provides time for mental and physical renewal, “re-creation”, as well as family and social bonding, and not least important, motivation for maintaining proper health. The following questions will help you discover whether the play in your life is in proper balance.

1. Do you do at least one thing you love to do each day?
2. Do you enjoy being around children?
3. Do you leave your work at work?

4. Do you devote one day per week to “re-creation”?
5. Are you physically able to do all the activities you like?

LOVE

No word has had more written about it than has Love. And yet it is probably still the most misunderstood of all words. Many have attempted to define it without success, but despite its mystery, Love is universally recognized as essential to happiness. Most people would agree that Love must involve giving of one’s self, unconditionally accepting and caring for others without expectations of return or reward.

Numerous studies have demonstrated the fact that people with close family and friends live longer, healthier, and happier. Their immune systems are stronger and they are more resistant to disease such as cancer and cardiovascular disease.

One does not just “fall in” to these types of relationships. They take time and energy.

1. Do you take time to daily show family and friends how much you care for them?
2. Does your spouse feel cared for after sharing his or her feelings with you?
3. Do you regularly share your feelings?
4. Do you have close friends?
5. Are you a good parent?

WORSHIP

We all need to regularly be reminded that we are not the center of the universe, to sit on our own mountain top and view the world from a larger perspective. It is from this vantage point that our priorities become clear, the endless to-do list is put in its place, and we are able to find that sense of peace that we all so desperately need.

Worship can take many forms. It can be solitary or communal. It can be receiving communion or feeding the homeless. It can involve prayer, meditation or song.

What ever from it takes, it gives our actions meaning. It forces us to see beyond our own self-interest and in its place, leaves us with a sense of wonder and gratitude.

Rather than being an optional exercise for those with nothing better to do, worship is the foundation upon which lasting peace and happiness are founded.

1. Do you pause daily to reflect and feel that inner peace?
2. When feeling stressed, do you have a place to go and reconnect?
3. Do you devote one day per week to worshipful activities?
4. Do you feel at peace with yourself and the world?
5. Do you give others the freedom to find their own way of worshipping?

Use these questions to help identify those areas which you personally need to bring into better balance. I also suggest that you ask your spouse or a close friend to answer these questions for you. Compare their answers with yours and take their input seriously.

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ASSIGNMENT #7

After identifying some area of your life which needs to be brought into better balance, go to the library or book store and get a book that will help you grow in that area.

* * * * *

CONGRATULATIONS!

You Did It!

Thank you for allowing me to help you through this most difficult change.
You can truly be proud of what you have accomplished.

It is my prayer that you continue with me to grow in peace, love, joy and understanding.

Vaya con dios!

Lon Peckham, DMD

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