

## The Marlboro Man and Me

I smoked for at least 40 years. I really enjoyed it and had no intention of ever quitting, even though I had frequent bouts with pneumonia and related problems. I loved my Marlboros and kept them close to me through every personal crisis that hit me...death of friends & family, loss of jobs, financial problems, dysfunctional relationships...normal things that usually happen to normal people.



I tried to quit three or four times and actually did for a week here and there before some perceived crack in my comfort zone drove me right back to my best friend, Marlboro cigarettes. I read all the steps to quit; even followed some of them for a few minutes or days. I even “worked down” from my beloved red pack to the light version.

I made a general announcement, “This is my last cigarette! I quit!” My belief was that I would chat myself into a public hole that would embarrass me enough to prevent relapse. **Wrong!**



I found things to keep in my mouth to distract me from smoking...hot cinnamon candies, mints, fake plastic cigarettes, nasty-tasting mouthwash. **Wrong!** Nothing tasted like my Marlboros and I was never distracted from the craving to smoke.

I read that after 3 days, the physical addiction was gone and the rest was emotional, Well, after 3 days my emotions were pounding a drum beat inside my head and I was sure I was going crazy. But I thought about that emotional thing for a while...while I was happily relapsing into nicotine heaven and working up to another bout with pneumonia.

One day, while taking a shower, it came to me that I was using cigarettes as my personal reward system...do the dishes and have a cigarette...take out the garbage and have a cigarette...wash clothes and have a cigarette...put them in the dryer and...you get the idea.

Being somewhat logical, I decided to try quitting smoking in a new way...one I designed myself. I gave myself permission to get some Marlboros anytime I wanted to, but I had to wait 30 minutes before I did it. This removed the “*absolutely forbidden*” component of trying to break this habit. While waiting for the 30 minutes to pass, I got busy doing something I enjoyed...like playing computer games, writing my genealogy, watching a really good video.

(Here’s what [really happens](#) to your kid’s body, if they smoke: pgs 41-45, “Child Drug Addicts – Are You Raising One?”)

When I felt a need to smoke, I took notice of what task I had just finished...dishes, picking up dog poop on the lawn, etc. This brought the entire nicotine addiction problem down to something I could handle and could understand. Most times, when I got myself involved in some distracting activity while waiting for the 30 minutes to pass, an hour or two had actually gone by.

I have to admit that more than once I grabbed my keys and started out the door to buy some Marlboros. Once I analyzed my own need to smoke (reward system) I could say to myself, “You’ve got to wait 30 minutes,” and it worked. I haven’t smoked for over 10 years.

I still feel a twang of wanting a cigarette when I am stuck in traffic on Southern California freeways. I look around and people in most of the cars around me are smoking. But it is a momentary passing urge that disappears in a moment and no longer controls me. Hope this helps you.

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