

Being a nonsmoker, I cannot honestly claim any personal perspective on the matter of smoking or the determination it takes to quit. I don't maintain that I fail to recognize my own personality when I attempt to stop and that I feel like a completely "un-together" person in those few days without smoking. I also fall short of asserting that I went back to smoking with reckless abandon once that patch idea got old. These are the thoughts of those persons that have been overtaken by the practice of smoking. A deceptive practice that at one point pretended to be their friend and then imbedded itself as a necessary fabric of their everyday lives, so much so that it seems they cannot do without. For those of you out there, rest assured you are not alone.

Although some individuals are unaware of the hold that smoking has over our Louisiana citizens, it truly is overwhelming and deserves a second look. By taking a brief glance around you might get a glimpse into a day in the life of a fulltime smoker. To quit or not to quit - to have that second, third, or fourth cigarette of the morning – to fill that void with a bag of chips or a candy bar – to take that prescribed little pill to help refrain, even though it may hurt their stomach.

For the most part, many smokers decide to quit when it is apparent that this habitual action has become of severe detriment to their health. They have known all along, or for at least the last ten years, of the risks involved, but felt that those risks outweighed the anger, nervousness, paranoia, loneliness, fear, panic, and anxiety that overcame them every time they attempted a departure from the routine of nicotine addiction.

Being anti-smoking should never be defined as anti-smoker. This is a common misnomer that the tobacco companies would like you to believe. That all this fuss over smoking is more about taking away your rights as an individual and less about a general concern for your health and well being. This cannot be further from the truth. Smokers, nonsmokers, teachers, doctors, mechanics, firemen, and legislators alike are beginning to recognize what type of hold this substance has on our society. Smoking is no longer recognized as a free spirited gesture of relief and fun, but more as a bad idea that will attempt to lead you down a path of unhealthy dependency.

The next time you feel the need to smoke or to quit, think about what made you start smoking in the first place. Can you even remember? Why do you continue to smoke? Do you wish you didn't have to? Call the toll-free Louisiana Tobacco Quitline, 1-800-QUIT-NOW, and see what options are out there. If you have successfully quit smoking, tell a friend of your experience and offer a helping hand when needed. It just may provide that little bit extra to get you on the road to breathing easy.

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