

# Stop Smoking Cigarettes

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Health experts everywhere agree that the best thing a smoker can do is to stop smoking cigarettes. When I was thirteen, I began smoking. It was at a concert with a friend and his older sister, and we both asked her for a smoke. I guess she thought it was cute &ndash; her little brother and his friend trying to act so grown-up and cool &ndash; and over the course of the evening, she let us both have several cigarettes.

One of the reason we had so many cigarettes is that we didn't really like smoking, but only the idea of smoking. When I'd get a cigarette, I'd inhale a puff, cough furiously for several minutes, and pass it to my friend. He'd do the same thing &ndash; inhale once or twice and practically hack up a lung as he waited to be able to breath again.. By the time we had one or two puffs each, the cigarette was gone. By the end of the evening, we were puffing away just like regular smokers. We thought we were so cool. I didn't realize at the time how much harder it would be to stop smoking cigarettes.

I smoked all through highschool and through most of college. It just seemed to make every event better, make the mood mellow, and make me feel cool. I used to love to go down to the pool hall, put tunes on the jukebox, and shoot with cigarette dangling sideways from my mouth. Everyone smoked, there wasn't even a question of it &ndash; it was another reason to get away from your parents for the evening, another thing that you did that they didn't understand, and another thing that made you adult. It was something to fiddle with when you were feeling socially awkward, and an excuse to go outside and take a break or just stretch your legs. And it made it so much easier to make friends.

That last fact is something non-smokers don't understand. When I finally stopped smoking cigarettes, it wasn't the nicotine cravings that made it hard &ndash; I never was physically addicted. It was the lack of the social contact that I had enjoyed before. When you're outside a building, or at a party with other smokers, there's a natural social bond the forms. You can ask for or offer cigarettes, you can light eachother up. It provides a good juncture to begin a conversation, though it may seem strange to say.

And besides that, the very fact that you are all smokers not only gives you something in common, but provides a feeling of comraderie based on the fact that everyone is sort of viewed as outcasts by the society around them. Among smokers, there's a certain spirit of &ldquo;we are all in this together&rdquo; that makes you feel almost like your leaving your family when you stop smoking cigarettes.

If I hadn't had health problems, a relative who got sick with cancer, and parents who nagged me incessantly, I probably never would have stopped smoking. I haven't smoked now for a couple of years, but I still miss the relaxation cigarettes furnished, and the feeling of comraderie from other smokers.