

Santa Claus Made me smoke – Ian Clark helped me quit

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By Ian Clark

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I am going to start with a number of preconceptions about smoking and start you to think in a different way about some of the most common reasons you will give for smoking. I will open this out further in the subsequent chapters

The Belief

Smoking is Fun

What is the nature of this psychological pleasure? It can be traced to the universal desire for self-expression. None of us ever completely outgrows his childhood. We are constantly hunting for the carefree enjoyment we knew as children. As we grew older, we had to subordinate our pleasures to work and to the necessity for unceasing effort. Smoking, for many of us, then, became a substitute for our early habit of following the whims of the moment; it becomes a legitimate excuse for interrupting work and snatching a moment of pleasure. "You sometimes get tired of working intensely and if you sit back for the length of a cigarette, you feel much fresher afterwards. It's a peculiar thing, but I wouldn't think of just sitting back without a cigarette. I guess a cigarette somehow gives me a good excuse."

The Reality

What started out as fun and excitement quickly moves to a new form of necessity and binding. Fun is spontaneous, it is a feeling that comes from doing something without fear of consequence. Lets face it smoking is no longer fun. It is something that has to be done to feel normal. Yet that is distorted as the real normal should be the times when you are not smoking. What you have done is attach moments and events to cigarettes, It is not the actual cigarette that gives you that freedom, you always had it. You just do not think it will be the same. Try it, you will be surprised how much better those times are, Remember non-smokers are no less relaxed because they do not smoke. You were not born with the need to have nicotine put in your body every hour.

Smoking is a Reward

Most of us are hungry for rewards. We want to be patted on the back. A cigarette is a reward that we can give ourselves as often as we wish. When we have done anything well, for instance, we can congratulate ourselves with a cigarette, which certifies, in effect, that we have been "good boys." We can promise ourselves: "When I have finished this piece of work, when I have written the last page of my report, I'll deserve a little fun. I'll have a cigarette."

The first and last cigarette in the day are especially significant rewards. The first one, smoked right after breakfast, is a sort of anticipated recompense. The smoker has work to do, and he eases himself into the day's activities as pleasantly as possible. He gives himself a little consolation prize in advance, and at the same time manages to postpone the evil hour when he must begin his hard day's work. The last cigarette of the day is like "closing a door." It is something quite definite. One smoker explained: "I nearly always smoke a cigarette before going to bed. That finishes the day. I usually turn the light out

after I have smoked the last cigarette, and then turn over to sleep."

Smoking is often merely a conditioned reflex. Certain situations, such as coming out of the subway, beginning and ending work, voluntary and involuntary interruptions of work, feelings of hunger, and many others regulate the timetable of smoking. Often a smoker may not even want a cigarette particularly, but he will see someone else take one and then he feels that he must have one, too.

While to many people smoking is fun, and a reward in itself, it more often accompanies other pleasures. At meals, a cigarette is somewhat like another course. In general, smoking introduces a holiday spirit into everyday living. It rounds out other forms of enjoyment and makes them one hundred per cent satisfactory.

The Reality

A reward of slow suffocation, is it perhaps that we do not like ourselves enough to want to damage the very thing that carries us through life. In some cases it is like the experiment that was carried out in the 1960's. It was called the Great Marshmallow experiment. It involved 100 4–6 year olds, they were individually placed in a room with 2 way mirrors. The tester would then place a single marshmallow in front on the child and tell them that he had to leave the room for a few minutes, if they did not eat the sweet, on his return they would receive 3 marshmallows as reward. 75 of the children ate the marshmallow almost as soon

as the tester left the room. This experiment proved a human craving for instant reward. The same applies to smoking, It is instant and anything that happens after you smoke a cigarette seems to have no bearing on the last one but creates a need for the next one.

The first cigarette of the day is linked closely to the amount of anxiety you feel. The morning is the time when you are thinking about what is going to take place that day. The journey to work, will I be late, will I survive the busy roads. What will happen when I arrive at work, will my boss be in a good mood. Will there be work that is too difficult for me or will there be too much to do and not enough time. Most people will have run through their whole day before they even leave the house. This instils anxiety and because of the misunderstanding that exists in your mind about real and artificial anxiety created by the last cigarette you feel destined to smoke.

The last one at night is another myth. I used to think that I could not go to sleep without my cigarette but what was I thinking. Nicotine which is primarily a stimulant, was never going to be a calming agent, all it did was increase my breathing to cope with the lack of oxygen that in turn released endorphins

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that in turn made me tense. Not only that but all the carbon monoxide in my blood was slowly poisoning me. No wonder I woke up every morning with a headache and no wonder I thought I felt so bad because I needed another cigarette. Once you quit you will sleep soundly, you will wake refreshed. As life intended it to be.

The issue of mealtimes is a strange one for me, I too would have agreed with the statement above regarding a cigarette being like another course however I now know differently. What could be nicer than eating your favourite food and then being able to savour and taste it for a long time after eating it. When you smoke all you are doing is replacing that lovely experience with the rancid taste of cigarettes. It seems to me that for any smoker having a meal is an inconvenience and the food is somehow just in the way. All you want to do is get the food out of the way to get to the cigarette. It does not enhance a meal it destroys it. Then there is the matter of waiting for everyone to finish before lighting up and even then you may have to leave the table and your company and have a cigarette, missing conversation and enjoyment all for a selfish act like smoking.

I have been helping people quit smoking for over 2 years through my book and support website at <http://www.fullstop-smoking>. I am married with one daughter. You can purchase the full book at the website

INTERNET OFFERS HOLIDAY FUN FOR FAMILY, CO-WORKERS

By Maria Heckaman

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Whether you celebrate Christmas, Chanukah, or Santa Claus, the holiday season is the perfect time for having fun with family and co-workers.

Of course, the Internet proves to be a great resource for gathering recipes, crafts, songs, and interesting tidbits about the holidays.

Santa's Net and The Kids Domain are two of the best holiday Internet sites, both offering information for many beliefs.

Do you know what year the British Parliament officially abolished the celebration of Christmas? What about the date and location of the first printed reference to a Christmas Tree? How do you say "Merry Christmas" in Bohemian, Yoruba, and Chinese?

Santa's Net can help you find the answers to such

questions, while filling you up with many more holiday facts and myths.

On its home page, visitors can countdown to Christmas and choose from many categories to browse, including carols and songs, Christmas traditions from other countries, recipes, toys, Christmas movies, bookmarks, and more.

Keeping with its world–holiday theme, the site also has posted recipes such as Amaretti from Italy, Billy Can Pudding from Australia, Christmas Lebkuchen from Egypt, and Kourabiethes from Greece.

The Kids Domain may sound like a place, well, just for kids, but the whole family can find something fun and interesting at the site.

It offers gift–making ideas, electronic greeting cards, crafts, games to download, holiday clipart, recipes, book suggestions for parents, music, stories and world traditions.

The site includes holiday variations for several countries and/or beliefs such as Kwanzaa and Ramadan. There also is the Grownups Place for parents.

Children have the opportunity to send Santa Claus a letter, provided in an easy–to–use form.

Other sites that offer letters to Santa are The North Pole's Christmas Mission, Claus.com, Santa at Home, Dear Santa Claus, Santa Claus Online, and The Christmas Pages.

Finally, children of all ages can track Santa Claus' travels on Christmas Eve at www.noradsanta.org.

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