

Diary of a Typical Smoking Client

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6:00 AM Couggggghhhhhh! Haaaackkkkk! Ugggghhhh! These filthy cigarettes are going to be the death of me yet, I think as I sit at the breakfast table, read the morning paper, and consume nearly a pot of coffee with at least a half dozen or so cigarettes. If only I could put these 'cancer sticks' down once and for all. I'd like to, but they relax me when I get nervous and keep me from gaining any excess weight. Goodness knows I can't afford to gain any more weight! Besides, when I'm socializing it gives me something to do with my hands. Most of my friends smoke, so I fit in nicely when we go out. I wouldn't want to be the oddball of our group. But then again, at the skyrocketing price of cigarettes I keep thinking of all the money I can save if I quit. Geeeee, I could even afford to take a well-earned and long overdue vacation with the extra money I'd be saving.

Although, I know I can't quit 'cold turkey'. I've been smoking since I was a teenager and tried to quit at least a dozen or so times over the past few years with no success. I've tried the patch, the gum, acupuncture and everything else that's come down the road. I just don't have the 'willpower' that others have. I admire people who can put them down once and for all, walk away, and never look back. I wish I could do that.

And quitting would certainly reduce the cost of the dry cleaning bill I incur each month. I clean my clothes excessively because of a few choice people at work who never miss an opportunity to remind me that I smell like a chimney and a dirty ashtray. I'm so self-conscious about it anymore. They almost make me feel like a second-class citizen! Although, it's none of their business what I do. It's a free country. I can smoke if I choose to do so. My grandpa smoked until he was 92 and he didn't die of complications from smoking.

But then again, new reports from the American Cancer Society say smoking is not only harmful to my health, but the second-hand smoke my children are exposed to isn't good for them either. Darn! Why didn't the Surgeon General issue those warnings on the side of the cigarette packs BEFORE I started smoking?

If only I could find a way to get through the first few weeks... I know I could kick the habit then. What's this? Hmmmmm... An ad in the local paper about a hypnotist who has a stop smoking program that is safe, effective and needs no will power. Hmmmmm... Hypnosis is recognized by the American Medical Association. Hmmmmm... No duck quacking or walking around like a bird or chicken. Hmmmmm... It says I won't be 'knocked out' or in a 'coma'. Hmmmmm... Maybe I should give this hypnosis stuff a try. I know my friends' aunt went to a hypnotist for a fear of flying and it helped her. Sandy in the office next to mine knows a girl who also went to a hypnotist for weight loss and she lost 35 pounds. Maybe, just maybe, it could help me to stop smoking. Goodness knows I've exhausted all other means.

I think I'll sit here and have one last cigarette before getting dressed for work.

4:00 PM Boy, this after-work traffic is something else. All I want to do is get home and relax with my feet propped up for a few minutes before the kids get home. I've been thinking about this hypnosis stuff all day long. I think what I'm going to do is go to the class tonight and not tell anyone what my intentions are. That way, if I fail, nobody will be the wiser and I'll eliminate all the heckling from family and friends. And if I succeed I can take all the credit for stopping myself!

4:30 PM WOW! Home already... funny I don't remember passing 8th Street to see if the dry cleaner was still open. I must have been caught up in my own thoughts about tonight. Some days the trip home seems so long and other days the time just flies!

5:00 PM I'm just going to prop my feet up for a few minutes before dinner and watch the evening news. Boy did I have a rough day... I know what I'll do. I'm just going to rest my eyes for a few minutes while I listen to the news and wait for the local weather forecast.

5:30 PM WOW! The news is over and I missed the weather! I know I couldn't have fallen asleep because I heard the kids come home from practice, the telephone ring and my eldest pick it up. I even heard them bickering over the last of the strawberry shortcake in the fridge. How could I have missed the weather that quick? Oh well... I'll catch it on the evening news tonight.

6:15 PM I wonder if I'm making the right decision to go to this hypnotist. I have almost a full carton of cigarettes left. At the price of cigarettes I can't afford to just throw them away! I think what I'll do is smoke all the way to the class. That way I won't feel as bad about throwing them out 'if' this hypnosis stuff works.

6:40 PM Okay, I'm registered for the class early. I have almost half an hour before the class begins. I'm just going to step outside and 'stock up' on the last few puffs 'just in case'. Funny thing, there's probably a dozen of us out here doing the same thing!

7:00 PM I guess I better go in and find a good seat. That must be the hypnotist in the front of the room. He doesn't look anything at all like what I imagined him to look like. I hope he doesn't look at me with those eyes! I can't help but feel skeptical about coming to a hypnotist. I've always seen them portrayed on television in a dark cloak with a droning voice, and mesmerizing people with their eyes. I know what I'll do; I just won't make direct eye contact with him until I feel comfortable.

7:10 PM I'm amazed! This guy isn't anything at all like what I expected. His explanation of hypnosis makes sense. After all this time of being skeptical of a hypnotist, I'm finally not afraid to look one in the eye. I'm beginning to feel very silly.

7:20 PM He singles out six or seven of us and asks how much we smoke and how often we've made vain attempts at quitting. He goes on to explain that we are victims of self-hypnosis – telling ourselves that we can't quit and re-enforcing that thought ten to twenty times each day, for thirty days or more. He says he needs to de-hypnotize us. He continues on, explaining about a conflict between our conscious and subconscious mind and how hypnosis will alleviate the conflict. It all makes sense to me.

7:25 PM Levels of hypnosis? He's using examples of driving a car and watching television. Imagine that! I did both of them already today! I guess I really am hypnotizable.

7:30 PM I glance at my watch. I've had enough already of the explanation. I'm convinced that I'm hypnotizable! I came here to get hypnotized and I want my money's worth! Let's do it!

7:45 PM The hypnotist moves to the back of the room and dims the lights. He asks everyone to choose a focal point in the front of the room. With a speaker system and a microphone to amplify his voice, his words come repetitively and quickly, urging, droning. I wish he'd quit that! I'm bored. I'm sleepy. I begin to think about how maybe I should have rescheduled my day so I wouldn't be quite so sleepy for this class.

8:00 PM He has us counting down backwards from 100 to the number one. Now he asks us to think of ourselves as non-smokers and imagine ourselves in various places as non-smokers. Hear the applause. Feel the pat on the back. Drinking pure, clean, refreshing water throughout the day. Yep, it's just like he said... I can definitely hear everything he's saying. Wait a minute. I'm confused... Does he want me to see myself as a non-smoker, or feel the pat on the back, or hear the applause all at the same time or individually, or what? And what about counting? What number did I leave off at? What's that music playing in the background? I wish he'd stop talking in that monotonous tone. What's this about counting again? What number did I leave off at?

8:15 PM What now? Throw my cigarettes away? I don't think so. They cost too much money. Maybe I'll just keep them in my coat pocket and...

8:30 PM That's it! Shazam! The lights come on and he dismisses the group. Go and sin no more! It doesn't seem like forty minutes has passed since he dimmed the lights! He offers us water at the back of the room and the option to purchase a re-enforcement tape of the session. I purchase a tape to be on the safe side. Funny. I don't feel any different.

8:40 PM I get in the car and head home. I find it amazing that I don't reach for my customary 'smoke' for the ride home. Maybe later.

9:00 PM I arrive home, unlock the door and run for the phone. I chat with my sister for a few minutes, check my kids' homework assignments and make lunches for the next day. WOW! I actually had a telephone conversation without a cigarette dangling from my lips. I am totally amazed. I really have no desire to light up. I'll enjoy it for as long as it lasts. It did occur to me to have a cigarette while I was on the phone, but my mind flicked that thought away like a one-inch butt!

10:00 PM Okay, it's time to catch the weather I missed earlier. Interestingly enough I still haven't reached for a cigarette. I don't know how long this 'hypnosis stuff' will last, but I sure am enjoying the benefits of it already. How does it work? I don't know and I don't care to know. But one thing I'm sure of is that what I've tried to do on my own for years worked with hypnosis in one hour in one night. I have no craving and no sense of deprivation. I am simply now a non-smoker.

