

You never quit smoking, you just stop. If I lit just one cigarette now after 32 years of not smoking, I would most likely start that old habit. Part of the will power necessary to quit is that you get to a point that you can say "I haven't smoked in 5 years" and so on.

Although I played high school and college basketball from age 11 to 20, I began smoking during my sophomore year in high school. I started with 4 to 10 cigarettes a week and at age 39, before I quit, I would often smoke 2 and a half packs a day. People would make comments like, "I've never seen anyone love a cigarette as much as you do" or "you look like you are kissing it".

The first time I attempted to stop smoking, I did so for 4 months. The second time I stopped, I did so for around 18 months. Now it has been 26 years, even though I've had many difficult times during those 26 years.

Before and after not smoking I would read self-help books for various reasons. In several books it talked about self hypnosis. It said that if you wanted to stop or stop a habit, you should think in your mind what you want to quit, and the reasons why, right before you go to bed and before you get out of bed the next morning. Then, sometime in the future, you would start or stop the habit you wanted to. They said if you not do the habit consistently each day, you will be starting over the next day with your self hypnosis.

Every day, morning and night, I thought to myself, "Richard, you have got to quit smoking. It is not healthy, you can't work as long and hard as you used to, it's not good for our children, you waste time at work and it costs \$100 a month. I did not miss a time to repeat the quote above. Five months later, we were eating at our favorite restaurant and after dinner, as usual, I reached for a cigarette from my shirt pocket and I had an empty pack. I said, "I'll just see how long I can go without a cigarette." ***This, I think is a very important comment, you're not saying you are going to quit or stop which puts pressure on you to quit as opposed to saying, "I'll just see how long I can go without smoking."*** If you do, great! If you don't, I'll try later.

About 2 weeks later I put on the same sports coat I was wearing the night I stopped and guess what; you guessed it, there was a fresh pack of cigarettes in the pocket. I haven't smoked or chewed any tobacco product, again, for 32 years. Even though I've lived under the most stressful events during those years; i.e., could not get my bipolar disorder stabilized after multiple changes in medications, job losses primarily due to my bipolar disorder, a marriage separation and getting to the point I was 7 days from being homeless without anything to eat and \$30,000 in credit card debt.

Since then, I got a job with a bank and was able to buy a house, a nice used car, and have \$5,000 in the bank in less than 3 years. Note: my brother and sister and respective spouses paid my credit card debt off. When I began paying them back, they graciously said that that was not necessary.

The hardest thing to do is to consistently use your thought process to do self-hypnosis.

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