

# Tobacco Use and Intimate Relationships

Ian Newman · John DeFrain

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Smokers and Non-Smokers Tell Their Stories

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## PREFACE

How does tobacco use really affect the lives of individuals and families? That simple question led us on a long journey of understanding. With the help of smokers and nonsmokers in every corner of America who spent many hours telling their stories in great detail, we believe we now have a much better picture of the challenges faced.

What they told us is well worth sharing: the precise dynamic of how smoking affects couple relationships and parent–child relationships; how anger, silence, and secrecy are wrapped up in the smoking dynamic; the battle in the home behind closed doors as both smokers and nonsmokers invoke personal rights and the American way in efforts to win arguments and defend positions; the intimate, behind-the-scenes private and personal discussions over health and the effects of smoking on smokers and nonsmokers; how smoking controls one’s life in many ways, controlling when and where a smoker can find a place to smoke without retaliation and where nonsmokers can find a smoke-free environment.

And, by far the most important of all, we learned how absolutely essential communication is—how smokers and their loved ones will never be at peace until they find a way to speak courageously and honestly from the heart, and, even more important, until they find a way to listen to each other from the heart and genuinely understand what each is saying. Reading the many stories in this book from lifelong smokers, unrepentant smokers, smokers who can’t quit, smokers who don’t want

to quit, former smokers, and lifelong nonsmokers gives us a broad and deep understanding of how the controversy that has raged in the media is really fought behind closed doors.

Reading this positive, objective, nonjudgmental book is a step in the right direction, a way out of the dilemma. Positive communication among couples and families leads to a better understanding of each other. This, in turn, leads to respect and appreciation for each other's needs, which leads to more fulfilling lives together.

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Jocelyn Herstein at the University of Nebraska Medical Center College of Public Health searched the literature for background material on many aspects of tobacco use. Ardis Holland, Cindy Jeffrey, Judy Martin, Phyllis Fogerty, and Betty Olson read early versions of this manuscript and provided helpful suggestions. Aimee Allard, graduate student in the Department of English at University of Nebraska–Lincoln, proofread the manuscript. Any spelling and grammar errors that may have crept into the subsequent revisions are not her fault. Michelle Maas, research project assistant at the Nebraska Center for Alcohol and Drug Abuse, University of Nebraska–Lincoln College of Education and Human Sciences, served as the research and clerical assistant throughout the project and provided insightful suggestions to keep the text focused on its original purpose. Over many years, Tagi Qolouvaki, a member of the English faculty at Hawai'i Community College in Hilo, Hawai'i, has shared her experiences as a smoker, former smoker and growing up in a home with smokers, providing invaluable insights throughout this project. Her experiences and skills as an insightful reader and analyst in reading testimony helped guide the development of the themes of this book.

Most importantly, to the hundreds of people who responded to our invitation and to the 139 who completed a questionnaire and mailed it back to us—whether you wrote dozens of words or dozens of pages—thank you for your trust, candor, and courage.

## QUOTES

“A smoker is not being fair to their family.”—A Former Smoker

“He wouldn’t accept the fact that smoking was turning me off.”  
—A Former Smoker

“I smoke. It makes no sense!”—A Smoker Who Can’t Quit

“I feel hateful toward my mother.”—A Former Smoker

“I do not want to be part of her slow, painful death.”—A Former Smoker

“I have a serious addiction.”—An Unrepentant Smoker

“It’s so unhealthy and I want him to live.”—A Lifelong Nonsmoker

“Actually, I loved every aspect of smoking.”—A Former Smoker

“I’ve always enjoyed smoking and could stop if I wished to.”—An Unrepentant Smoker

“Smoking is more enjoyable than eating.”—An Unrepentant Smoker

“I have never seen a tobacco ad show a person with emphysema.”  
—A Smoker Who Won’t Quit

“I hate everything about smoking, but I love to smoke and I can’t stop!”—A Smoker Who Can’t Quit

“I chased this guy, threatening to brain him with my crutches.”  
—A Former Smoker

“I was smoking up to three packs a day, depending on my level of boredom.”—A Former Smoker

“Smokers have a hard road to travel.” —A Former Smoker

“There is not one cigarette that I do not enjoy or look forward to.”  
—A Smoker Who Can’t Quit

“It’s almost like ecstasy when I light up.” —An Unrepentant Smoker

“More than likely I will not see my grandchildren grow up.”—A Former Smoker

“My doctor told my husband I was a human time bomb.”—A Former Smoker

“It is difficult to do this, to bring back all the bad memories, but here goes...”—A Former Smoker

“I would do anything to get one.”—A Former Smoker

“My whole adult life has revolved around smoking.”—A Smoker Who Can’t Quit

“Not only was he a victim of tobacco—so were we.”—A Former Smoker

“I consider quitting to be one of the greatest accomplishments of my life.”—A Former Smoker



# CONTENTS

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Marital and Couple Relationships</b>	<b>3</b>
	<i>Testimony</i>	5
	<i>Stories</i>	7
	<i>A Smoker Is Not Being Fair to Their Family—A Former Smoker</i>	7
	<i>He Wouldn't Accept the Fact That Smoking Was Turning Me Off—A Former Smoker</i>	8
	<i>I Did This to Myself—A Lifelong Nonsmoker</i>	9
	<i>It's Me or This—A Lifelong Nonsmoker</i>	12
<b>3</b>	<b>Parent–Child Relationships</b>	<b>15</b>
	<i>Testimony</i>	18
	<i>Stories</i>	22
	<i>I Smoke. It Makes No Sense!—A Smoker Who Can't Quit</i>	22
	<i>If I Smoke Now, I Die—Plain and Simple—Former Smoker</i>	27
	<i>I Feel Hateful Toward My Mother—Former Smoker</i>	29
	<i>I Do Not Want to Be Part of Her Slow, Painful Death—Former Smoker</i>	30
<b>4</b>	<b>Anger, Silence, and Secrecy</b>	<b>33</b>
	<i>Testimony</i>	35
	<i>Stories</i>	37

	<i>I Have a Serious Addiction—An Unrepentant Smoker</i>	37
	<i>It’s So Unhealthy and I Want Him to Live—A Lifelong Nonsmoker</i>	38
	<i>Actually, I Loved Every Aspect of Smoking—A Former Smoker</i>	40
	<i>I’ve Always Enjoyed Smoking and Could Stop If I Wished to—An Unrepentant Smoker</i>	41
	<i>Smoking Is More Enjoyable Than Eating—An Unrepentant Smoker</i>	41
	<i>If a Person Believes a Behavior Is Harmful Then That Possibility Exists—An Unrepentant Smoker</i>	43
<b>5</b>	<b>Personal Rights and the American Way</b>	45
	<i>Testimony</i>	47
	<i>Stories</i>	56
	<i>I Have Always Believed and Practiced Tolerance. I Am No One’s Judge—A Smoker Who Believes She Can’t Quit</i>	56
	<i>I Have Never Seen a Tobacco Ad Show a Person with Emphysema—A Smoker Who Won’t Quit</i>	58
	<i>I Will Try in the Future to Think of Smokers as Victims Rather Than Aggressors—A Lifelong Nonsmoker</i>	61
	<i>I Got a Lot More Work Done When I Could Smoke at My Desk—A Smoker Who Can’t Quit</i>	63
	<i>My Doctor Suggested That I Take Up Smoking—An Unrepentant Smoker</i>	63
	<i>“Call Dr. X. I Don’t Treat Patients Who Smoke!” —A Former Smoker</i>	66
	<i>It’s Almost Like Ecstasy When I Light Up—An Unrepentant Smoker</i>	69
<b>6</b>	<b>Health</b>	73
	<i>Testimony</i>	75
	<i>Stories</i>	82
	<i>Every Role Model I Can Recall Was a Smoker—A Former Smoker</i>	82
	<i>More Than Likely I Will Not See My Grandchildren Grow Up—A Former Smoker</i>	87
	<i>My Doctor Told My Husband I Was a Human Time Bomb—A Former Smoker</i>	89

	<i>It's Not Fair How One Person's Habit Can Ruin Another Person's Health—A Lifelong Nonsmoker</i>	90
	<i>I'm Fighting the Entire Courthouse Over Smoking—A Lifelong Nonsmoker</i>	92
	<i>I Initially Thought of Smokers and Dippers as Villains, But Have Come to Think of Them as Victims—A Lifelong Nonsmoker</i>	96
	<i>I'm Quite Weary of 60-Plus Years of Coughing and Secondhand Smoke—A Nonsmoker</i>	103
7	<b>Lifestyle: The Power of Tobacco Over Our Lives</b>	107
	<i>Testimony</i>	108
	<i>Stories</i>	113
	<i>“Why Should I See a Psychiatrist to Learn to Accept Inhaling Toxins and Carcinogens?” I Asked—A Nonsmoker</i>	113
	<i>My Whole Existence Was Just to Endure Each Working Day and Go Home—A Nonsmoker</i>	117
	<i>It Is Difficult to Do This, to Bring Back All the Bad Memories, But Here Goes...—A Former Smoker</i>	129
	<i>At the Age of Nine I Was Addicted—A Former Smoker</i>	132
8	<b>Why Smoke?</b>	137
	<i>Testimony</i>	138
	<i>Stories</i>	145
	<i>It's Been a Source of Very Angry Disagreements Between Us—A Former Smoker</i>	145
	<i>To Be the “Inspiration” to Your Kids to Smoke Is a Rotten Legacy to Leave with Your Children—A Former Smoker</i>	148
	<i>I Would Do Anything to Get One—A Former Smoker</i>	149
9	<b>Quitting</b>	153
	<i>Testimony</i>	154
	<i>Stories</i>	170
	<i>I Feel Like a Pest, a Weakling, and an Ignoramus!—A Smoker Who Can't Quit</i>	170
	<i>My Whole Adult Life Has Revolved Around Smoking—A Smoker Who Can't Quit</i>	171
	<i>I Feel Very Befuddled and I Really Miss My Cigarettes—A Smoker Who Can't Quit</i>	174

<i>Postscript</i>	176
<i>After All These Years I Thought I Was Safe from Addiction—A Smoker Who Can't Quit</i>	176
<i>I Hate the Fact That I Am Addicted to a Filthy, Dirty Habit—A Smoker Who Can't Quit</i>	178
<i>I Hate Everything About Smoking, But I Love to Smoke and I Can't Stop!—A Smoker Who Can't Quit</i>	179
<i>I Chased this Guy, Threatening to Brain Him with My Crutches—A Former Smoker</i>	180
<i>I Was Smoking Up to Three Packs a Day, Depending on My Level of Boredom—A Former Smoker</i>	183
<i>Not Only Was He a Victim of Tobacco—So Were We—A Former Smoker</i>	184
<i>Smokers Have a Hard Road to Travel—A Former Smoker</i>	185
<i>There Is Not One Cigarette That I Do Not Enjoy or Look Forward to—A Smoker Who Can't Quit</i>	186
<i>I Consider Quitting to Be One of the Greatest Accomplishments of My Life—A Former Smoker</i>	188
<b>10 Conclusion—Beginning the Dialogue</b>	191
<i>What, Then, Can Be Done?</i>	197
<b>About the Authors</b>	199
<b>Appendix A: Why and How We Did This Study</b>	203
<b>Appendix B: The Questionnaire for Smokers</b>	207
<b>Appendix C: The Questionnaire for Survivors</b>	215
<b>Bibliography</b>	223
<b>Index</b>	229