

HIS VIEW: Don't like 'sin taxes'? Then quit smoking!

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Johnston

Smoking is a nasty habit. I think that's a pretty widely accepted statement that few folks would disagree with.

I smoked heavily for many years - sometimes consuming upwards of a carton per week. My New Year's resolution in 2007 was to quit, so at midnight Jan. 1 I threw away all my cigarettes and started the year with fresh breath and lungs.

That resolution lasted about three days before I was back to puffing those nasty cancer sticks. But I was determined to kick the habit, so I kept trying. I also promised myself that I would do it on my own with no patches or gum to help me along.

I'm glad I did it that way, too, because there is no bigger sense of accomplishment than breaking an addiction strictly on willpower. But it wasn't easy.

I'd be smoke-free for a few weeks and then succumb to my mental craving for a smoke. Being the cheap guy that I am, I couldn't throw away a perfectly good pack of cigarettes, so I'd finish off the pack before I tried to quit again.

Pretty strong willpower, I know.

I measured my success in the amount of time I would take to go through a pack, and at one point I was down to two cigarettes a day. I began to track how much time had elapsed between finishing my last pack and the urge to buy the next.

One night when I stopped at the gas station to buy another pack, I remembered that it had been nearly three months since had bought my last pack of smokes.

I said to myself, "Self, why do you need these smokes?"

I didn't have an answer any better than "I want them," so I turned around and left. It was at that point that I considered myself having truly quit smoking. Sure, I'll still bum one now and then, but each time I get two puffs into it I remember why I quit smoking in the first place.

Quite frankly, I don't know how I ever managed as a smoker. I'm focused on looking my best when it comes to my professional life, and I never realized that my teeth were a nice shade of yellow or that I stunk of general nastiness.

But why did I start smoking in the first place?

For those of us who grew up in the 1990s there is no reason why we should have ever lit up. From the time many of us started grade school we were taught that smoking, along with drugs of all kinds, was bad.

I also watched as my grandfather died of emphysema because he smoked for nearly 50 years. And he wasn't a casual smoker. Oh no, he was in the "two packs a day using the last one to light the next one" category.

Yet I still started that very nasty habit.