

## One-Week Health Behavior Diary Smoking

As a class we were told to change one aspect of our lives that would have an impact on our health for just one week. Looking around the room I saw many puzzled faces. People just had no idea what to change in their lives. It was much easier for me. I have wanted to quit smoking for a long time now but have always managed to put it off out of sheer laziness. We hear about the health risks of smoking every day but many of us do not think that it will happen to us. My grandfather died of lung cancer when I was younger and my mother is a heavy smoker as well. I have already noticed effects of smoking that really alarm me. I definitely do not have the stamina that I once had. Shortness of breath and wheezing are everyday occurrences. All of my life I have been an athlete and it is so frustrating to get winded after only a couple miles. Along with the health risks is another major concern of mine; they are disgusting. There is nothing worse than the smell of a smoker or the yellowing of their teeth from the tar. I make every effort to whiten my teeth and have perfume on me. It will be nice to not have to worry about that. Smoking has never and will never be "cool". Why I even started is beyond me but now is the time to take control and quit so here it goes.

## The Week of March 1, 2009 - March 8, 2009

### Day One

Well, here it goes. Last night I had my last cigarette and threw the rest away, very bold of me I know. Day one of not smoking is here and I'm actually pretty excited about it. Since it's Sunday I had to work as a bartender from 3pm to 9pm. I found that while at home I did not have any urges to smoke. The car is a different story. Usually when I get into my car I have a cigarette. I usually smoke at least two on the way to work, about a twenty-minute drive. Driving without my window cracked and a cigarette in my hand took some getting used to. Obviously I cannot smoke at work so that was not a problem. However again on my way home after work I was getting extremely anxious about driving without smoking. I made it home with no incidents, let the dog out and went to bed. I knew if I stayed up and about I would be tempted to have "just one" before bed so I decided to take the temptation away by going to sleep. So Day One is done and I must say I'm pretty proud of myself since the car is my enemy when it comes to smoking. Tomorrow is a fully day of classes so hopefully I will stay busy.

### Day Two

Monday is a long class day for me. I start class at 10:40am and don't get done until 9:00pm. I have one two-hour break in between where I go to the library to get some work done. I felt good waking up this morning. No wheezing this morning or any "heavy chest". Again driving to school, which takes roughly forty minutes was a bit annoying. The thought of going the whole day without a cigarette even in the morning was

daunting. After getting to class and settling in I was more at ease. After my first class is my break. I went directly to the library where I did my usual work and kept busy. After my break I have three classes back to back so there is no time for a cigarette. This part was easy. Having classes to focus on instead of idle time is always very helpful. When I got into my car I called one of my old roommates and we caught up the whole ride home. This was a great way to get my mind off of smoking. Now I'm going to take a shower and go to bed. I am actually very surprised by my progress and my ability to resist temptation. However tomorrow I will be bar-tending at night, which is usually followed by going out with some friends from work. When we go out they all smoke and obviously I did too. I am nervous to have a cocktail because I know that will lower my inhibitions and I'll be more inclined to cheat.

### Day Three

Today was not so good. I didn't really do much today during the day. I cleaned the house from top to bottom and made some dinner for my boyfriend for when he gets home from work. It is easy for me to be home and resist going outside in the freezing cold since I'm pretty lazy about that kind of stuff. My boyfriend and I switched cars today. There is absolutely no smoking allowed in his car so I figured that it would help with the temptation driving to and from work. I was totally fine on the way in to work today, mainly because I was focused on trying to drive his big SUV correctly. At work it was the usual suspects at the bar and on the staff so nothing was too different. It was extremely busy in the restaurant so by the end of the shift we were all ready to just relax and have a cocktail. We went to the bar we usually go to. After one drink everyone

decided to go out for a cigarette but I stayed behind and talked to some people I knew. On the second drink however I did go outside. I couldn't help the temptation anymore and the smell was getting to me. I took a couple of drags from my friend's. I instantly felt really lightheaded and nauseous. That sure taught me a lesson. I left the group pretty early so that I could get back home. I'm pretty bummed out that I had a couple drags but am pretty pleased that I didn't just resort back to chain smoking when I had a drink. I realize that this is a slow process and I cannot expect to never mess up.

#### Day Four

So today, just like Monday, is my day of nonstop school. I went the whole day without one drag on a cigarette. I realize that I have been talking about many of my day-to-day doings and nothing about my health or how I'm feeling so I figured I would take that opportunity now. I feel like a literal weight is off of my chest. I'm not as frustrated when I'm walking long distances or running around the restaurant. I have not woken up wheezing at all, which is pretty astonishing. There's no coughing up stuff in the morning after a night of smoking too many cigarettes. Overall, I feel that even in the last three or four days I have made great improvements with my health. I just feel better. Along with physical there is the emotional side of me as well. I am finding better ways of dealing with my stress such as taking deep breaths or just going for a walk to calm down instead of just lighting up. I'm very proud of myself, which is saying a lot for me.

#### Day Five

I don't really have much to say today. I worked a thirteen-hour day today so that is pretty much all I did all day. I switched cars with my boyfriend again to take the temptation away. At one point in the day it was chaos and things were just so

frustrating. We aren't allowed to smoke at work anyway but usually I just lose it. This time, however, I went upstairs to the empty room and just sit in silence for a couple minutes to calm down. This helped immensely and I don't know why I didn't think about it earlier. After seeing how well I'm doing my mom has actually cut back a lot. We would usually have a couple of cigarettes outside at night when I got home from work but since I am not there to do that with her she has stopped doing it all together. She will have one before bed but that is it. I'm really proud of her and excited that I can make even a little difference by being an example even if it is only for a short time.

#### Day Six

So, the weekend is here and this is my time to work. I usually work the entire weekend and always go out after work. Tonight I skipped going out so that I can save it for tomorrow night. I finally have off Sunday so I can relax and rest after going out. Tonight was busy at work so that was great for my wallet. One thing I've notice is the money I've been saving! I put every dollar I have in the bank so even if I wanted to buy a pack I would have to go through the ATM and the hassle just to buy a pack. But, I would say that I saved \$40 this week just on cigarettes alone and probably another \$60 with not going out or having extra drinks on Tuesday night and tonight. Money's tight so every little bit counts and this counts a lot. You never realize that \$6 a day really adds up!

#### Day Seven/Eight

I didn't have any time on Saturday to get on and type in the diary so I decided to do a combine of the weekend. Saturday was another 14-hour shift at work, which was brutal. I slipped up again on Saturday night while out with some friends. After a few drinks I

had a few drags of a cigarette and felt awful immediately. It's funny; I know I will feel horrible but I can't help myself after some alcohol is in my system. Overall I was pretty good. Only a couple drags on a night when I would have probably smoked half a pack is pretty good. Sunday was a day of resting and hanging out with my boyfriend. He hates smoke so I am never tempted to smoke around him and even if I wanted to he wouldn't let me. It is so nice to have such a good support system, I don't think I would be able to do this had it not been for him letting me switch cars and never letting me smoke. I'm proud of my mom too for cutting back as much as she has. She's down to about 5 cigarettes a day which, for her, is amazing. I'm really proud of her and of myself. I'm so glad I was given the opportunity to do this assignment and finally have a reason and deadline to quit. My car has that new car smell back and I want it to stay that way!

I learned so much from this experience. Most of the things that I learned were about myself. I will be the first to say that I can't do something. I really set my mind to this and was able to accomplish it. I learned that I really do have a great support system and that I am actually a great support system to other people, such as my mother. It amazing what just one week can do for your health. I no longer wake up wheezing or with a heavy chest and there is hardly any shortness of breathes at all. I didn't gain any weight, which is what really concerned me also, so that was a huge plus. Overall, this was a great assignment. I hope to stick to this for the rest of my life. The habit is gross and something I do not want to do again. I know I will have some slips but know I know that that does not mean I will fall off altogether. I have a lot more confidence in what I can accomplish these days.