

Smoking's become thing of the past for SP reporter

By Lori Coolican
of The StarPhoenix

This is the week thousands of Canadians ignore as best they can.

It's the time of year when all those depressing statistics about cancer and other horrors are even more likely than usual to come flying at you from the radio, TV screen and newspaper.

It's National Non-Smoking Week, an expanded version of the time-honoured Weedless Wednesday, when smokers everywhere are urged to butt out by well-meaning non-smokers with an urge to butt in.

Having recently gone "cold turkey" in a very public way by writing an article about participating in a one-day clinic, Allan Carr's Easyway to Stop Smoking, this reporter has been asked to provide a progress report.

Here it is — things are marvelous.

I have not had so much as a puff since Dec. 12, the day I reluctantly (and skeptically) attended Carr's clinic, which was led by Damian O'Hara.

No willpower. No other lifestyle changes. No weight gain as far as I can tell.

Who says there's no good news in the paper?

Thanks are owed to the many people who have offered me words of encouragement since the story was published.

One reader who contacted the StarPhoenix suggested it was unfair to proclaim in the headline, "Seasoned SP reporter stops smoking for good," when it had been such a short time since I quit. He himself had been clean for more than a year.

He has a point. We've all heard of smokers who kicked the habit for months or years, only to get sucked back in. This usually starts with the phrase, "One puff can't hurt."

It could happen to me, but today that seems unlikely. I still have an ashtray on my coffee table for guests, but taking a drag just doesn't seem worth all the bother. That's how I know the clinic really worked.

Easyway local organizer Shirley Baird, who hopes to join Carr's organization as a clinic presenter, tells me she got plenty of feedback from people who read the article. O'Hara returned to Saskatoon for more clinics last week, and because of high demand he will be back again on Feb. 5 and 6.

Call Shirley at 933-1875, or e-mail easywaysask@shaw.ca for details.

Allan Carr's Easyway seems like the Cadillac of stop-smoking methods to me, but of course it's not the only one out there.

The gum, the patch, and the pill have worked for many, and failed for many. There are also books and support groups with a variety of pointers.

With taxes climbing and smoking sections steadily shrinking, the quitting business is likely to get more competitive and creative.

One new method entering the market is Smokers Edge, described as a "cigarette alternative product" in a press release issued last week. It's a smokeless device you inhale from, but don't light. Instead of nicotine and tar, it contains "natural herbs and essential oils" in breath-freshening flavours.

"When inhaled, Smokers Edge takes the place of a cigarette by giving the person who smokes the hand to mouth motion as well as the inhale feeling," according to the release.

For more information, call 1-888-762-8887 or visit the Web site smokersedge.com.

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