

Speaking from Experience

Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)

Transcript for chapter 3 of 11: Smoking Cessation

Roy, 53 (3 years since diagnosis): Quite a number of years I was smoking. I started smoking at boarding school when I was about 11 and I gave up just before my 50th birthday so you'd have to say nearly 40 years. And as I say, of course I didn't smoke 30 odd a day as an 11 year old, I only just had the odd one, you've got to start somewhere. But by the time I quit, I was well over 30.

Ruth, 72 (14 years since diagnosis): Probably if I was really truthful; in between one and two packs a day. But the packs would have been 25's, not these great big packs now, but probably 50. I could smoke anywhere: in the bathroom, in bed, dreadful.

Roy, 53: I think a lot of people smoke when they're young because people they look up to or peer group pressure as they call it, they're doing it, it's cool. Today it's not as cool; there are a lot of kids walking around that say, "Yuck, cigarettes". Filthy, you know my daughters don't touch cigarettes, filthy, got a boyfriend who smokes but she's still lecturing him. I think most people take it up because the group in which they associate smokes.

Chris & Reg, 83 (21 years since diagnosis): My father smoked. Everybody else smoked. Smoking was just part of the scene, what men did, and so this little man did it too.

Ruth, 72: I was only 13, and I don't say I was terrible wayward but you know, we all thought smoking was very sophisticated then. And at 13 I was not a young 13, we were quite mature in those days. I mean, people went to work at 14 and 15. So it was behind the shelter shed with other girls, devilment, saying "I don't like this, it's making me cough" and somebody saying "bad luck, keep smoking." So it was just perceived to be sophisticated, you saw the people in the movies.

Roy, 53: Major sponsors of most sporting events which I'm keen on were cigarette companies. You go out to eastern creek, the Sydney drag way, 'Winfield' drag races. Then it was banned, you couldn't put it on cars anymore. Australia was one of the first ones, when the Formula 1 came to Adelaide they had to change the whole cars because we said "no, you can't have cigarette commercials on them". It was everywhere; it was shoved down your throat! Good phrase, I suppose, for smoking.

Chris & Reg, 83: They gave cigarettes away in the navy, they gave them the cigarettes.

Chris & Reg, 83: Yes, cigarettes were available in the services canteens. The Red Cross parcels included cigarettes. Cigarettes were just accepted as part of the scene.

Graham, 69 (12 years since diagnosis): It was a thing of the norm; everyone did it. So I had to be a part of it, didn't I - big, tough. Mistake. Big mistake.

Ruth, 72: The problem with all of these things, particularly smoking, you think it will happen to somebody else; that it won't happen to you. But the statistics are out now and they're

extremely high of the number of women particularly who smoke of my age group, because they now have the stats, we'll either get one of three diseases emphysema, heart disease or lung cancer. Now that should be terrifying enough for children, but it doesn't appear to be, don't know why. But it certainly is addictive. I mean, when I say I tried to give it up and wasn't successful, I did try a good few times. But I just found it incredibly difficult.

Roy, 53: Quitting smoking was hell. There's no other word for it, it was hell. How I did it was I tried with the quit foundation, you have a support group. So they'd ring me and say how am I going? I originally decided I was going to cut back. I've done that so many times. I can get it down to 14 down to 10, back to 18, even down to 9, back to 14, and 20, 22 and back to where we were before.

Colette, 45, (1 year since diagnosis): Every time I'd say when finish this packet of cigarettes I'm not buying another packet. I did, I'm very willful I'd always do as I said, it didn't matter if it lasted a week or a year, I failed. I think it was the 14th of march I'm not 100% sure of the date 7 years ago and I woke up and I had a whole carton of cigarettes and I simply said, "I don't want to smoke anymore" and I have no idea to this day where that came from, none at all. I was going through a divorce, I was an absolute wreck. I was living on cigarettes and chardonnay and that's the truth, I'd lost a tremendous amount of weight. And suddenly something triggered and I just went, this isn't the road. I can't remember thinking that thought, but now I can look back in hindsight and obviously somewhere in me a mechanism shut off and went "this is not what I want to be" and I threw that carton of cigarettes out instead of saying "when I finish this carton of cigarettes, I'm going to stop".

Ruth, 72: As soon as I was diagnosed I stopped, and I have never had another cigarette since.

Roy, 53: My wife also smoked. Then one day, it just happened to be the work Christmas party I decided to stop smoking. I don't mind a beer and with a beer goes a cigarette and it was the worst day to choose but I remember seeing her at the station at 5 o'clock and I said "how many smokes do you think I've had today?" she said "I don't know, 5 or 6", "none" she said "oh, I guess we've given up smoking", I said "I guess we have".

Chris & Reg: He used to get quite agitated and he used to love having a cigarette with his cup of tea. Anyway I'd give him his cup of tea and next thing he'd be walking around the room, I'd know what was going on, he was wanting a cigarette, had to walk around to get rid of the urge. But it didn't last long and he stayed off them, never had another one. It's good.

Julie, 58: I've consciously had to hate cigarettes basically. You know, well they are, they're filthy horrible things but I also consciously can't really change my whole lifestyle. A lot of my friends smoke, well the majority of them and where I live a lot of people smoke. I'm in a unit and all these other people are in these other units, they all smoke as well. I'm not going to stop visiting them because they do smoke. I have to become comfortable with the fact that that's their choice it's what they want to do. I've gone through the process of either pitying them [laughs] to make myself feel better, but to keep knowing that I'm doing the right thing by my COPD, basically.

Colette, 45: Every day you go without smoking if you use a patch or gum or the inhalers that are out at the moment to continue with the habit then do it. You'll get all the support you



need, your mindset may change. You might start with, “I want to give up smoking because so-and-so said I should”, but you just might start with all that assistance with patch or the gum or whatever, you might start to think “hey, this isn’t so bad, I might just continue because I want to”. So my advice is, just start with one of the assistants that you can get it’s way, way, way harder on your own.

Julie, 58: The quit message is, you know, about delay, walking, doing exercise, distract yourself, brush your teeth, have orange juice, instead of a cigarette, brushing my teeth and distracting, realizing that they’re horrible, filthy things. And having to reaffirm my decision to stop and not to doubt that decision.

Colette, 45: Today if I walk down the street and someone’s smoking in front of you and the big cloud of smoke comes into your face it literally, for me, takes my breath away now, it just chokes you. It wasn’t hard the last time, but the previous 30 were really hard. But the last time was a breeze.

Graham, 69: It took me about 2 or 3 years before that craving started to dissipate with the aroma of a cigarette. Now when I smell a cigarette it repulses me to the point where I can’t breathe properly. I’ve just got to get away. And so the best thing is deep breaths, slow and easy, and “no, no, no”.