

My Masters Bidding

I awoke as I always had to the incessant nagging of my master. I tried to ignore him as I had so many times before, but as usual, he won. I got out of bed to see to my master's needs. 15 minutes later and I have quieted his craving for at least an hour. This was not new to me. I have been a slave for more than 30 years. My whole life revolves around pleasing my master. I get up because he tells me to. I take breaks during the day because he requires attention. I can't sit through an entire movie without seeing to his needs. I eat quicker than my wife at the restaurant so that I have time to attend to him. I stop at intervals on a long trip because my master bids me to. The stench of my slavery clings to my skin and clothes heralding to everyone that I meet that I am a slave.

I've tried to win my freedom many times. I would leave my master for days; sometimes weeks at a time. The reason for my return was simple. My master was good to me. I enjoyed his company. I loved him. He made me feel comfortable like an old pair of shoes. When I was with him my mind was sharp, my senses alert. He took away my anxiety and allowed me to relax. When I was in his embrace I didn't have a care in the world. He wasn't a cruel master. He was, however, deadly. I knew I was committing slow suicide, but I didn't care. I was addicted to him. I knew that I couldn't live without him in my life.

Nicotine addiction is common. According to the American Heart Association 24.8 million men smoke and 21.1 million women smoke, this is 19.8% of the population. As high as that seems the percentage of Americans smoking has actually decreased said the Center for Disease Control. Between 2006 and 2007 the percentage of Americans smoking dropped almost

a full percentage point from 20.9%. This is the lowest percentage since the CDC started keeping track in 1965 when the percentage of smokers was 42.4%. Unfortunately the number of deaths contributed to smoking is on the rise. Lung Cancer, the leading cause of cancer death among men and women, kills about 157,000 Americans a year. A greater number of people die of lung cancer than of colon, breast, and prostate cancers combined. (WebMD)

According to the Oxford Reference web site nicotine is a simple alkaloid produced by the tobacco plant. All the acute effects of the tobacco habit are dependent on nicotine, which has complex actions, both on the central nervous system and in the rest of the body. Nicotine acts on certain cell membrane receptors, which were therefore given the name nicotinic receptors. Nicotine was found to mimic the actions of the neurotransmitter acetylcholine at these sites: at the neuromuscular junctions in skeletal muscle; at the synapses in the relay stations of the autonomic nervous system; and in various parts of the brain and spinal cord. In many situations nicotine first activates the nicotinic receptors and then by its continued presence desensitizes them. Normally, at these nicotinic synapses, the transmitter (acetylcholine) is rapidly destroyed by the enzyme cholinesterase, so its action is temporary; this is not the case with nicotine. (oxford web.)

Research has demonstrated that the vast majority of harm associated with cigarettes is attributable to the byproducts of smoking rather than to the effects of nicotine (Slade 1999). In addition to nicotine, unprocessed tobacco smoke includes more than 2,500 compounds, and when manufactured additives and other compounds are taken into account, about 4,000 compounds are present (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 1988). Compounds such as; formaldehyde used to embalm bodies; arsenic a major component of pesticides;

methanol used to produce rocket propellant; acetone used to remove paint and finger nail polish; cadmium the cad of ni-cad battery; and lead a heavy metal known to be a neurotoxin.

The nicotine withdrawal syndrome develops after abrupt cessation of or a reduction in the use of nicotine products and is accompanied by at least four of the following signs and symptoms: depressed mood; insomnia; irritability, frustration, or anger; anxiety; difficulty concentrating; restlessness or impatience; decreased heart rate; and increased appetite or weight gain (web NIH). Four is the minimum number of symptoms that most people experience. During my attempts at quitting I experienced all of them.

After literally hundreds of tries I am free of the chains of nicotine addiction. What made this time different? How did I escape the bonds that my master had placed upon me? Attitude is the simple answer. I wanted to quit. I desired the freedom more than the pleasure. I used a nicotine replacement therapy, the patch, to get me over the rough times. If I was going to succeed I would have to find a way to overcome my myriad excuses that caused me to start smoking again. Many people had told me to visualize my lungs getting better. They said that if I started to smoke I should visualize my lungs getting diseased. I had tried that; unfortunately it didn't work very well for me. While pondering why this had not been a very effective technique for me I hit upon a new method. Instead of visualizing my lungs going bad I should visualize something that would scare me. The one thing I am very afraid of is suicide. It is an irrational fear but a fear all the same. Every time I fabricated an excuse to start smoking I would ask myself one simple question. "Is this the excuse I am going to use to kill myself?" I would then visualize putting a gun to my head and pulling the trigger. Instead of the bullet going fast it

would travel very, very slow. That is how cigarettes kill you; slowly, methodically, and insidiously. With that visualization the answer would always be “no.”

I have been free for over three years now. I struggle daily with my old master. He wants me back. He pleads with me to come to his embrace. At stressful times of the day his voice whispers in my ear. “I can take away your pain.” I close my eyes and see the gun...

List of works cited

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