I Am a Teen Smoker

By ACSH Staff — August 21, 2003

Editor’s note: We just received this letter, a reminder that weighing long-term risks and benefits is often hardest for the young, which is what makes them such an important market for cigarette manufacturers. To help kids get a better handle on the risks, we'll soon publish a teen version of our book Cigarettes: What the Warning Label Doesn't Tell You, and for smokers of all ages interested in knowing some of the quit-assist options, there's our book Kicking Butts in the Twenty-First Century. We'd also recommend that the letter writer talk to her parents about her problem, despite her stated reluctance to do so, and that other kids in the same situation talk to their parents and doctors as well. TS

I am fifteen years old and I've been smoking for I don't know how long, but I started out as a casual smoker and now I smoke a pack a day. I think I was eight when I first started smoking, and I started because of issues at home and then I smoked more and more to fit in with the older kids. I decided to get online and find someone to write and pretty much vent off my anger on cigarettes, and I saw this site and was completely amazed that girls of young ages are targeted so much. The Truth [anti-smoking public service announcements] really made me think, and I have them to thank for support and inspiration. I would talk to my family about it, but I don't want them to deal with my problems, and they wouldn't understand because they don't smoke.

I've tired to quit smoking, but I can't seem to put the pack down and just cold turkey it. I've tried Nicorette and got a weird burn in my mouth, and I tried the patch and got a horrible rash, so I decided that those things just weren't for me, and I am far past wanting to feel any more pain for something I started myself.

My dad smokes and so does my grandpa. Most of my friends smoke, mostly because it's hard finding friends that understand and because most people at my school do smoke anyway. I hate the fact that the people I love so much will end up in deep pain or die because of people that just want to make money. My dad has had three stints put into his heart and has had open heart surgery. My grandpa is very sick and is slowly and painfully dying because his lungs and heart are completely trashed. My other grandpa already died of lung cancer, and it was one of the greatest losses of my entire life, and I never want to go through it again. I have so many people close to me that are in great risk, including my aunt and uncle, who are complete chain smokers, and most of my aunts and uncles and cousins in general.

I guess what I don't understand most of all is how cigarette companies can hurt and kill so many people and feel no remorse. I personally feel so guilty if I even make anyone angry, let alone murder them! I am completely baffled and angry about how any human being in their right mind could possibly hurt people so badly. Those people, I suspect, have no heart and are inhumane. If
serial murderers and abusers are in jail and prison, then the people who run cigarette companies should be, too. They are no different, if not more cruel. They are the worst kind of killers, the ones who kill us slowly and painfully and ruin everything on the upside for us.

For now, my biggest goal in life is to quit smoking and pray that I have not ruined my body or mind for the rest of my life, or that I have time left before smoking kills me! It's my biggest regret in life and at the same time my worst nightmare. I am fifteen years old. I have so much to live for, but my time is getting shorter and shorter. I have no one to blame but myself, but I have remorse for the poor souls that created this torture, and I hope that they will someday see it from another perspective and help those that have endured pain and death from smoking.

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