Commit to Quit

Today is the American Cancer Society's Great American Smokeout.

November 16, 2017 By Liz Highleyman

I quit smoking 10 years ago—almost. I still get the urge occasionally, and when I'm in a city like Paris or Saigon where everyone smokes, all bets are off.

But since my work has shifted from HIV to cancer, and I focus every day on the difficulties of cancer and its treatment (I almost wrote "horrors," there…), the urges have fortunately become fewer and more far between.

I lost my dad, a long-term heavy smoker, to lung cancer in 2003. But even that didn't make me me quit right away.

California's early strict anti-smoking laws, and the fact that most of my friends no longer smoked, did the trick. Always a social smoker, I found that a furtive puff standing alone outside in the rain just wasn't as the same as sitting down and having a smoke and a cup of coffee or glass of wine with friends. A prescription for Zyban (bupropion) certainly helped too.

If you need more convincing about the dangers of smoking, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says that:

- Tobacco use causes at least 12 types of cancer.
- Cancers linked to tobacco use make up 40% of all cancers diagnosed.
- Cigarette smoking causes 3 in 10 of all cancer deaths.

Today, the American Cancer Society’s Great American Smokeout, is a great opportunity for quitters to rededicate ourselves to staying quit, and for everyone to encourage our friends, family members and colleagues to do the same.

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