



By Dr Max Pemberton

I LOVED smoking. Or at least I thought I loved it. As a doctor, I knew how bad it was for me, but that didn't stop me doing it. In fact, if simply knowing the health risks of smoking stopped people doing it, then no doctor or nurse would ever light up a cigarette – and that's imply not the case.

Throughout my 20s I told myself I'd give up one day. Then my 30th birthday came and went. It was several more years before I realised that if I didn't make a concerted effort, I'd be smoking until I died.

But the thought of stopping smoking made me profoundly sad. I didn't want to stop doing something that I enjoyed so much. I was in a muddle. I loved smoking, but I knew it was killing me.

And then one day on my way to work, I heard my thoughts out loud for the first time. My gran and aunt had just died from lung cancer and this had brought on a new round of nagging from my mother about my smoking habit. I needed to make sure that I definitely loved it enough that I wouldn't mind dying for it.

For many years I have worked with drug addicts. Lots of the things I was hearing myself say were horribly similar to the things I'd heard my patients say.

I had helped get them out of their predicaments using cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), so surely I could use this to help get myself out of my one. CBT works by inviting the patient to examine aspects of their life that are causing them difficulties or problems, and to challenge some of the unhelpful thoughts that they have and that are contributing to the problem.

Using my experience of working with drug addicts, I developed a CBT-based programme to help me change my thinking about smoking. It worked.

I quit and I haven't looked back. The programme, which I have now put into a book, involves a series of exercises that gradually build on one another. Here are some simple exercises you can do now to introduce you to some of the key ideas, and help you start gently thinking about your relationship with cigarettes.

EXERCISE 1

WRITE a list of what you love about cigarettes, and why. It doesn't matter how daft some of the things are. It's important that you start to examine what you think cigarettes give to you. Do they make you feel more confident or more relaxed? What do you think you get from smoking – after all, it must give you something, otherwise why do it?

EXERCISE 2

NOW write down a list of all the things that prevent you from stopping smoking. This might be harder than it sounds.

Smoking is something we can

Want to quit SMOKING?

...by the time you finish this article, you'll be ready to stub out your habit



smoking. Part of the path to becoming a non-smoker again is picking apart these arguments that your mind relies on to justify you smoking. Every single reason that smokers give to rationalise why they smoke is based on false logic.

For instance, nicotine doesn't actually relieve stress. It's not very good at staying in the body for any length of time, so smokers spend most of their days in a constant state of mild withdrawal.

This low-level discomfort is only relieved by smoking, but shortly afterwards the withdrawal begins again.

The situation is accompanied by the growing, niggling feeling that at some point we need to smoke a cigarette – so, when we do, we feel that this has helped us with our stress levels.

There is nothing inherent in a cigarette that calms us. In fact, smoking raises blood pressure and heart rate, so, if anything, it contributes to stress. It doesn't help us relax or concentrate; it doesn't make us more focused or less bored.

All smoking does is momentarily address the mild nicotine withdrawal that smokers spend the majority of their lives experiencing. With this in mind, I want you to do one final exercise.

EXERCISE 4

IMAGINE that you are a lawyer in a legal case. First of all, put the case forward for continuing smoking. You already have the information for this from Exercises 1 and 2.

Imagine putting forward this argument in front of a judge and jury, and be as persuasive as you can be. Use emotive phrases – play on their emotions. Cigarettes are on trial and you are defending them.

Now switch sides and imagine that you are the prosecution barrister. Put forward the argument against smoking, as you outlined in your 'Quit list' in Exercise 3. You need to convince the judge and jury that the arguments in support of continuing to smoke are a load of nonsense.

THE cases you make in Exercise 4 reflect what goes on inside your head when you smoke. Hopefully, you can also see how exercises like these are able to make you think objectively about the whole situation – this distance is what you need to start the process of stopping.

There is one positive to smoking: even now, when I find myself doubting my abilities or facing something I think is daunting, I remind myself of this incredible achievement that I did entirely on my own – just me and my brain.

Quitting smoking has given me new self-confidence. And you can have that feeling as well. All you have to do is stop smoking. Trust me, it's the best thing you'll ever do.

● *Stop Smoking With CBT, by Dr Max Pemberton, will be published on January 1 by Vermilion, priced £9.99. To pre-order your copy, visit www.eburypublishing.co.uk.*

do without really thinking about it most of the time, and it's easy for us to create myths and illusions around why we should keep doing it. What it is that truly prevents you from stopping? And what is it that scares you? Write down your list, and, as always, you can add to it later as things occur to you.

These are your reasons NOT to quit, or 'Reasons to continue'.

EXERCISE 3

GO BACK to the list that you made in Exercise 1. Now, I want you to write down all the things that NOT

smoking would give you. What are the benefits? Why stop smoking? What are your reasons for wanting to no longer smoke? We'll call this your 'Quit list'.

IT MIGHT not seem like it now, but everything you wrote down in Exercise 1 is an illusion. These 'reasons you smoke' might seem very real, but they are not. Instead, everything on this list is your mind's attempt to justify something that doesn't make sense.

We all know that smoking is bad for us. It costs an incredible amount

of money and, ultimately, it's likely to either kill or disable us. In the mind, this sets up a bit of a quandary. We want to do it but we know it is bad for us and we shouldn't do it.

In psychology, this problem is called 'cognitive dissonance' – when our thoughts are in conflict with one another. Part of becoming a smoker is that your mind finds ways to resolve this dissonance so that you can continue smoking without experiencing the mental conflict.

It does this by coming up with 'cognitive distortions' – arguments that, on the face of it, might seem logical and that allow you to keep

SOME FOOD FOR THOUGHT

1. Full-fat. Stripping out heart-healthy polyunsaturated fat removes the flavour, so low-fat products are usually higher in sugar or salt.
2. B. A standard glass of sparkling wine contains twice as much sugar as a glass of dry white wine.
3. Lord Falconer went from 16st 6lb to 11st 5lb by snacking on apples and drinking up to nine cans of Diet Coke every day.

QUIZ ANSWERS

4. Researchers said increasing intake to seven portions of fruit and veg a day cuts the risk of heart disease and dying from cancer.
5. False. Green juice packs a powerful punch in terms of vitamins and mineral, but any form of juicing strips fibre from fruit and veg.
6. Adults should aim to cut their intake

to six teaspoons a day, and never more than 12.

7. C. Time's cover line 'Eat butter' followed research questioning the long-held connection between fat intake, cholesterol and heart disease.
8. Beyoncé and Jay-Z, who signed up to 'Veganary' – a meat and dairy-free January – sharing photos of meals with millions of fans on Instagram.

DOCTOR, DOCTOR!

1. The Prime Minister warned

of the threat of resistance to antibiotics.

2. C. *Campylobacter* is the biggest cause of food poisoning in the UK, resulting in 100 deaths a year.
3. Madonna and Nancy Shevell favour long-sleeved rash vests – or 'rashies' – to block out the sun's rays.
4. A. The new proposals mean 17.5 million adults are now eligible to take statins.
5. Flu.

6. Her throat – Joan Rivers was having a diagnostic investigation on her vocal cords when she died.

7. The charge rose by 20p to £8.05 on April 1, and will climb further still to £8.20 in 2015.
8. Women were warned that they were nearly twice as likely to develop blood clots.

THE BODY BEAUTIFUL

1. B. Victoria's Secret faced a backlash for the campaign, which showed ten

tall, slim models showcasing the brand's new bra range.

2. False. Training programmes should include steady running as well as sprinting so you have a foundation of fitness to build on.
3. In Wild Reese's character embarks on a 1,100-mile trek across the Pacific Crest Trail.
4. B. Amanda went paddleboarding with her dog Finn.
5. The Duchess was pictured hurdling

tin cans while sporting 4in wedges at the Commonwealth Games.

6. Three minutes. Michael Moseley recommends three 20-second bursts of high-intensity training, three times a week.
7. Jogging. The PM says he enjoys the anonymity as while jogging he becomes 'just another middle-aged, slightly overweight man'.
8. Davina McCall travelled from Edinburgh to London in seven days, raising £2.2 million.