Commit to Quit

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

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By Liz Highleyman (Editor-In-Chief, Cancer Health)

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.

For more information about cancer, please visit Cancer Health.

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