

QUITTING SMOKING HARD FOR ADDICTS

Special to The New York Times

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Synanon Reports Success With Nicotine Ban

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LOS ANGELES, May 22—"It was much easier to quit heroin than cigarettes," said a newcomer to Synanon.

A ban on smoking was imposed a year ago this week at the community founded in 1958 for treatment of drug addicts and alcoholics.

Many at Synanon, like the newcomer, have found that the nicotine habit is the hardest one to break.

Michael Kaiser, who has lived at the Seaside Community in Santa Monica for six years, points to the long withdrawal period as a major reason.

"With most drugs you get over the symptoms in a few days, a week at most," he explained. "But with tobacco, we've noticed them for at least six months."

Almost an Obsession

In the past, smoking for most at Synanon was an obsession. The bill was almost \$200,000 a year for an unlimited supply of cigarettes for the 1,400 members at seven centers.

So it was natural that the notice of the ban—smoking was declared illegal on Synanon property—disrupted the careful balance of the life in which verbal violence is used to counteract aggression and support of colleagues is essential to bolster individual weaknesses.

The most common reactions were depression, irritability and weight gains ranging from seven to 30 pounds. About 100 people left during the six-month period following the ban and chose possible re-addiction to drugs outside Synanon to life without cigarettes.

Pacifiers such as fake cigarettes, toothpicks or even syringes helped many pass the initial shock.

Today most of the trauma of withdrawal is over. The majority say the thought of a cigarette is rare, although some admit to an "occasional urge" or fluctuating weight.

The Easiest Place

Despite the personal agony, most feel that it is much easier to quit smoking at Synanon than anywhere else.

"I couldn't have stopped without the help of my colleagues," said Charles E. Dederich, founder of Synanon and motivator for the ban.

In a telephone interview from the Synanon retreat at Tomales Bay, north of San Francisco, Mr. Dederich cred-

ited his decision to stop smoking to the combination of a cloudy lung X-ray and the pressure from the 200 young people under 15 who live in the community.

"They are nonsmokers, so they don't have no rationalize away the medical reports and antismoking commercials the way I always did," he explained.

Once the decision was made, smoking became the No. 1 crime for the community and was punishable by shaved heads or eventual expulsion.

The trial by fire for each has become both a personal badge of honor and a point of communal pride.

Clean Inside and Out

Random samplings from the spacious common room find testimonials of better health, cleaner air and spotless walls, which are newly painted and never to be nicotine stained, hopefully.

"We have been traditionally governed from smoke-filled rooms," explained Mr. Kaiser, who doubles in microbiology and public relations. "But the new society will have to be one of cleanliness inside and outside the body."

Synanon considers itself a leader toward that new society. The ban on smoking illustrates its evolution from a treatment center for addicts to a permanent life style.

James Middleton, a 46-year-old who has been at Synanon for 12 years and was in a variety of prisons for the previous 15, would never leave.

"Why should I?" he smiled. "Here my daughter can grow

up in a drug-free and unpoluted environment, and she's happy."

At Synanon, there's more than a hint of the self-righteousness proper for all reformed sinners.

"If we dregs of society can give up smoking," said Mr. Kaiser sarcastically, "then out there in a so-called sane world which is killing itself with the most dangerous of all drugs, responsible people can make a stand."

Although no one has yet entered for the expressed purpose of giving up smoking, Mr. Dederich would welcome them.

"As the word spreads, I would not be surprised to get some nicotine addicts," smiled

Mr. Dederich, "since there is gathering momentum that this is a nice place to come for clean air, nice furniture and sweet breath."

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