

roadtest

Giving employees the easy way to stop smoking

It is estimated that smoking costs Australian businesses at least \$1.5 billion per year, or \$4.3 million a day. On an individual level, every smoker can cost up a business up to \$5,000 every year. Furthermore, the average smoker spends up to 30 minutes a day, or 14 working days a year, on cigarette breaks, and takes five days more sick leave a year on average than non-smokers.

I had been smoking for five years, up until recently, when I was presented with an opportunity to attend Allen Carr's Easyway to Stop Smoking course – a one-day workshop based on simple cognitive therapy techniques that help smokers to realise that there are no genuine benefits to smoking.

Prior to attending the course, I felt scared and nervous; I had it in my head that I really enjoyed smoking. Attendees at the course were greeted our facilitator, Natalie Clays – director of Allen Carr's Easyway to Stop Smoking NSW, and an ex-smoker herself. The first thing we saw was a huge pile of cigarettes being poured out of a bag and onto the floor. At first, I was disgusted at the sight of all these cigarettes, but then I thought to myself that I have probably smoked more cigarettes than this over the past couple of years.

We were told to help ourselves to coffee and biscuits and to go and have a cigarette outside, while filling out some general paperwork, before starting the course. Upon going back into our room to start our session, we were told there will be plenty of smoke breaks. You could hear the sigh of relief from fellow soon-to-be-non-smokers.

Natalie said that throughout the day, she would be giving us instructions to follow. Two of the instructions that have stuck with me are to keep an open mind, and



that anyone can be a non-smoker, no matter how long you have been smoking for. Throughout the day we were informed that we are actually addicts, similar to people who do heroin, as we are always needing that fix and constantly thinking about when we can get that next fix.

We also learned that it is fear that keeps smokers smoking. This is why those scare tactic advertisement do not work. I know myself that when I saw those ads, all I wanted to do was light-up.

By the time lunchtime came round, I was looking forward to this happier, healthier life that I was going to lead. Following lunch we had a session on withdrawals, where we were told that only 5 per cent of the withdrawals were from nicotine while the rest are in fact mental. Another smoke break followed this session. We were told to go outside and have our last cigarette, and when we came back in we were to throw our cigarette

packets and lighters into the huge pile of cigarette packets.

By this stage, I was ecstatic that I was finally going to kick this dirty habit. Once we were back inside, the final session was hypnotherapy, which ran for about 15 minutes. This brought us to the end of the day, with a final debriefing before going our separate ways to start our new non-smoking lives.

I am proud to say I am going into my fifth week of being a non-smoker and I couldn't be happier. I highly recommend this course to anyone who wants to stop smoking, and to companies that want to make a difference to the lives of their employees and the bottom line. Thank you once again Natalie for helping me change my life for the better.

Reviewed by Melissa Henry.

Corporate programs consist of one five-hour seminar for groups of up to 20 smokers. Cost per person is \$480 (including GST). For more information call 1300 785 180 or (02) 9818 3700, email nsw@allencarr.com.au