I liked smoking cigarettes. In my last fact sheet titled “It Took Grandsons to Open a Grandmother's Eyes”, I said, “I always listen to my heart - except when it came to smoking cigarettes.”

Over the last 16 years, I have been struggling with trying to quit smoking cigarettes with very little success. I believe that, while I knew it was bad for my health, bad for my clothing (I kept burning little holes in them), bad for my breath, bad for my pocketbook, bad for the way it made my car smell, and bad for the way it made me smell, I just could not seem to break that addiction.

Last year, I wrote a narrative about how my then 5 year old grandson told me in no uncertain terms that he wanted me to quit and to quit NOW. His reaction to seeing me smoke after receiving some disturbing news about his other much loved grandmother was so strong and powerful it shocked me.

I have taught my grandsons’ that Life is what the Creator gave each of us. It is up to each of us to figure out what to do with each day of Life the Creator has given us.

When I am with my grandchildren, my focus is on them. I feel so full of love and have such a sense of fullness of life. To me, in a way, that is what the Circle of Life means. Life.

I let them know they are my grandkids, my love for them is unending and my love is taught by actions more than by words.

My little grandson helped me to commit to stop smoking. My quite date was June 29, 2015.

Here we are a year later, and I can say I am one year clean from smoking cigarettes.
By my actions, let him know that I listened to him, not only to the words he said, but to the feelings he was expressing to me. And my love for him was more important than smoking cigarettes.

During that time, I also taught my grandsons about the sacred use of tobacco. And that by abusing tobacco, asema, by smoking it in the form of cigarettes I was actually disrespecting it. But at the time, I did not see I was acting disrespectfully. Now that I am not smoking I have a clearer vision of how that disrespect happens. And it happens so easily.

I am not going to tell you it was an easy journey. Even with the Western medicine supports, it was not easy, but I believe it was much easier because I used asema every day to pray and ask for help to give me the will to not smoke and to show me the faces of my grandchildren and great grandchildren so I remember what the purpose for quitting is all about.

After all, there has to be a motivating factor in stopping any addictive behavior, doesn’t there? There has to be a reason for us to transform ourselves from one state of being to another. Otherwise, we will not have the will power to commit to a long lasting life time transformative behavior.

In my life, my traditional Ojibwe belief system, my family and community are my purpose for being on Mother Earth.

Abusing asema was not following a traditional belief.

Behaving in such a way that would most likely cause me to have a lesser quality of Life or to shorten it did nothing to help my family. In fact, it caused them a great deal of pain.

And, in the end, by smoking, I cause myself to become ill with bronchitis every year, and even cause a bout with pneumonia. Now how did that help me when I was not able to do my community work?

Those were my motivating factors. Every one of my traditional beliefs were being negatively affected by the simple act of putting a cigarette up to my lips and ‘flicking the Bic.”

I will never forget the day when I told him I was going to quit smoking. I expected him to thank me! But he didn’t. In his wisdom, he just said, “Well, are you gonna thank me now Granma?”

And I said, “Yes T.J. Thank You. Not smoking will be a Good Life.”

And Life Is Good Not Smoking!!!

So...if you smoke, or have another type of behavior you want to transform into something positive, You Can Do It!

Find your motivating factor. It has to be something that really means a lot to you!

- Saving your health?
- Helping your community?
- Saving your marriage?
- Conducting yourself as a positive role model for your children?

The Creator and Spirit World will help if you ask. And you will find the heart to do it and you will feel a freedom like no other.