

# Coffee, No Cigarettes

Category: Smoking

written by Julie A. Dickson | May 10, 2022

She smoked. There was always a pack of *Lark* cigarettes on the kitchen table next to a half-empty cup of lukewarm coffee. I couldn't stand the smell of coffee for years because it was comingled in my nostrils with curling cigarette fumes. I had to beg her not to smoke in the car, where the combination of motion and tobacco smoke nauseated me until I had to yell to my father to stop the car, just in time to open the door and throw up on the side of the road.

I never smoked. Questionnaires always ask whether you smoke and how frequently, what quantity and when did you start. Some questionnaires don't even have the option to choose *Never Smoked*. In high school, during times when all the kids seem to be outside in courtyards, in parking lots and walking through town smoking, I was the one who didn't smoke. To be more popular, I occasionally bought a pack of *Winston*, just so if another kid asked whether anyone had a cigarette, I could offer mine.

My mother smoked for forty years. Not a lot, never more than half a pack per day. But heart disease, high blood pressure and high cholesterol ran in her family. Back then, no doctors ever suggested that she stop.

Then, at age sixty-five, she suffered a heart attack. A year later she received a mitral valve replacement and triple bypass, which enabled her to live another fourteen years. After her heart attack, she never smoked again.

My aunt, who had smoked just as long, got emphysema. She kept on smoking a pack of cigarettes per day, until they brought in her oxygen tank and nasal cannula. She quit cold-turkey that day, just as my mother had.

When I was forty years old, I finally started drinking coffee. The cigarette connotation was finally gone from my nostrils. I decided I liked coffee. But I never smoked a cigarette.

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