

I started smoking when I was 16. I didn't need to start smoking but friends who smoked were pressuring me and I was the only one who didn't - I wanted to fit in. I have five children, two of my sons were bad asthmatics as babies, and as young children they spent a lot of time in hospital, often over several nights, being put on a nebulizer to help them breathe, I did not realise I should stop smoking.

My daughter who is now 12 was a bad asthmatic as a baby and young child. More recently she has asked me repeatedly not to smoke, telling me I am killing myself and I should read the packet. About a week before I decided to stop I lit a cigarette and my daughter said if you smoke that you will die - I told her not to be silly. Listening to my daughter read to me was a problem, as I had to go without a cigarette. I would go downstairs to smoke and tell her I could hear her reading, in the end she gave up reading to me.

My son Jon now 19 has never smoked but has suffered breathing problems, he always used to say to me maybe you want to kill yourself but we don't want you to kill us! I would say keep away from me then! I never realized how bad I was making the house smell, or how much my children hated me smoking. My children are 12, 19, 23, 29 and 31 and only the 23-year-old smokes.

I've had 4 operations on my legs because of clots in my veins, and one to remove a clot from behind my knee. I was told smoking caused this and that if I didn't stop smoking I would lose my legs. That was about 9 or 10 years ago, I didn't listen and have always suffered pain and cramp in my legs and back.

Since giving up smoking on 5 March this year I no longer have pain in my legs or back. My daughter has not used her asthma pump since I gave up smoking and I have decorated my bedrooms and tiled the floor, which I couldn't afford to do before. I'm just getting started to decorate my hallway. I take long walks now and can actually breathe while walking. I can smell and taste everything so much more clearly. I recently had a large phone bill and had to take £50 out of my smoking tin to pay it, money that would have been burnt.

I have smoked a couple since giving up, not in the first two weeks but in later weeks and in the past few weeks I have tried one or two. It wasn't because I was craving, I didn't need to do it, but I have a friend who is a chain smoker and my 23 year old son smokes so I feel once again it was just to fit in and be like everyone else at that time. I know I've given into the gremlins, but I know I don't need cigarettes. I know I would never be bothered if I never smoke another one; I think I have beaten it and I can't believe for the past 36 years I thought that I couldn't get through the day without a cigarette.

Belonging to the group has definitely helped me, I could not have done it on my own and since my children who don't smoke, and friends who don't smoke have realized I'm serious about giving up they have shown me a lot of support and encouragement.

I know I am stronger than the addiction and I am really proud of myself. My 19-year-old son and my 12-year-old daughter tell me how proud they are of me. I am determined to stay stopped and I will try harder to overcome any temptation, which really is getting easier; and my daughter has started reading to me again!