

Smoke-Free Marriages

By Barrington H. Brennen, May 18, 2011

What happens when one spouse smokes cigarettes and the other spouse doesn't? Ironically, both of them can die of lung cancer or other related diseases. Although one spouse might be quite aware that the other partner smoked long before they got married, she reasons that since she is not smoking there should be no harm done to her. We know today that this is far from the truth. These same couples end up arguing over cigarette smoking in the home or car until finally the marriage ends. It is safer to have a smoke-free marriage for the sake of the marriage and the lungs. I suggest that while courting or selecting a mate and one discovers that the person smokes, even if it is one cigarette every three months; do not stay in the relationship. The cigarette smoking will get more frequent as the years go by, and it will add undue stress on the marriage even leading to divorce.

NON-SMOKERS CANCER

I think most of us agree that cigarette smoking is dangerous to one's health. On the other hand, far too few understand that smoke from cigarettes is equally as hazardous to non-smokers. We have bans on smoking in certain public areas in our country, but that is not sufficient. Here's what the latest research is telling us. Mayo Clinic, one of the top research hospitals in the world, stated in an article "Secondhand smoke: Avoid dangers in the air" the following:

"Exposure to the toxins in secondhand smoke can cause asthma, cancer and other serious problems. Know what you're breathing — and consider practical steps for clearing the air." The article goes on to state that "secondhand smoke — also known as environmental tobacco smoke — includes the smoke that a smoker exhales (mainstream smoke) and the smoke that comes directly from the burning tobacco product (sidestream smoke). Secondhand smoke contains thousands of toxic chemicals, including: Benzene, Carbon monoxide, Chromium, Cyanide, Formaldehyde, Lead, Nickel, Polonium. The dangerous particles in secondhand smoke can linger in the air for hours. Breathing secondhand smoke for a short time can irritate your lungs and reduce the amount of oxygen in your blood. Prolonged or repeated exposure to secondhand smoke is all the more dangerous. And it isn't just the smoke that's a concern. The residue that clings to a smoker's hair and clothing, as well as cushions, carpeting and other goods — sometimes referred to as thirdhand smoke — also can pose risks, especially for children."

Let me share with you more from the article without editing it. "Secondhand smoke causes or contributes to serious health problems. Lung disease, asthma, bronchitis and other chronic lung ailments can be triggered or aggravated by exposure to secondhand smoke. Secondhand smoke increases the risk of heart attack and other heart problems. Secondhand smoke also damages blood vessels, interferes with circulation and increases the risk of blood clots. Secondhand smoke is a known risk factor for lung cancer. Some research also suggests a link between secondhand smoke and various other types of cancer.

Secondhand smoke poses additional risks for children, who are especially vulnerable to the effects of secondhand smoke. Exposure to secondhand smoke during pregnancy increases the risk of low birth weight and sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). Secondhand smoke increases the risk of SIDS, whether exposure occurs during pregnancy or after birth. Children who live with smokers are more likely to develop middle ear infections (otitis media) and lower respiratory tract infections. Secondhand smoke also causes chronic coughing, phlegm and wheezing, as well as eye and nose irritation."

WHAT TO DO

Here are some tips on how to avoid secondhand smoke:

1. Don't marry or sleep with someone who smokes.
2. Don't allow smoking in your home. If family members or guests want to smoke, ask them to step outside. Don't rely on an air conditioner, ventilation system or an open window to clear the air.
3. Don't allow smoking in your vehicle. If a passenger must smoke on the road, stop at a rest stop for a smoke break outside the car.
4. Insist that smoking restrictions be enforced in your workplace. Even powerful ventilation fans don't

- effectively remove secondhand smoke from the air.
5. Choose smoke-free care facilities. If you take your children to a child care provider, choose one with a no-smoking policy. The same goes for aging loved ones.
 6. Patronize businesses with no-smoking policies. Many restaurants and other establishments are entirely smoke-free. Reinforce these no-smoking policies by telling the management that you appreciate the healthy air.
 7. Keep your distance from smokers. If you must share space with people who are smoking, sit as far away from them as possible.

WHAT ARE YOUR RIGHTS?

It is extremely difficult to avoid cigarette smoke even when a business has no-smoking policies. Why, because the smoker would stand outside the public entrances to smoke causing you to inhale all that poison. I know of persons who have severe allergic reaction to cigarette smoke and nicotine. Sometimes these persons have to be hospitalized or on serious medication for months. A few years ago my wife and I were returning home from a vacation, we cleared our luggage and headed to the transportation area. Inside the airport was cool and clear of smoke. As we walked outside the door toward the taxi zone a small stream of cigarette smoke crept across the nose of my wife. For the next few months she suffered intense, chronic sinusitis and other nasal infections. There were a few medical visits and batches of antibiotics and nasal decongestants. All of this was the result of a split second sniff of nicotine coming across the nose of an innocent non-smoker. On the other hand, the smoker had no apparent congestion, allergy or other health problems. I am relieved that the smoker will die a slow, painful death due to making his body human chimney. But the one who chooses to remain smoke free is forced to inhale a lethal substance that causes immediate pain and even death. While we were building our home a few workers would smoke on the premises. Because we were not there at the time, we would not see them smoking but could smell the smoke all through the home when we came at the end of the day. We then banned all smoking on our property, even across the street or the nearby vacant lot because the wind would still send streams of poisonous tobacco smoke through our home. People do have a right to smoke, but they don't have the right to cause others to inhale their deadly poison. Non-smokers have a right to have a constant stream of fresh clean air wherever they go.

NEED MORE CONSIDERATE SMOKERS

If cigarette smokers want to kill themselves, let them do it in their own smoking chambers where the sheets of white smoke, saturated with many deadly poisons, can engulf their own bodies. Smokers must be aware of the serious dangers of the least amount of cigarette smoke in the air. Even when they are driving a car and hanging their handheld cigarette outside the windows causing streams of smoke to enter the nearby automobiles. If people want to smoke, at least they should be compassionate and considerate towards non smokers. I certainly support a ban on public smoking anywhere in The Bahamas. The only places people should be allowed to smoke are in designated buildings/zones/rooms far away from non-smokers. Not even spouses should be allowed to smoke in homes where there are children and other non-smokers. Let us build smoke-free marriages and nation.

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