

HOW SUFFERING MADE PEOPLE QUIT.



ENTRY FOR 2014 JAY CHIAT AWARDS.



Australian Government

SUMMARY

Quitting smoking isn't easy. Despite having the world's toughest anti-smoking laws, one in six Australians continue to smoke daily. So how do you get them to quit when they've proven to be immune to gruesome packaging pictures, ultra high pricing and numerous cancer awareness campaigns?

After talking to people about their feelings towards death, we learnt a powerful truth: people are more afraid of the pain that comes with death than death itself.

To better understand the pain associated with dying from a smoking-related disease, we spoke to a doctor in palliative care. This lead to the strategic breakthrough: death itself isn't physically painful. The real pain comes from the long-term suffering associated with progressive functional disability.

The strategy became to make the suffering of quitting seem insignificant compared to the suffering that comes with dying of a smoking-related illness. It reframed quitting as the lesser of two evils. A shock and inspire approach brought the campaign to life, providing not only an important jolt to smokers, but also encouragement to help them act on the desire to quit.

The campaign resulted in 180,000 smokers undertaking a quit attempt and bringing 960,000 smokers one step closer to quitting.

(Word count: 198)

BACKGROUND

Public enemy number 1

Smoking is recognised as one of the largest preventable causes of death and disease in Australia (population: 22M), claiming 15,000 lives each year.ⁱ It is responsible for more deaths than alcohol and drugs combined. The Australian National Preventive Health Agency (ANPHA) tasked us with a brief to help reduce the rate of adult daily smokers in Australia. The brief mandated to reinforce the damaging health effects of smoking.

Finding a new way in

96% of smokers were aware that smoking caused lung cancer.ⁱⁱ Yet, despite knowing the risks, roughly one in six Australian adults still smoked.ⁱⁱⁱ For these resilient smokers, 40 years of anti-smoking campaigns, increased pricing, gruesome packaging and the toughest anti-smoking laws in the world, hadn't compelled them to quit.



A new insight to give smokers an extra boost of willpower and motivation to take action and quit was required. But this was not going to be easy.

Our approach

We started by talking to smokers from inside and outside the agency. We went into corner stores to observe how cigarettes were displayed and bought by smokers; we analysed the effectiveness of previous anti-smoking campaigns made in Australia and the rest of the world; we read up on the latest thinking on habits and neurology; we explored the meaning of death and how people feel about it; we listened to people who had lost loved ones to smoking-related illnesses and we spoke to a doctor in palliative care about the process of dying in relation to smoking-related diseases.

CHALLENGES

A difficult relationship to end

Smoking has lots of important benefits for smokers. It helps smokers relax^{iv} is an important part of their social life, helps them cope in difficult situations and is an easy way to lose weight^v. As a result they perceive the pain of quitting smoking to be so much bigger than the gains they'll get from breaking their relationship with cigarettes.



Quitting seems impossible

Quitting requires overcoming a physical as well as an emotional addiction. Physically, nicotine itself is extremely addictive, and can be compared to the addictiveness of heroin^{vi}. Quitting smoking makes smokers literally sick. They experience symptoms such as nausea, headaches and shakiness, making quitting physically painful^{vii}. On the emotional side, quitters feel like they've lost their social glue, their coping mechanism and even part of their identity, as well as experiencing feelings of irritability, anger and moodiness^{viii}.

*"It's almost like you're adrenalised by the need...
I can feel it rising. I can feel agitation.
I start to anticipate it. It's an incredible feeling.
I have to have that cigarette!
I need that first drag in the morning.
It has to be, or the day will not start."*



Barb Tarbox, well-known anti-smoking activist.

CHALLENGES

A resilient habit

Smoking is a habit, not a rational choice. Habits are processed on a less conscious level in the brain. This makes them incredibly resilient to orders from higher-level thinking and notoriously difficult to unlearn.^{ix} This is why even intelligent, highly motivated people like doctors struggle to beat smoking.^x

For a resilient smoker, the benefits of smoking far outweighed any reason to quit. Our strategy needed to reframe quitting as more beneficial than smoking.



STRATEGY

Powerful jolts break habits

Having studied the habit of smoking from a behavioural economics and psychological perspective, it became clear that the only way to get resilient smokers to start breaking their habit was by using a powerful emotional jolt that would penetrate the subconscious.

The campaign had the near-impossible task of reframing the act of quitting from something impossible and unrewarding, to achievable and worthwhile.

Therefore, the role for advertising was twofold:

Jolt smokers into consciously wanting to break the habit, and reframe quitting as achievable and rewarding.

Searching for the right jolt

We started by exploring the territory that smoking kills. However, one-to-one interviews taught us that people aren't fearful of death itself because death is seen as inescapable and unavoidable. Death on its own wasn't going to be enough; it gave smokers an easy way out, helping them default to the 'it's going to happen one day anyway' mentality. It's also not new news to smokers that smoking kills.

When we probed further, we came to an important learning: what people did fear about death was that it would be '*painful*', '*long*' and '*undignified*'; that they'd end up putting themselves and their families through torture.^{xi} People wanted their death to be quick, dignified and painless.

Through this research we came to our key insight:

People are more afraid of the pain that comes with death than death itself.

STRATEGY

Understanding how smokers die

To get a better understanding of the details of a painful death, we setup an interview with a doctor in palliative care. In a moving interview we learned the following:

Death itself isn't physically painful.

It's rarely characterised by agony or severe discomfort.

The real pain of a smoking-related death comes from the long-term suffering associated with progressive functional disability.

Yes, smokers die just like everyone else, but it's how they die that's different. Lung diseases, such as emphysema, result in a severe loss in quality of life and dignity. Over time, progressive functional disability makes it impossible to perform the most basic tasks causing emphysema sufferers to lose all sense of autonomy, control and identity. They endure extended lengths of time where the mere task of breathing becomes their entire world, making their last years of life a living hell.



Barb Tarbox, well-known anti-smoking activist.

STRATEGY

We asked the doctor if the pain ever got so bad that people welcomed death. Sadly, this was confirmed. To end the suffering, death becomes a relief for both the patient and their loved ones.^{xii}

This interview gave us the powerful jolt we were looking for:

The suffering that comes with dying from emphysema.

Importantly, as smokers were well aware that smoking caused lung cancer, focusing on emphysema would give us a new way in.

Reframing smoking

In the strategy we wanted to bring to life the long-term suffering that both a smoker and their family endure as a result of emphysema.

However, to prevent smokers from tuning out from the campaign and dismissing it as ‘another smoking campaign made by anti-smokers that don’t understand us,’ the campaign also needed to be empathetic of the experiences they go through when undertaking a quit attempt. Instead of only focussing on quitting like other campaigns had done, we needed to also acknowledge that the process of quitting was going to be difficult.

To inspire a quit attempt, quitting was reframed as the lesser of two evils.

The strategy became to make the suffering of quitting seem insignificant compared to the suffering caused from dying of a smoking-related illness.



VS



CREATIVE IDEA

To juxtapose the long-term suffering that a smoker and their family endure due to emphysema, with the short-term pain of quitting.

The campaign worked in two ways: first to shock (to provide the right jolt) and then to inspire. It depicted in graphic detail the horrific nature of death from smoking-related disease, by dramatising the severe loss of quality of life that precedes death itself. The campaign juxtaposed this suffering with factual descriptions and portrayals of the short-term pain and discomfort experienced when someone quits. Two calls to action were used.

For the shock executions:



For the inspire executions:



A top (shock)-and-tail (inspire) media strategy was used for TV and press.

CREATIVE IDEA

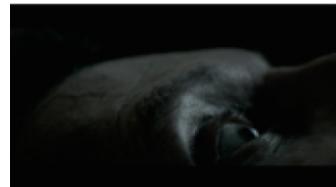
TV- "Breathless" (shock)



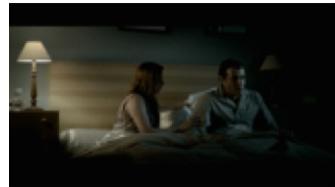
MVO: imagine your body being buried while you're still in it.
Imagine the horror.



You'd struggle.
But struggling only makes it worse.



Imagine your whole life reduced to thinking about your next breath.



Eventually, you'd welcome death...



But an emphysema sufferer can go on living like this for years.



If you smoke, death could be the least of your worries.



Stop, before the suffering starts.

TV- "Couch" (inspire)



It seems like a cold at first.



You get headaches. Can't concentrate. Can't sleep. Before long, it's all you can think about.



You feel anxious and uncertain...



Until one day you realise, this could be it.



You've done it.
You've quit smoking.
For good.



A little suffering now, can save a lot of suffering later.



Stop, before the real suffering starts.

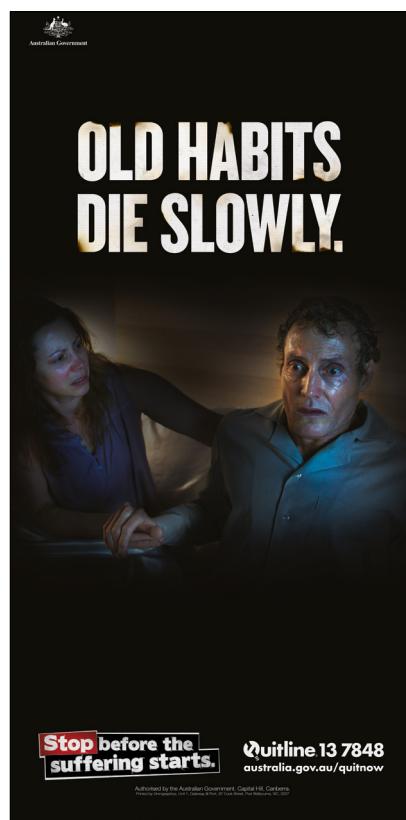
View TVCs in appendix.

CREATIVE IDEA

Press



Outdoor



CREATIVE IDEA

Online pre-roll



THE OUTCOME

The campaign ran from April to June 2013. Results were measured in The Social Research Centre's Tobacco Social Marketing Campaign Evaluation Report in July 2013.^{xiii}

Behavioural results

- Approximately 180,000 smokers made a quit attempt as a direct result of seeing the campaign from April 2013 to June 2013 (above the target of 155,000).
- 33% of smokers and 40% of recent quitters took some quit-related activity (e.g. contacted the Quit helpline). This is almost 1 million (960,000) people who are at least one step closer to quitting smoking.
- The campaign strategy was successful as a new way in, getting 21% of those who had previously not tried to quit to make an attempt.

Awareness results

- Despite a lower media budget than in previous years, the campaign achieved an awareness of 85% among smokers and 83% among recent quitters.
- Campaign awareness was particularly strong in the online channel. The 'Breathless' online ads generated an awareness of 22% among smokers and 25% among recent quitters significantly higher than the average 6% from previous campaigns.
- As of July 2013, 70% of smokers agreed that they had been thinking a lot about quitting recently, which is significantly higher than the benchmark score of 64% from previous campaigns.
- Following the ad campaign 93% of smokers and 96% of recent quitters believed that smoking causes emphysema.

(Word count: 1489)

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- IX Duhigg C., Heinemann W.(2012).The Power of Habit: why we do what we do in life and business. New York: Random House. X Duhigg C., Heinemann W.(2012).The Power of Habit: why we do what we do in life and business. New York: Random House.
- XI Qualitative research. Obtained from street interviews in w/c 19-11-2012.
- Interview with Dr.Sonia Fullerton, Director of Palliative Services at Eastern Health. Interview conducted on 21-11-2012.
- XII The Social Research Centre's Tobacco Social Marketing Campaign Evaluation Report in July 2013

Pictures of Barb Tarbox

We specifically chose to use the pictures of Barb Tarbox. She was a lifelong smoker who died at the age of 42 from brain cancer and lung cancer. Barb became famous as a passionate anti-smoking campaigner. In the months following her diagnosis, Barb spoke to more than 50,000 youth across Canada in person, and reached millions of other Canadians through her frequent radio and television appearances. Barb used photographs to motivate people to quit smoking. One of her last wishes was that her photograph appeared on cigarette packaging.

