

My father had been smoking all his life, and by the time he turned seventy, my brother and I began to worry about him. This was when new health problems arose and the need to quit smoking seemed very urgent.

I'm not saying that I didn't try to get him to quit before. As a child, I would hide, destroy or throw away his cigarettes. As a young adult - I was begging him, when demands or instructions did not help. As an adult, I made sarcastic remarks angrily, especially when I had to remind him not to smoke near my children. I have tried the buy-and-do technique, uttered countless intimidating messages, and if there were any other methods, I would certainly have used them. I just didn't try Instant Motivation. By the time I was developing it, I was already too discouraged to try it on my father.

One day the children and I went to visit my parents. We just finished our delicious lunch when Dad started to smoke as usual.

My good humor was gone. I was so worried about him. I thought to myself that maybe I was mature enough to talk calmly to my father about it, using the method I so believed in.

I realized, of course, that this was going to be a conversation with my father - the most stubborn man I had ever known. He had never listened to anyone, much less his own son.

However, I decided to give it a try. I started like this.

- "Dad, I'm worried about your smoking."

My father immediately became defensive.

- "Is that what you came here for? Leave me alone. Everyone has to die of something!"

I knew that one of the most important aspects of Instant Motivation is respecting the interlocutor's autonomy, especially when dealing with someone who stubbornly refuses to change. I also realized that for the process to be effective - for my father to discover his potential inner motives for quitting - I had to think ahead about the next steps in the conversation, while giving my dad the right to make his own decisions.

"No, Dad" I replied carefully. "I didn't come here to talk with you about it. But I'm worried about you. I know that I used to torment you with these conversations before, but today, let me ask you a different question."

My father wouldn't hear of anything.

- "Why is everybody bothering with my smoking?" He exclaimed. - "I don't want any question!"

Although I respected his autonomy, I did not want to give up.

"Just one question" I said and I'll leave you alone. You don't want to be harassed anymore, I get it. So let me ask you just one question and I promise that's it. I will not touch this topic anymore.

Dad sighed loudly.

"Come on" he said in the voice of a man tormented by long suffering. - "Knock me down with your best hit."

I took a deep breath.

"If you ever decided to quit - and you don't have to, Dad, it's entirely your choice - but if you were to, why would you do it? **Stage 1: Why might you change?**

My father pointed to a pack of cigarettes, which, as usual, was in his hand. – “Do you know how hard it is to quit?”

Okay! The first spark of motivation. To most people, such a statement would sound like the beginning of an argument - like an expression of reluctance to change. However, years of working with Lightning Motivation have taught me to see the tiny space that my father opened up for me.

"So you say you would quit if you could. But it's hard" I said softly.

Dad began to suspect a trick but couldn't find it.

"Yes", he said regretfully, "and I've tried to show you - you and your brother - how difficult it is, but you don't understand."

"But I understand" I replied.

I remembered that you have **to reflect both resistance and motivation**. – “You say that it is difficult to quit smoking, so you feel that you cannot do it, although you may want to. But I asked you a different question. I asked why you could quit if you wanted to do it. I'm not asking how hard it would be for you to do it, but what would make you do it. What would be the reason for that.”

My father got angry again.

- “Will you then leave me alone - when I finally stop smoking?”

- “Oh, Dad, you know I'll never leave you alone, but that's a completely different topic. What would be your personal reason for quitting - one that's important to you and me?”

- “You think I like to get up every morning and cough and spit my lungs out? Father asked. Believe me, I'd rather not experience this.”

Despite my father's original reluctance, we have reached an important point. Before, he didn't even want to talk about quitting smoking, and now he has confessed that he would have stopped smoking if it hadn't been so hard.

"So," I said, to reflect his motivation, "one of the reasons you would like to quit smoking is if you feel better and cough less?"

- “I think so.”

- “All right, but wait a minute, Dad. I promised to ask you one question and we would be done if you wanted to. So should I continue?”

My father sighed deeply again.

"I think so, it doesn't metter," he said.

It was important. I knew that in the case of a person who stubbornly did not want to change, the key is their consent and autonomy. I had to ask my dad all the time for permission to continue the conversation, otherwise he could have said I was nagging him - and he would have been right. I knew very slowly but surely my father is reaching his desire to quit smoking. If I forced him to talk, he would only feel frustrated at my desires and my wishes. And he would never find the motivation to make a change.

If he had not agreed to continue the conversation, I would have kept my promise and would not have touched upon smoking on this visit anymore - although I might have obtained such permission on

another occasion. Most likely, I would wait for the next opportune moment, and then I would ask for his approval.

I asked another question - **from step 2: How ready are you to change? Rate on a scale from 1 to 10, with 1 being completely not ready and 10 being completely ready.** I have decided to choose the lowest possible smoking restriction.

"It's okay, Dad," I said. - So let me ask you a really trick question. How ready would you be to cut down on two cigarettes a week?

"No" my father replied, "if I were to quit, it would be completely." Either I'm doing something or I'm not. That's my rule. I am a man of action.

"You are" I replied, still trying to reflect what he said before, "and I know it's hard." So if 1 was completely unprepared and 10 was completely ready, what would be your willingness to give up a few cigarettes a week?

- Two cigarettes a week is no problem! He said decisively, completely changing his attitude. - I could do this. I would say 6 or maybe even 7.

"Okay," I said, going to **step 3, "why didn't you choose a lower number?"**

- "Why a smaller number? I thought you wanted me to do this?"

As you can see, every time I asked my father a question, he was somehow pushed out of standard thinking. Sometimes he was confused and at other times he didn't understand what I was asking. This is the effectiveness of Instant Motivation, especially in conversations with resistant people: it makes you think differently, allows you to see in a different light and - perhaps - to reach your unconscious feelings, thoughts and desires. It was clear my father wanted to quit but thought he couldn't - and he wasn't at all hostile to our efforts.

"We're not talking about what I want" I reminded him. - You said 6 or 7, so let's consider why did you choose these numbers and not the smaller ones?

"That's easy" my father said with a sense of superiority, "because it'll save me some money if I stop smoking." Even if it is two cigarettes less. He paused and thought for a moment. - If I wanted to quit smoking, it would certainly be easier way. Give up little by little. Maybe I wouldn't even feel it.

Ironically! If I had started the conversation with such advice, my dad would have rejected it, as he would have rejected all my anti-smoking suggestions. He didn't need my advice - he wanted to figure out his own reasons for quitting smoking.

Now is the time for stage 4: Imagine you've changed - what would be the positive consequences? - Dad - I started - imagine that the next time we come to you, you smoke 8 cigarettes less a month. You did it, you made it ...

Before I could finish my sentence, my father interjected:

- I can do a lot more.

I often see this behavior in people who say they don't want to change. When they discover their intrinsic motivation to behave differently, they have to prove to themselves that it is entirely their idea. They often do more. When you ask for a report by Friday, return it on Wednesday. You suggest writing one job application, they write 3. When my father hears two cigarettes a week, he decides he can give up a lot more.

"Okay," I said, "how many cigarettes could you quit?"

Dad was calculating in his head.

"I think I could go down to half a pack," he said.

"You seem excited about it," I observed.

- I'm not sure if I will actually do it.

"Well, just imagine you've already done that." And it's been a month since today. What you see?

Father looked at the cigarette in his hand.

"I wouldn't be smoking anymore" he said, almost regretfully.

Moved on to **step 5: Why are these outcomes be important to you?**

"You wouldn't be smoking now," I repeated, "why would that be important to you?"

There was a long moment of silence. I had to resort to my professionalism not to fill it with anything. I was counting silently, "once-Mississippi, two-Mississippi, three-Mississippi," using this funny count-up to keep my silence and let my dad deal with his problem on his own.

Finally he said:

- Because I would be in the garden now with my grandchildren and I would not make the children wait for their grandfather to finish smoking.

Analyze the text and consider what are the main factors that led to the transition from total resistance to autonomy?

What strengthened the interlocutor's autonomy?