

## **One-way ticket to Quitsville, By Amelia Skimin STAFF WRITER**

Many people vow to do it each year. It's one of the most common New Year's resolutions. Unfortunately, quitting smoking can be an uphill battle.

Perhaps Mark Twain said it best: "Quitting smoking is easy. I've done it a thousand times." So maybe quitting is easy — it's staying away from the habit that's tough. The benefits of quitting are well-known; aside from the obvious health reasons, non-smokers don't have to spend money on cigarettes, they save time smokers spend outside on smoking breaks or rushing out to buy cigarettes, and they set better examples of health for their children.

Even with all the benefits, however, the fact remains that smoking is physically and psychologically addictive. Perhaps this is why smokers hoping to quit have their choice of an array of products and services aimed at helping them do just that.

### **Easing the cravings**

Most drugstores are fully stocked with nicotine replacement products, including patches, gums and cartridges, all aimed at easing the cravings smokers feel when they quit. Nicotine is a drug," said Carl Hendricks, a pharmacist at Sav-Mor Drugstore in Milford. "It's not easy (to quit smoking)"

When customers come into his pharmacy seeking advice as to which nicotine replacement product to try, Hendricks says he usually gives them the choice between the patch and gum, though he always warns people about the gum's unpleasant taste. It is for this reason that he believes the patch is more effective than the gum. Additionally, he tells people about support groups are offered through most hospitals.

Hendricks said anyone can use nicotine replacement products, but patch-users should take the patch off at night; leaving it on can cause nightmares. For people wary of replacing nicotine with nicotine, other avenues of quitting are available.

### **Relaxing the mind**

Another alternative to nicotine replacement products is hypnotherapy. Hypnotherapy works through a process of relaxation. The mind is relaxed to a point where the subconscious is allowed to take over. According to hypnotherapist Nicol Merline of M.T.U. (Mental Training Unlimited) in Milford, the subconscious mind is extremely relevant to overcoming bad habits. "If the wide awake conscious mind could solve that problem, the client wouldn't have come (to see me)," Merline said.

Merline began studying hypnotherapy in the 1970s to deal with a medical disorder. Though skeptical of the practice, she decided to give it a try. It worked and she continued to study it. She opened her office in Milford about five years ago, before that she practiced in Waterford.

The objective of hypnotherapy, said Merline, is to replace the negative habit (smoking) with a positive habit. Generally, people smoke to deal with stress. Merline teaches her clients how to relax without having to turn to cigarettes. What you have been looking for in the form of a cigarette you can find internally that has always been with you," Merline said.

Merline's first session with new patients is two hours long. She uses this time to get herself and her client on the same page. She determines, among other things, how strong the client's desire is to quit, his or her willingness to succeed and his or her belief in his or her own success.

Many of Merline's clients quit after that first session. In fact, Merline estimates that within the first two sessions, 90 percent of her clients have kicked the habit. One client of Merline's, who declined to give her name, came to see her on Aug. 28 and hasn't had a puff since. The woman had smoked for more than 30 years. Even during her two pregnancies she couldn't go without the occasional cigarette.

Before coming to Merline, she'd tried group hypnosis. She was wary of nicotine replacement products, however, and didn't want to use those. As her 50th birthday loomed ahead, she decided it was time to quit. She didn't want to have to deal with emphysema or other health problems associated with smoking. She wanted to make sure the second half of her life was better than the first. So she turned to Merline.

According to the testimonials from past clients Merline keeps in a binder, many of her clients tried various other means to quit before enlisting her help, from patches to acupuncture to group hypnosis.

Merline believes that, while group hypnosis works for some, individual hypnosis is ultimately more effective. In a one-on-one setting, the hypnotist can deal more directly with a client's fears. Fear is the main thing that stands in the way of successful hypnosis.

To people wishing to quit, Merline recommends a three-visit package, which costs \$320. Clients have up to a year to use all three visits. If a person gives up smoking before the third visit, Merline offers a refund or allows clients to use any remaining sessions to deal with other issues, such as relaxation or weight loss. For more information on hypnotherapy, contact MTU at (248) 568-0831 or visit them on the Web at [www.mtuhypnosis.com](http://www.mtuhypnosis.com).

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