SMOKING

Harry has been smoking cigarettes since he was 15 years old. He is now 40 and desperately wants to give up but can't.

"I have tried to quit smoking on my own," he says. "But I just don't have the willpower. I can manage at most just a week or two, then I find that I start again. I don't know what to do."

The reason Harry wants to stop is not so much that smoking is bad for his health, but because of the social stigma attached to smoking. When he started smoking, it was regarded as cool. Now, fewer people are smoking and as such, it is now seen as something anti-social and dirty.

"Another thing happened," said Harry. "I was at work and I had to go outside to smoke a cigarette. Years ago people were smoking inside buildings and offices. Now there is no smoking allowed. I can understand that. But there were complaints from other members of staff. They were saying that I was taking a break once an hour. Someone even timed me! They said I took 11 minutes to smoke one cigarette!"

Since then Harry has been told to cut down on his cigarette breaks. The HR department at work told him he was taking on average an hour and a half in cigarette breaks every day. The HR manager advised him that unless he cut down on his cigarette breaks, his salary would be docked every month.

"That might amount to seven and a half hours every week," Harry said.

"I was shocked when they told me. In the old days of smoking, everyone took cigarette breaks, because everyone smoked. Now I feel like I am the only one smoking." So not only does Harry feel like a social pariah, there is an economic cost too.

"A pack of cigarettes costs the Earth these days," he says. "Plus, if I start getting my salary cut every month that means I am only being paid four days for every week. It never occurred to me how expensive smoking is to me. I have to stop or I will end up in big trouble.

Poor Harry is not alone.

Many people in his generation are now addicted to smoking but now finding they are in a world that looks down on smoking.

LIVEWORKSHEETS