



The World Foundation for Natural Science The New World Franciscan Scientific Endeavour of The New World Church

Restoring and Healing the World through Responsibility and Commitment in accord with Natural and Divine Law!

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Reflection and facts on World No Tobacco Day 2023

World No Tobacco Day, proclaimed by the WHO, takes place on May 31st. Before we deal with partly alarming, partly delightful facts about this, we would like to broaden the focus and look at breathing.

As with the heartbeat, the special thing about breathing is that, seen from the outside, it simply “does”, the heart beats, without us having to make a deliberate and conscious effort. It is the same with breathing. Both are absolutely essential for our survival – without the heart beating and without us breathing, we do not stay alive.



Even people, who have no affinity with the spiritual, notice that there is a difference whether I am gasping for breath in the 4th basement of a building with artificially supplied air, or whether I am breathing pure air during a walk in the woods. The medical importance of breathing and breathing exercises is undisputed; it is widely known,

that, when done properly, they can have a calming, healing effect.

Besides the physical and psychological aspects, breathing also has a very important spiritual meaning and component that transcends these aspects. It is found in all world cultures and religions with correspondingly different names, for example

“Pranha” (Buddhism), “Chi” (among others Taoism, Chinese philosophy), “Atman” (Hinduism), “Ruach” (Judaism) or “Ruh” (Islam). Breathing not only connects us with our environment, but also allows an in-depth connection with everything that has life.

Therefore, it is logical to assume that smoking and also vaping, i.e. feeding one's breath with toxins, not only has massive negative physical effects, but also limits mental development. If we consider that the smoking industry's business model in this regard is to get people addicted, and thus to secure the sales of these highly harmful products for the future, it is obvious to assume that in addition to addiction and the resulting loss of freedom – chains of addiction, as the saying goes – further development on the spiritual level is also compromised. In other words, addiction does not only take place on the physical level, but has a psychological and spiritual dimension. The difficulty in getting away from addiction is not on the physical level. The purely physical addiction, whether it is smoking or heroin addiction, for example, is over after about 14 days. It is the immaterial aspect of addiction that drives us to resume a behaviour that we no longer want because it is harmful and ultimately often fatal. This addiction's sole purpose is to only to enable the tobacco and vape industry to make billions in profits from our money. Society's current focus is mainly on young people and vaping, i.e. electronic cigarettes.

Electronic cigarettes are steadily gaining in popularity because many people still believe they are the healthier alternative to smoking tobacco. But after this was claimed by many authorities and governments in the beginning, there is now more and more data that proves that e-cigarettes are just as harmful as tobacco cigarettes.

A few facts from more recent studies:¹⁾

- Vaping causes even more DNA damage in the mouth than conventional cigarettes. Sweet, flavoured pods (mostly single-use e-cigarettes) are particularly harmful, especially those with the popular fruit and mint flavours.
- Vaping triggers almost immediate changes at the cellular level. Vaping has immediate negative effects on various organ systems, such as the brain, lungs, heart and colon. Effects are also especially noticeable in the endothelial cells, and these are the same changes that can be observed in the development of heart disease.
- In many places, vaping is allowed even where smoking is prohibited because it has been claimed that vaping is not harmful to bystanders. This is false. Data show that people around vapers have similar cotinine levels (a measure of the amount of nicotine absorbed by the body) as people exposed to conventional tobacco smoke.

In addition, people around vapers also have more bronchitis-like symptoms and shortness of breath. So the dangers of second-hand vaping are just as great as with second-hand smoking.

Unfortunately, the brightly coloured, flavoured (“single-use”) e-cigarettes are very popular, especially among young people. In Switzerland, for example, sales figures rose by 30% every month in the first half of 2022, mainly due to increased consumption among young people.²⁾ Meanwhile, 25% of 15-year-olds and 10% of 13-year-olds in Switzerland consume e-cigarettes at least once a month.



This means that the consumption of cigarette alternatives has tripled since 2018, with vaping becoming increasingly popular, especially among female teenagers. Oral tobacco (snus) use is also rising sharply among youth, with the number of users doubling since 2018.³⁾

This trend can be observed worldwide, especially in western industrialised countries. In Germany, for example, the smoking rate among 14- to 17-year-olds almost doubled in 2022! Since most smokers become addicted as adolescents and most vapers are dual users, i.e. they use both tobacco cigarettes and vapes, the development is highly worrying, as a new generation of smokers is growing up.⁴⁾

In this respect, stringent legal regulations such as those introduced in New Zealand are very welcome. By the end of 2023, young people under the age of 14 will no longer be allowed to legally purchase tobacco products, and then the age will be raised every year so that younger generations will never have legal access to tobacco products.⁵⁾ In Australia, vaping will be banned altogether in the future. Vaping will only be allowed as a smoking cessation option and then only with a doctor's prescription.⁶⁾

It is at least as important as legal regulations and especially youth protection to ensure that young people do not start smoking in the first place. Public health experts at the Zurich University of Applied Sciences talk about the pressure to perform, multiple crises, high psychological stress and the constant presence of smartphones and social media, among other things, which are causing problems for young people today. Nicotine – the drug that simultaneously calms and agitates – then often appears as an attractive and easy escape. Society must ensure that young

people are in “better shape” mentally, the experts demand. And interviewed young people themselves say that it would be good to show them alternatives on how to deal with difficult situations.⁷⁾



In other words, adolescents need other strategies to get their bodies to release happiness hormones like serotonin and dopamine, which is what the addictive substance nicotine does in the brain when it docks at the receptors of the reward centre. Of course, this is just as true for adult smokers. A healthy lifestyle, which includes enough exercise (sports) as well as a healthy

diet, is a good foundation. Young people need role models and perspectives as well as guidance on how to deal with the many demands placed on them.

Studies show that mindfulness training, for example, can be a great help in quitting smoking. For the study participants, the training reduced concentration difficulties, anxiety and cravings for cigarettes, and they were better able to cope with negative emotions without reaching for a cigarette.⁸⁾

As mentioned initially, all world religions attribute a significance to the breath transcending the purely physical level. Breath gives us life on different levels and is a gift that makes life possible. Promoting awareness on this level and at the same time protecting children and young people in particular from being seduced into often lifelong self-harming behaviour, as well as supporting fellow addicts in quitting, go hand in hand!

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