

Letter to a Cigarette

(idea contributed by Kathy Dwyer at Keystone Child, Youth, and Family Services)

The Ontario **STARSS National Rollout** site, located in Owen Sound, ran a group model approach to **STARSS**. During one of the group sessions, moms were invited to write a letter to a cigarette as part of that session's activities. This gave moms an opportunity to work through their feelings, both positive and negative, surrounding smoking and in this case, their feelings about cigarettes specifically. Moms wrote letters that were very insightful and powerful. If you engage in this activity, be sure to allow enough time at the end of the session to debrief about the letters moms write. Because this activity can stir up a lot of unexpected emotions, there needs to be the opportunity for moms to have a discussion and share the powerful emotions that can occur. Moms should also be encouraged to share the positive feelings they have towards the cigarette, as these feelings are those that can be more difficult to overcome.

This would also be a good opportunity to use the Decisional Balance Index (DBI) or **Worksheet #4** in the **Guide to STARSS Strategies**, which helps moms examine the larger impacts that both smoking and quitting smoking can have in their lives, from both the positive and negative viewpoints.

You are ruining my life. Stop sucking my life away. I feel bad every time I see you but I need you. You make me feel like shit. I don't need you, I just want you.

Stay away from ^{me}, I'm going to get a restraining order. You have to stop harassing me. 20 years wasted on you, not knowing... afraid to live without you. I want to take control of my life + think healthfully about myself. I want ~~raise~~ my self-esteem back. I don't want to be reliant on you anymore. I don't need you. I don't need you to make me whole anymore.

Some days the power you have over me is unbearable. You know you'll keep coming back because I can't live without you.

I'm sick of having to always lie and make excuses to see you. From now on I don't want to be around ever if it kills me, because it will kill me to stay with you. You're going to end up killing me.

Sara Mistie and
Donna