Healing
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Pitfalls of the Pipe

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We have been elaborating the various modalities of the use of tobacco in our present-day situation. We now discuss an ancient method that was used by the American Indians for bonding, declaration of truth and a binding agreement of peace amongst the elders. The image that fascinates our subconscious is of the elder, the scholar, the wise man, the secluded one, the contemplative, the thinker-all images that are desirable and very powerful. This use of tobacco is the smoking of a pipe.

The pipe smoker is probably involved in more ritual, which is very satisfying to the subconscious, than any of the other smokers. This is manifest by the rituals of choosing one or more fragrant blends of tobacco; packing the tobacco into the pipe; emptying the pipe of the used tobacco; the complicated ritual of cleaning the pipe, making it ready for another ritualistic ceremony; packing the bowl of the pipe and lighting the tobacco and getting it to burn at a desirable rate. All of this adds to the power of the addiction to the tobacco. This smoke is the least offensive of all smokers as it is mixed with various delightful and satisfying fragrances. Who does not remember passing a pipe smoker and having the fragrance of his particular tobacco remain for a considerable time? This is another aspect of the addictive nature of pipe smoking. Could such a delightful memory be caused by a killer? Yes. Indeed, smoking is a killer. Pipe smoking has all of the health hazards of any other type of tobacco. It also has its own particular health hazards exclusive to the pipe.

First, it is often the cause of pain in the jaw due to asymmetric pressure from clinching the pipe stem between the teeth. This sends tension and pressure to one

temperomandibular joint more than the other. Nature responds to this unnatural tension by producing pain and swelling in the temperomandibular joints. Many people go through years of this unnecessary pain not knowing the reason for it.

The stem of the pipe is usually elevated in temperature due to its proximity to the flame. This is constantly irritating to the mucocutaneuos junction of the lip. The combined mechanical strain and elevated temperature often ends up in cancer of the lip. The constant irritation of the oral mucosa produces changes either precancerous or cancerous in the mouth. Slugs of tobacco juice may come through the pipe which produce irritation to the esophagus and stomach which may lead to cancers in these areas or, at the least, inflammation and/or indigestion.

Usually, pipe smoke is not inhaled into the lungs so there may be less likelihood of lung cancer. But the nicotine is absorbed by the mucosa of the mouth and pharynx. Because of this there are attendant chemical changes, as produced by all tobacco use. A rather complicated chemical reaction tends to lower the body's stores of Vitamin B12, Vitamin C, and causes other chemical changes that are detrimental to one's health. The physical changes that occur with these deficiencies are very serious. An old teacher of mine told me that if one smokes he should supplement his diet with vitamins: "C for tobacco and B for booze." I feel the advice should have been, "Just say `No' to the killer." Tobacco in any form is truly a killer and also produces great morbidness in those who use it. The next article will discuss smokeless tobacco and its particular hazards.

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