

Nicotine

(Continued from Page 1) to deal with," Robertson said. "Whether it's the stress of driving a car and wondering if you're going to be profiled, to the stress of looking at a job that's not available to you because of lack of education, whether it's the absence of social support in the African-American community, the fragmentation resulting from issues of underemployment,

poor housing, racism, all of those factors, I think, leads to a tremendous amount of pressure, a tremendous amount of stress, and you see that in terms of the inability of African-Americans to quit smoking."

Among other factors that cause African-Americans to struggle to quit smoking:

—The lack of availability of smoking cessation pro-

grams in the Black community.

Richardson says he is about to join such a program through the Veterans Administration Hospital in Richmond, Va., where he lives. But, Robertson says such programs are rare in the Black community.

—The fact that three out of four African-Americans smoke mentholated ciga-

rettes.

A CDC report, "Pathways to Freedom," says that three out of four Black smokers buy mentholated cigarettes, the most dangerous of all brands.

"Chemicals are added to menthol cigarettes to give them a fresh, minty taste. This can make it easier for a smoker to inhale deeply, which may allow more chemicals to enter the lungs," the report states.

—The fact that mentholated cigarettes are marketed in the Black community, purposely targeting Blacks.

"The tobacco industry is profoundly skilled at understanding the dynamics of a community, understanding the issues, understanding the kinds of imagery and words that click with a community. And they will build a campaign around that understanding and the result is that it works," said Robertson.

"They targeted White people with the [Marlboro man] cowboy. The tobacco industry, they don't care if you're Black, White, blue or green. It's pure dollars and cents. And they will exploit any vulnerability in the community."

—The fact that, until recently, few organizations that normally defend the rights of African-Americans have stood up to say that targeting Blacks for the addiction of cigarettes is wrong.

"The tobacco industry penetrated the African-American community, not simply with marketing campaigns and advertisements and imagery and words," said Robertson.

"But it penetrated the African-American community with money. It put money into every African-American organization that you can think of."

Some research has indicated that some people are genetically and environmentally inclined to be more addictive than others. Robertson says there is no proof that African-Americans are among this group.

"Those studies are 50-50. There seems to be an underlying genetic predictor of addiction," Robertson said. "But, there really has been no African-Americans or Blacks in those studies, so none of those studies help to answer the question of [whether or not there is] a genetic underpinning."

Even as a three-year partnership of six Black community organizations, funded by the American Legacy Foundation, ended earlier this month, Robertson says it has never been clearer how dire the need is for escalated anti-smoking and cessation programs in the Black community.

"We know that African-Americans want to quit. They express a desire to quit at a higher level than Whites. We know that when they quit they are more likely to go back to smoking than Whites," Robertson says.

More than 45,000 African-Americans a year die of smoking-related diseases.

"It's a world view that says, 'Oh my God, heroine and cocaine and marijuana are horrible.' Tobacco, on the other hand, is backed by RJ Reynolds and Phillip Morris and thousands and thousands of dollars go into the coffers of politicians; therefore, we do not have a legislative policy that deals with the issue that tobacco is the number one preventable cause of death in this country."

Richardson is a living witness: "I won't stop trying," he said. "No."

Your Horoscope Says...April 26-May 2

ARIES

The tide has turned, and what has been holding you back in some area of your life is now gently drifting out to sea. Keep your self-criticism in check and allow yourself to appreciate all of your wonderful gifts. Your analytical skills will be creatively employed if you focus your attention on the beauty inside of you.

Soul Affirmation: Trust gives me a deep sense of peace and joy.

Lucky Numbers: 18, 21, 37

TAURUS

You are learning that freedom and security vibrations come to you when you keep your mind open to them. One way to do this is to go on a "mental diet." Don't think or say anything negative for one whole day, and then another, and another. See if you haven't lost some negative energy! It will feel grand! Go for it!

Soul Affirmation: My emotions provide me a pathway into the sunshine of my being.

Lucky Numbers: 17, 29, 45

GEMINI

Your gift for gabbing is put to good use this week, as partnerships flourish and new relationships bloom. It's all in your aptitude for communication, and you are riding a high cycle currently where everything you say is exactly right and at exactly the right moment. Use this resource to build allies and gain new friends that will lead to business gains at a later time.

Soul Affirmation: I enjoy the spirits of people whose spirits are akin to mine this week.

Lucky Numbers: 9, 14, 24

CANCER

Here's the week you've been waiting for. You'll find that others consider you highly appealing, and many who are particularly interested in your spiritual outlook will seek your advice and wisdom. Many of the dreams you've been dreaming may come sooner than you expect as relationships improve and things in general just seem to take a happy turn.

Soul Affirmation: Knowing I can do it is the biggest preparation for getting it done.

Lucky Numbers: 45, 51, 53

LEO

You wake up feeling as good as you want to feel. Affirm your right to a healthy, happy, joy-filled life and that's what you'll find that you have this week. Lucky! Treat yourself to a lottery ticket. While you're riding high take a chance on love.

Soul Affirmation: I am ready for the good times that the universe will bring me.

Lucky Numbers: 4, 22, 41

VIRGO

Everything seems to be moving along in a very pleasant way this week. Friends are helpful, family is supportive, even the sun seems to be shining just for you! Enjoy this harmony and count your blessings.

Finish a task at work.

Soul Affirmation: There are no obstacles in my way.

Lucky Numbers: 2, 16, 25

LIBRA

Take a week off from sparkling at work and spend some time thinking about what is most important to you. The solution comes while you are thinking about love. Healthy habits are easy to keep. Shed habits that have been bogging you down for a while.

Soul Affirmation: I turn all of my emotions toward the home front.

Lucky Numbers: 15, 24, 47

SCORPIO

Watch for petty arguments at your workplace this week. Sail past any grumbling co-workers with a smile and think about how your soul vibration radiates your happiness. You'll look and feel very attractive to positive vibrations.

Soul Affirmation: I let myself adapt to the flow of life around me.

Lucky Numbers: 16, 29, 33

SAGITTARIUS

A compromise may be in order; luckily, it's easy for you to be flexible. That special other person will be very appreciative of your ability to go with the flow when necessary. You are truly one-of-a-kind! Especially this week your uniqueness will be very apparent. Don't be afraid of it.

Soul Affirmation: I master life by mastering myself

Lucky Numbers: 5, 6, 11

CAPRICORN

Peace will be flowing all around you this week. Soak up the harmony as if it were sunshine and smile, smile, smile. You'll be in sync with partners, family, friends and even co-workers. Carefully consider all your options before you make your final decision.

Soul Affirmation: I send words like music to the ears of those around me.

Lucky Numbers: 3, 10, 13

AQUARIUS

Your multi-tasking abilities will kick into high gear this week. While it's sometimes difficult for you to know how to handle a particular situation, this week you'll know the perfect answer. Everything good is unfolding. No panic. Definitely stick to your routine.

Soul Affirmation: I will actually write a love letter to the universe this week.

Lucky Numbers: 10, 20, 48

PISCES

Sociable, lovable you. You can have a wonderful week this week if you hook up with like-minded friends. You'll find that many people are on your wavelength this week. Appreciate your ability to bring people together. Leadership roles will call.

Soul Affirmation: I find a source of strength in someone I love.

Lucky Numbers: 4, 9, 36


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