



# *Freud's Time Travel Letters*

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**Freud's Time Travel Letters ©**  
**By**  
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**Sigmund Freud, the father of psychoanalysis, an eminent neurologist, knew well before 1923 that he must stop smoking. He didn't stop. All his doctor friends tried to help him. Is it possible that one of his friends tried using the wrong method?**

**In February 1923, Freud detected leukoplakia, a benign growth associated with heavy smoking in his throat. Freud was a heavy smoker of cigars, which are worse than cigarettes.**

**Freud consulted the dermatologist Maximilian Steiner who told him to stop smoking.**

**Freud later saw Felix Deutsch, who saw that the growth was cancerous; he identified it to Freud using the euphemism "a bad leukoplakia" instead of the technical diagnosis epithelioma. Deutsch advised Freud to stop smoking and have the growth excised.**

**Freud was treated by Marcus Hajek, a rhinologist, whose competence he had previously questioned. Hajek performed an unnecessary cosmetic surgery in his clinic's outpatient department. Freud bled during and after the operation,**

**In 1930, Freud was awarded the Goethe Prize in recognition of his contributions to psychology and to German literary culture**

**In January 1933, the Nazis took control of Germany where they burned his books.**

**In March 1938 Nazi Germany annexed Austria, and the outbursts of violent anti-Semitism ensued. Freud was forced to leave Austria.**

**Perhaps, the following is the real reason Freud didn't stop smoking:**

Scene: Feb 1923. Freud is aware of a lesion in his mouth. He is well aware that his constant cigar smoking is causing this lesion. He had it looked at, and Maximilian Steiner insisted that he must stop smoking.

Freud: *“Maximilian, take a look at this lesion on my soft palate.”*

Maximilian Steiner: *“Looks like a growth. Let’s stop smoking and then we will see if it goes away.”*

Freud: *“Good advice. I know I should stop smoking but I haven’t had success. I will try again.”*

Freud admitted that he had tried to stop, even resorting to drugs, without success. He had done psychoanalysis, had interpreted his dreams, had tried various drugs recommended by his wide circle of friends.

Steiner said, *“Sigmund, if you don’t stop smoking you will have to have surgery and that will be quite difficult for you.”*

Steiner was afraid to tell Freud that he felt it was cancerous for fear Freud might commit suicide.

Then Freud saw Felix Deutsch who recognized that it was cancerous, and told Freud so. Again, Freud admitted that his attempts to stop smoking had failed.

Deutsch hit on a plan that had worked for some of his patients.

Deutsch: *“Sigmund, suppose we try time travel.”*

Freud: *“Have you been reading H.G.Wells too much?”* (H.G. Wells wrote, “The Time Machine in 1895)

Deutsch, *“Well yes and no. Let’s just imagine you, Freud 1923, are receiving a letter from yourself, say, in 1930. Just let your mind free flow, you can even just dictate it on that new Edison dictation machine as you lie on the couch and then have your secretary type it up. Visualize yourself seven years from now, and you are writing a letter to yourself today. Wouldn’t you thank Freud 1923 for your not smoking, so that Freud 1930 is alive and healthy? Perhaps a letter from yourself will carry more meaning than advice from your peers. You can’t lose by it, can you?”*

Deutch imagined a future letter thanking Freud for ceasing to smoke, would be effective.

Freud; *“Well, I admire H.G Wells and in honor of that man, I will try this.”*

The following Saturday Freud lay on his couch, turned on the dictograph, and free floated his thoughts. He pretended it was 1930. Later his secretary, Greta, typed it up. She was accustomed to some strange stories, and grinned as she typed it. When she handed it to Freud, she smiled. It read:

Dear Sigy,

*This is me writing to you from Vienna, in 1930. I am so proud that now your International Psychoanalytic Society is recognized all over the world. Not only your medical works, but your books on history and literature have been recognized and the prizes and recognition you have earned have been well deserved.*

*Your association with Jones in London and Jung in Switzerland has advanced the whole field of psychiatry, as well as medicine. If your father and mother were alive, they would be so proud of you. Please stay healthy so we – you and I – can enjoy all the honors and accolades and the many more to come.*

*By remaining healthy, you have allowed me to enjoy these honors today.*  
Sigmund Freud 1930

After reading this letter Freud was well aware of how much of this was wishful thinking and yet, it was certainly altogether reasonable.

He contacted Deutch to tell him how much the letter had moved him and he had reduced his smoking significantly. He now felt it was important to take care of his health so that he could fulfill the bright future that lay before him. Deutch was overjoyed that this letter had been effective for his friend.

A few months later, at a meeting of the Vienna Medical Society he attended, Dr Franzhoffer spoke of traumas suffered by the railway employees including headaches, sleeplessness and paralysis.

Freud, who was an excellent neurologist, stood up to comment. He said, *“many of these symptoms can be explained by hysteria and the rewards of compensation. For example, one of the paralysis cases Dr. Franzhoffer described, was fully able to move his arm under hypnosis and recovered.”*

Franzhoffer was furious, as were others in the audience. There were murmurs of *“here comes that Jew again,”* or *“why do we allow Jews here?”* Finally, one of Franzhoffer’s associates rose and said, *“Dr. Freud, hysteria and faking may be prevalent among you Jews, but is not present in honest hard working Christians.”* Immediately there were cheers and murmurs of anti-semitic remarks.

Freud was incensed and told his friends that it wasn’t so much the anti-Semitism, but the lack of scientific insight that he felt betrayed science and medicine. His longing for a cigar that night was so strong that he could only resist it by taking a sleeping medicine.

When he saw Deutch for examination the following week, Deutsch was disappointed that the lesion had not receded. However he praised Freud about his not smoking.

Deutsch: *“I plan to use this time travel for my patients from now on.”*

The following Saturday, Freud decided to write another letter. What would a letter from himself at age 78 be like?

He closed his eyes and spoke to the dictation machine: He had drifted off to sleep while dictating and his secretary had to struggle to put this letter together. When she finished, her typing, her heart pounded. It read:

Dear Sig,

*Sadly, I am writing to you from 1934. Anti-Semitism is terrible now. It is so bad that in some places your very books are burned. People are leaving Germany and Austria, especially Jews. There are terrible rumors of what is happening in Germany which has always been the most anti-Semitic country. You too may have to leave Austria because of these terrible crimes.*

*Fortunately you have an international reputation and won’t have trouble finding refuge in places like England or United States.*

*Remember how you criticized the doctors of Vienna for being unscientific? Now the very citizens of Austria are being irrational and they blame every problem on Jews: the poor crops, the forest fire, any epidemic. All the great philosophers, doctors, writers who are Jewish or suspected of having Jewish blood are having their books burned or worse. You should plan now about leaving Austria some day for a better place. Be sure to have some of your funds in other countries.*

*Sorry to write a sad letter to you, but that is the situation now in Austria.*

*With Love,  
Sigmund 1934*

It wasn't until the following Tuesday that he got the letter in typewritten form. When Greta, his secretary, handed it to him, she didn't say anything, but quickly hurried out of the room instead. Obviously the letter had upset her; it was to upset Freud even more.

After he read it, his hands shook. Could such a thing be possible? Was this just his imagination from the medical meeting? Actually there were plenty of anti-Semitic remarks in newspapers almost daily. It was a known fact that Jews were regularly not admitted to important social circles, nor did they get government jobs.

He vividly recalled that his close friend Carl Jung had gone into deep depression in 1913 with an overwhelming feeling of "knowing" that a terrible world calamity was about to happen. Somehow, he had anticipated and felt the horrors of the future World War. Jung had certainly been right. Why would Freud's feelings of future horrors be less authentic?

Yet, he argued with himself, 1923 was the age of enlightenment, a world that would never have a war again, with the League of Nations, and advanced education. Yes, but look how the educated doctors of Vienna, admittedly the most educated persons in the entire world, see how they had treated him, just because he was a Jew! Maybe his letter was right?

Freud slept badly that night. The next day morning, he was back to smoking his cigars. He explained to the disappointed Deutsch, that, if that was the world that was coming, he didn't care if he died of cancer

anyway. He contacted his USA and UK publishers and instructed them to stop forwarding his book royalties to him in Austria. Instead, he asked that they be held in trust for him in the United States and in England instead. That way he would have funds available should his letter prove to be accurate.

The cancer advanced and he had surgery performed by Dr. Marcus Hajek which turned out to be unsuccessful. He continued to smoke. His cancer continued to require surgery. Despite all pleadings, he continued smoking, explaining that he envisioned a future that was so terrible; he didn't care if he lived to see it.

He was forced to leave Austria in 1938 and moved to England. The Nazis did steal his Austrian funds. He did live well on the book royalties that had accumulated from his UK and USA publishers.

Safely in England, he was suffering from oral cancer, but grateful for having funds available to him and his family. When the cancer became inoperable, his friend administered a fatal dose of morphine, at his request, on September 23, 1939.

He never proposed this time travel therapy in any of his writings, nor did he mention that 1934 letter he imagined to himself in 1923. But, in a sense, perhaps, with such a letter, one can't blame him for continuing a habit that all his science and knowledge, knew to be a cause of cancer!

However, in my book, *Stressed? Anxiety? Your Cure is in the Mirror*, I do recommend letters from the future for reducing unwanted habits, as do modern psychologists.