

# Freedom from Nicotine The Journey Home

John R. Polito



## **Dedication**

This book is dedicated to all still captive to nicotine's influence. May understanding the "Law of Addiction" lead you to freedom.

## **Acknowledgments**

This book could not have been written without the insights of Joel Spitzer. It would not have been written without the support of Patricia P. Arnold and encouragement of Harriet McBryde Johnson, who left us on June 4, 2008.

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# Freedom from Nicotine

## The Journey Home

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## Introduction

You may or may not like reading books but if a slave to nicotine then this one has the potential to alter your thinking, mind and life.

As hard as it may be to believe, ending nicotine use does not need to be a horrible or even a bad experience. In fact, learning to live nicotine-free can be our greatest personal awakening ever. Why? Because with knowledge as your ally, you are about to discover that you've journeyed far, far from the beautiful pre-nicotine mind you once called home. Hopefully you are about to awaken to the realization that "educated cold turkey" is a quitting method, that knowledge is power.

Insights, understanding and the confidence flowing from them can destroy needless fears and anxieties. The pages that follow offer understanding as a tool for diminishing both.

It's difficult to appreciate the beauty gradually unfolding around us after ending all nicotine use if consumed and gripped by anxiety and fear. Fear of failure, fear that life as an ex-smoker will be horrible, that we're leaving something valuable behind when we stop using, fear of an inability to cope, fear of the emotional storm that may arrive with the next challenge we face, a fear of success, fear that we really did smoke our last cigarette ever, our fears, during previous attempts our fears may have been many. The anguish of quitting in ignorance and darkness can overwhelm freedom's dreams. By destroying needless fears, what once may have seemed nearly impossible is now ours to command.

My objective in writing this book is to remove the mystery and as much anxiety as possible, so as to afford you the ability to notice and savor the full flavor of coming home. It is my dream that the library of knowledge we are about to explore helps you see through the fears and lies associated with living nicotine-free, that it aids you in once again occupying the driver's seat of your mind.

I wish I could claim credit for most of what you are about to read but I can't. The insights that follow were not discovered during my own thirty-years of chemical captivity, nor do they flow from more than a dozen serious failed attempts to break free that each lasted longer than a day. This book is not the result of the invention of some new method or product, or of ideas or concepts born inside this mind. Instead, nearly all of the lessons shared here were mined from the discoveries and accomplishments of others.

Take your own poll of all the ex-smokers you know who have been free from all nicotine and all stop smoking products for at least one year. How did they do it? You'll likely discover a giant elephant in the room, that someone has been lying to you.

Those marketing a growing array of quitting cures are compelled to attempt to acquire market-share by getting you to fear your natural instincts, cold turkey, the recovery method used by 80-90%<sup>1</sup> of long-term successful ex-smokers. These ex-smokers owe their success to ending use of all nicotine, not to devices that replace it, designer drugs that imitate it, vaccines that partially block its entry into the brain, or to magic herbs, vitamins, needles, lasers that imitate needles, hypnosis or Billy Bob's Lima Bean Butter.

There are hundreds of millions of worldwide cold turkey success stories. This book celebrates how education and understanding hold promise to swell their numbers even greater.

But it takes strong observational skills to look at the elephant and accurately separate truth from fiction. Frankly, this book would not exist without the insights and teachings of Joel Spitzer of Chicago. Since 2000, I have studied and shared Joel's clinical observations. They are insights he began harvesting as early as 1972, as a volunteer smoking prevention speaker for the American Cancer Society, and then as a smoking cessation counselor and paid staff member in 1977.

Try to locate any other person who has devoted their entire life, full-time, to helping smokers break free. Joel truly is the Henry Aaron, Michael Jordan or Tiger Woods of smoking cessation.

On January 20, 2000, out of the blue, Joel e-mailed me offering to share more than 80 stop smoking articles he'd written. They quickly became the centerpiece at both [WhyQuit.com](http://WhyQuit.com) (WhyQuit), a motivational website I started in July 1999, and at [Freedom from Tobacco](http://Freedom from Tobacco)<sup>2</sup> (Freedom), what was then an anything-goes, free online MSN-based peer-support quitting forum that Joel could clearly see was floundering horribly.



*A young Joel holding wrapped slices from the lungs of a smoker and non-smoker.*

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- 1 Doran CM et al, [Smoking status of Australian general practice patients and their attempts to quit](#), Addictive Behaviors, May 2006, Volume 31(5), Pages 758-766; Fiore MC et al, [Methods used to quit smoking in the United States: do cessation programs help?](#) Journal of the American Medical Association, May 1990, Volume 263(20), Pages 2760-2765.
  - 2 [Freedom from Tobacco – Quit Smoking Now](#) was founded on September 8, 1999 as a free peer support forum at MSN Groups. On February 21, 2009 MSN shut down all MSN Groups. In anticipation of the closing we moved Freedom to Yuku's free forums where we officially opened "Freedom from Nicotine" at [www.ffn.yuku.com](http://www.ffn.yuku.com) on January 18, 2009.

He'd written the collection of articles as follow-up reinforcement and relapse prevention letters, letters sent to graduates of the more than 300 six-session, twelve-hour, two-week clinics he'd presented. Since they'd already used a "one day at a time" approach to successfully break free, Joel used the closing of each article to teach them how to stay free ... How to "Never Take Another Puff!"

As I read them, I was hammered by ringing truths on a wide range of cessation issues. Joel raised scores of concerns that I had never once considered. How could I have missed all this? I was left stunned and humbled by how little I actually knew about smoking or stopping. Who was I to think that I was somehow qualified to create and co-manage an online stop smoking support group? This guy was the real deal!

Nicotine's relationship to eating, stress, alcohol, vitamin C, anger, its influence upon heart rate, depression, and sleep, how did I miss all this? Where had I been hiding? Why hadn't I seen smoking nicotine as true chemical dependency, that replacement nicotine undermines resolve, or grasped the importance of crave trigger extinguishment and cessation crutch avoidance?



Prior to Joel's arrival, Freedom's co-founder, Joanne Diehl, and I had grown

*Joel challenging pharmaceutical industry assertions that nicotine gum is not addictive on Fox News on May 12, 2004.*

horribly frustrated. Failure was everywhere. It was as if online message board support was somehow actually fostering defeat. Each new announcement of a return to smoking brought lots of virtual member hugs, and encouragement for them to again jump into the "quitting" pool. It was as if the group's affection and attention were an invitation for others to relapse too, so they could return and enjoy their own relapse party.

More than once Joanne had wanted to pull the plug and shut Freedom down. But now, here was a guy whose entire life had prepared him to deliver on the forum's name, Freedom from Tobacco. Without hesitation, we begged Joel to take charge of what was then little more than an anything-goes motivational pep-rally. Although Joel declined, he did agree to join us and assist as a co-manager and become our director of education.

I fondly named his collection of reinforcement letters “Joel’s Library” and gave them center-stage at both WhyQuit and Freedom. Nearly a decade later they remain on center-stage and freely available to all. The collection has grown to more than 100 articles and now includes more than 60 video counseling lessons. They continue to be the heart and soul of our online work.<sup>3</sup>



*Joel presenting one of his 63 free video counseling lessons.*

Today, the often-repeated title of Joel’s free e-book, “Never Take Another Puff,” has become relapse prevention insurance for countless thousands. An email I opened a few moments ago from Roy, who is six weeks into recovery, said it well. “The ‘Never Take Another Puff’ sentence is one of the most powerful sentences I have ever heard in my life. It can move mountains. It was my only shining light in a mass of darkness and guided me back to a normal nicotine-free life. It is effective because it is so simple and innocent. It has the power of innocence.”

I’ve searched long and hard for any work comparable to Joel’s. Except for individual lessons here and there by particular counselors and authors, and Allen Carr’s excellent assault upon smoking rationalizations, I’ve been unable to locate any collection of work that comes close. What I did find were individual studies by scores of dedicated researchers and educators, studies that aid us in better understanding this most amazing chemical called nicotine.

On May 15, 1999 at 10:00 pm I took my last puff of nicotine. Since then I’ve been on a quest for answers and at every opportunity possible have shared what I’ve learned at WhyQuit.com. According to U.S. Google rankings, since 2001 WhyQuit has been the #1 “nicotine cessation” resource. It’s my hope that this book provides an avenue to expand the reach of our work to the millions who either lack Internet service or have yet to discover WhyQuit.com.

So here it is in a nutshell. As health care futurist Joe Flower puts it, you’re about to find yourself “in the mush,” the same mush I encountered when Joel arrived. According to him, there are four phases to change induced learning: (1) unconscious incompetence [*not knowing that I knew almost nothing about my addiction*], (2) conscious incompetence [*Joel making me aware of how little I knew*], (3) conscious competence [*mastering Joel’s teachings*], and (4) unconscious competence [*having those lessons become as second nature as walking*]. As Flower suggests, once competence is achieved it becomes difficult to recall how we could ever have been anything else.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Spitzer, J, [Joel’s Library](http://www.WhyQuit.com/joel), [www.WhyQuit.com/joel](http://www.WhyQuit.com/joel)

<sup>4</sup> Flower J, [In the mush](#), Physician Executive, Jan-Feb 1999, Volume 25(1), Pages 64-66.

Please don't allow this book to collect dust on some shelf or become lost in your computer if the printed or electronic version aids you in achieving conscious competence. Consider handing or e-mailing it to a friend or loved one still trapped in active dependency. Being deprived of the insights needed to save our life is a horrible reason to die.

If someone has gifted you a copy of this book, you can visit [WhyQuit.com](http://WhyQuit.com) or [FFNicotine.com](http://FFNicotine.com) to download the book's most recent electronic version. If just starting out, congratulations on your decision to reclaim your mind and life! You are about to experience the time-tested adage that “knowledge is power! Yes you can!

Breathe deep, hug hard, live long!

John

John R. Polito  
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