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Packing for the Journey Home

When to Start Home - Now or Later?

Short answer? Now!

Regrettably, both smoking cessation product and tobacco industry websites continue to proclaim that a "key" to success is to not stop using today or tomorrow but to pick some future date such as our birthday, New Years or your nation's national stop smoking day, and then plan around it.

While such advice makes it far more likely that you'll purchase and toy with replacement nicotine, it's deadly. Why? Because delay deprives smokers of significantly greater odds of success. A 2006 study found that about half of all smokers attempt to stop smoking without any planning whatsoever. That's right, no planning and no packing at all.

The study's authors were shocked to learn that unplanned attempts were 2.6 times more successful in lasting at least six months than attempts planned in advance.¹ Results from a 2009 study were nearly identical, also generating increased odds of 2.6.²

According to Joel Spitzer, the real experts on this question are millions of long-term successful ex-users, and this isn't news to them. "Rarely do those with the longest initials for credentials do real research on how people stop smoking," he says.

"Conventional wisdom in smoking cessation circles says that people should make plans and preparations for some unspecified future time," writes Joel.

"Most people think that when others stop smoking that they must have put a lot of time into preparations and planning, setting a date and following

1 West R, et al, "Catastrophic" pathways to smoking cessation: findings from national survey, British Medical Journal, February 2006, Volume 332(7539), Pages 458-460.

2 Ferguson SG, et al, Unplanned quit attempts--results from a U.S. sample of smokers and ex-smokers, Nicotine & Tobacco Research, July 2009, Volume 11(7), Pages 827-832.

stringent protocols until the magic day arrives. When it comes down to it, this kind of action plan is rarely seen in real-world [cessation]."³

In an email to me Joel wrote, "My gut feelings here, I think the difference between planned and unplanned is that a person who is planning to stop isn't really committed." "If he were committed to it he would just do it - not plan it."

Waiting on some future day to arrive invites silly and exaggerated fears and anxieties about ending use, to gradually erode confidence and destroy core motivations. Imagine being emotionally drained and physically whipped before ever getting started.

According to Joel, most successful ex-users fall into one of three groups:

1. Those who awoke one day and were suddenly sick and tired of smoking, who threw their cigarettes over their shoulder and never looked back;
2. Those given an ultimatum by their doctor - "stop smoking or drop dead" and
3. Those who became sick with a cold, the flu or some other illness, went a few days without smoking and then decided to try to keep it going.

"All of these stories share one thing in common - the technique that people use. They simply stop smoking one day. The reasons varied but the technique used was basically the same."

"If you examine each of the three scenarios you will see that none of them lend themselves to long-term planning. They are spur of the moment decisions elicited by some external circumstance."

I visited the Philip Morris USA website during the initial draft of FFN-TJH. Philip Morris is the company that then held a 50% share of the U.S. cigarette market. Its "Quit Assist" pages told those hooked on nicotine to:

3 Spitzer, J, Setting Quit Dates, 2006, WhyQuit.com/joel

"Plan and prepare - that's the first key to quit-smoking success."

*Choose a specific quit date - perhaps your birthday or anniversary, or your child's birthday - and mark it on your calendar. If you give yourself at least a month to prepare, you're more likely to succeed than if you decide New Year's Eve to quit the next day. Pick a week when your stress level is likely to be low. **Philip Morris USA**⁴*

Delay recovery for at least a month? Until your next birthday? Wait for life to become nearly stress free?

Joel wrote an article attacking such insanity back in 1984.⁵ It opens with the following rather lengthy list of cessation delay rationalizations that fit snugly with Philip Morris' advice to continue using.

"I will stop when my doctor tells me I have to." "I can't stop now, it's tax season." "Maybe I will stop on vacation." "School is starting and I'm too nervous to stop." "I will stop in the summer when I can exercise more." "When conditions improve at work I'll stop." "Stop now, during midterms, you must be nuts!" "Maybe after my daughter's wedding." "My father is in the hospital. I can't stop now." "If I stop now it will spoil the whole trip." "The doctor says I need surgery. I'm too nervous to try now." "After I lose 15 pounds." "I'm making too many other changes right now." "I've smoked for years and feel fine, why should I stop smoking now?" "I'm in the process of moving, and it's a real headache." "It's too soon after my new promotion, when things settle down." "When we have a verifiable bilateral disarmament agreement, I'll consider stopping." "It is too late. I'm as good as dead now."

"The best time to stop is NOW. No matter when now is. In fact, many of the times specifically stated as bad times to stop may be the best."

"I actually prefer that people stop when experiencing some degree of emotional stress. In most cases, the more stress the better. This may sound harsh, but in the long run it will vastly improve the chances of long

⁴ Philip Morris USA, [Quit Assist, Get Ready](#), web site visited July 31, 2008.

⁵ Spitzer, J, "[I will quit when ...](#)" Joel's Library, 1985, note that article references to the word "quit" have been here been replaced with the word "stop" in hopes of diminishing any sense of having left something behind.
www.WhyQuit.com/joel

term success in abstaining from cigarettes," suggests Joel.

He knows that if successful during a period of significant stress, that stress would never again be the mind's excuse for relapse.

Joel is careful to distinguish real-world cessation from the Internet phenomenon where some spend substantial time at WhyQuit.com reading, planning and watching many of his more than 190 free video stop smoking lessons before taking the plunge.

While Internet use is tremendous in industrialized nations, only about 1 in 3 humans were Internet users in 2012 (32.7%).⁶

I suspect that the percentage of the world's nicotine addicts turning to the Internet to master their dependency, who have ever heard of the [Law of Addiction](#), Joel Spitzer or WhyQuit.com, is vastly less than 1 percent.

Even with Internet access, while knowledge is power, time devoted to studying incorrect or false lessons can prove deadly. Regrettably, the primary lessons shared at the majority of websites are about toying with replacement nicotine and deadly. We wish it wasn't so but it is.

When to get started? Unless delay is associated with quality learning that is diminishing needless fears and anxieties, the sooner the better. But even then, you can pack and learn as you go.

Ask yourself, when will there ever be a more perfect time to take back control of your mind than when wanting flowing from hijacked dopamine pathways is again commanding you to use?

FFN-TJH's lessons are presented in an order roughly paralleling recovery's sequencing and priorities. So, don't worry about finishing it before departure.

Pack for Recovery

Ready for day #1 packing? For starters, are you packing for quitting or recovery? Instead of leaving wiggle room for mind games such as "quitters

⁶ Internet World Stats, [Internet Usage Statistics - The Internet Big Picture](#), www.internetworldstats.com - 07/17/12.

never win, winners never quit," why not start by adopting a positive vision of what's about to happen?

Synonyms for the word "quit" include: abandon, break-off, chuck, desert, forsake, give-up, leave, push-out, relinquish, resign, surrender and terminate.

Abandoning us? Giving up? Forsaking, terminating or quitting ourselves? As reviewed in [Chapter 3](#), the real "quitting" took place on the day that nicotine took control of our mind, not the day we decide to take it back.

Why not pack a healthy mental image of what happens during this temporary journey of re-adjustment? The taking back of control, "recovering" the real us!

Although it'll feel a bit awkward at first, try replacing the phrase "I'm quitting" with "I'm recovering."

You'll be pleasantly surprised at the calming effect upon needless anxiety generating fears by thinking in terms of taking back, returning and getting, instead of abandoning, forsaking and quitting.

Document Your Core Motivations

What is the inner source that allows us to end once mandatory nicotine feedings? Strength, willpower or desire?

It's natural to think that it's some combination. However, none of us are stronger than nicotine's influence upon brain dopamine pathways, as clearly evidenced by our inability to live the active addict's greatest desire, to control the uncontrollable.

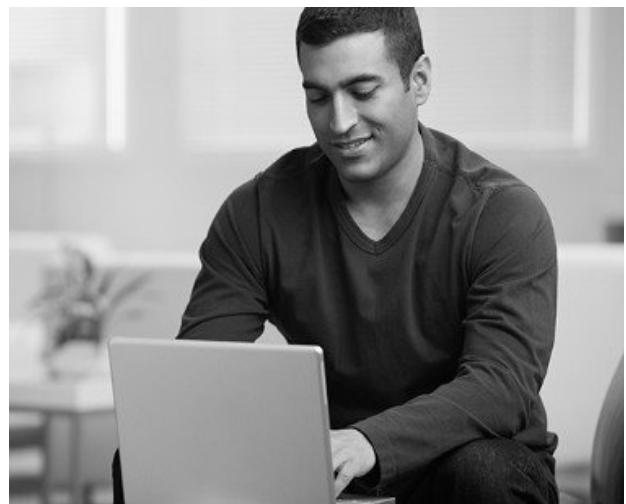


Photo by National Cancer Institute

Yes, we can temporarily muster mountains of willpower. But can willpower make any of us endure a challenge that we lack the desire to complete?

Once nicotine gets inside, all the strength and willpower on earth cannot stop it from traveling to the brain and activating acetylcholine receptors.

We cannot beat our dependency into submission. Nor can we handle one hit of nicotine without stimulating brain circuitry designed to make activating events nearly impossible to forget, pathways engineered to generate wanting for more.

If incapable of using strength to control our addiction and we cannot "will" it into hibernation or submission, what remains?

As simple as it may sound, dreams and desire have always been the fuel of human accomplishment. Born of the honest recognition of nicotine's negative impact upon our life, desire is the fuel for change.

But it takes keeping those motivations vibrant and on center-stage, so that they can both consciously and unconsciously stimulate, motivate and fuel our journey home.

Those successful in navigating recovery found creative ways to protect and safeguard their dreams and desires. They somehow kept them robust, invigorated and available at a moment's notice.

Our core motivations aid in fostering the patience needed to transition an up to 3 minute subconsciously triggered crave episode. They provide resistance to the nicotine addict's romantic use fixations. Desire's energy stands up to junkie thinking that at times may linger inside the recovering mind.

This temporary period of re-adjustment is about fulfilling recovery's dreams and desires. We enhance our chances by protecting desire's juices. Those juices are accurate and vivid memories of the daily nightmare of living life as nicotine's slave.

Success is about well-protected and



Photo National Cancer Institute

remembered recovery motivations. It's about uniting the realities of use with an understanding of the [Law of Addiction](#) (Chapter 2).

What will you do during the heat of battle (if there is any - as cakewalk recoveries can and do occur) to remind yourself of the importance of victory? Which desires will control?

Will you be able to vividly recall the full price of life as nicotine's slave? What will aid you in recalling dependency's prison cell, your lost pride and self-esteem, and the increasing sense of feeling like a social outcast?

What will help you remember standing at the counter and handing over your money to purchase a chemical that you knew would force you to return to buy more? During moments of challenge, how do we bring honesty and the desire flowing from it, to the forefront of our mind?

Dreams and desire embrace recovery as freedom's stepping-stone. Consider allowing honest dependency memories to keep desire excited and stimulated. Let honesty transport you home. Allow it to gift you the inner quiet and calm that arrives once addiction's daily chatter goes silent.

When packing, bring along the thousands of negative nicotine use memories that motivated you to begin reading FFN-TJH. Doing so will provide all the wind your dream's wings will need.

One way to do so is to sit down and write yourself a caring (or even loving) letter in which you list your reasons for wanting to be free. Then, carry it with you, pull it out during challenge and use as a front-line defense.

I admit, it sounds rather silly for a fully-grown man or woman to write a letter to themselves, carry it, and then reach for it when threatened. But when your greatest moment of challenge is upon you and an anxiety-riddled mind is seriously considering throwing it all away, it won't seem so silly then.

You'll reach for a powerful resource -- "you" -- to remind yourself why victory here and now is oh so important.

Fear and panic may at times suggest that you flee toward your

dependency's grasp; that you leave recovery behind. Failure to document and recall dependency's bad and ugly makes saying "no" to it more challenging.

Why allow your core recovery motivations and the dreams they fuel to be absent, erode or die?

The human mind suppresses negative memories. While daily chemical dependency kept dependency's memories vivid and alive, it's amazing how quickly they begin to erode once nicotine use ends. As impossible as this may be to believe, it won't be long before you'll find it extremely difficult to picture yourself having ever used nicotine.

Why allow time, challenge and memory suppression to destroy freedom's dreams? Pack sufficient fuel to transport you home. Consider spending a few minutes now to document life as an addict. While your list will never grow shorter, consider adding to it the benefits noticed during recovery.

Take a glance now at the [Appendix](#) at the end of FFN-TJH. It's a simple journal form that you can copy, complete and carry with you. Or, make your own!

Pack Durable Motives

Do this for "you," not others - It's wonderful that we'd be willing to attempt recovery because some other person wants us to. But navigating battle after battle for someone who isn't in there fighting with us, and who isn't there afterward expressing thanks for our sacrifice, naturally fosters a sense of self-deprivation that can quickly eat away and destroy motivation.

- "My husband can't stand it when I smoke. I'm stopping for him."
- "My dentist is constantly nagging me about my dip causing gum disease. I'll stop before my next appointment."
- "I'm hooked on nicotine gum and my two teenagers are telling everyone that dad is a drug addict. I can't take it. I'll stop if they stop."
- "I'm pregnant and stopped for the baby."
- "Our pediatrician claims that my smoking is causing our daughter's illnesses. I'm stopping for her."
- "My doctor says that she won't do surgery if I'm still smoking."

- She leaves me no choice."
- "My neighbor said my cat smells like cigarettes. My cat deserves better."

While each is making an attempt, they are doing so for the wrong reasons. "While they may have gotten through the initial withdrawal process, if they don't change their primary motivation for abstaining, they will inevitably relapse," wrote Joel in 1984.⁷

Ending nicotine use for someone else pins our success to him or her. Should they do something wrong or disappoint us we have at our disposal the ultimate revenge, relapse.

"I deprived myself of my cigarettes for you and look how you pay me back! I'll show you, I'll smoke a cigarette!"

As Joel notes from this example, "He will show them nothing. He is the one who will return to smoking and suffer the consequences. He will either smoke until it kills him or have to stop again. Neither alternative will be pleasant."

We can't stop for our doctor, religious leader, parents, spouse, children, grandchildren, best friend, employer, insurance company, support group, pet, some guy who wrote a nicotine cessation book, or for the developing life inside a woman's womb.

While all with whom we share our lives will clearly inherit the fruits of our recovery, it must first and foremost be our gift to us.

Journey for better health, not fear of failing health - While fear of bad or even failing health can be a powerful motivator in causing us to contemplate recovery, the human body is a healing machine. If allowed, it mends and repairs.

What if the primary force driving our recovery is an escalating fear flowing from noticeable dependency related harms? What will happen to those fears if nearly all noticeable harms quickly improve after stopping? What will happen to our determination and resolve?

7 Spitzer, J, Joel's Library, [Quitting for Others](http://whyquit.com/joel), 1984, <http://whyquit.com/joel>

If an oral nicotine user, imagine a white spot on your gum that quickly disappears.⁸ If a smoker, picture dramatic improvement in your sense of smell and a noticeable change in taste. Imagine a chronic cough or wheeze that vanishes in a couple of weeks.

Healing is normally an extremely positive thing. But if recovery is driven almost exclusively by fear of failing health, it can feel like our motivational rug is being pulled out from under us as our primary concerns evaporate before our eyes.

Imagine healing breeding such thoughts as, "I guess smoking hadn't hurt my body as much as I'd thought. I guess it's safe to go back to smoking."

Obviously, we don't correct years of mounting damage to lungs and blood vessels within a few months. Long-term cancer and circulatory disease risks take years to reverse.

But to a mind that commenced recovery primarily due to worries about declining health, disappearance of a chronic cough or a noticeable improvement in breathing may fuel junkie thinking about the impact of smoking upon the body.

The flip side of fear of declining or poor health is hope for improved health. While it may seem like word games, when packing durable and sustaining motives the distinction could prove critical.

Instead of using fear of failing health as a motivator, imagine recasting those fears into a dream of seeing how healthy your body can once again become.

What if instead of each new health improvement realization eating away at our primary motivation, we looked upon it as a reward that left us wanting to celebrate? Imagine the disappearance of each concern stirring our imagination about the limits of possible improvement?

Again, initially, fear can be an extremely positive force. It may have been what motivated you to start reading FFN-TJH. But fear suffers from a lack of sustainability. We can only remain afraid for so long. We can only look

8 Polito JR, [Long-Term Nicorette Gum Users Losing Hair and Teeth](#), WhyQuit.com, December 1, 2008.

at so many photographs of diseased lungs or mouth cancers before growing numb to them.

As to noticeable tobacco related health concerns, why not use their potential for healing and some degree of noticeable improvement as a means of refueling core dreams and desires?

These bodies are built for healing. If given the opportunity, all tissues not yet destroyed will mend and repair. Why not put your body's ability to heal to work for you?

Do it for total savings, not daily cost - The final motivation we may want to consider shifting and recasting is cost.

The cost of satisfying the brain's demand for nicotine continues to rise as governments increasingly turn to tobacco tax increases as motivation to induce cessation, or so they say.

Fewer smokers mean that the tobacco industry must charge remaining smokers more money in order to satisfy profit-seeking shareholders. Still, if the cost of today's supply of nicotine is our primary recovery motivation, what's the actual price of relapse?

How much does it cost to bum or be offered a cigarette, cigar, pinch, wad or piece? What's the cost of a single pack, tin, pouch or box? A few dollars?

But if we focus upon total savings instead of the cost of our daily or weekly supply, our core motivation is allowed to grow instead of serve as a



source of increasing temptation.

I just glanced and according to my computer's desktop recovery calculator, at \$3.00 per pack of cigarettes (an addict's paradise, South Carolina continues to have almost the cheapest nicotine in America), during my 13 years of healing I've saved \$52,462.01 (U.S.) by skipping 285,749 once mandatory nicotine feedings. But in reality, my savings have been far greater.

When calculating savings don't forget the price of fuel if travel was necessary to re-supply. And what about the value of our time? And don't forget tobacco use related doctor and dentist visits.

When smoking 3 packs a day, I lived with chronic bronchitis and respiratory illness, including being diagnosed with early emphysema. I had pneumonia two years in a row and six root canals in the two years prior to my final attempt.

Amazingly, the madness of paying the tobacco industry to destroy this body ended after arresting my dependency. I can't begin to guess at my medical savings but clearly they've been substantial, including being alive here today to type these words.

Dream about the big picture and total savings, not just what you'd spend for tomorrow's or next week's supply.

Pack Patience: One Day and Challenge at a Time

Derived from the French word "pati," which means to suffer or endure, patience is the "quality of being patient in suffering."⁹ Ironically, nicotine users suffer from the fact that stimulation of dopamine pathways by use of an external chemical fosters impulsiveness,¹⁰ the opposite of patience.



Yes, the speed with which we were each able to satisfy wanting via a new supply of nicotine conditioned us to develop varying degrees of impatience. As you embark upon this temporary journey of re-adjustment, practice

9 Patience. (n.d.). Online Etymology Dictionary. Retrieved July 27, 2008, from Dictionary.com website.

10 van Gaalen MM, et al, Critical involvement of dopaminergic neurotransmission in impulsive decision making, Biological Psychiatry, July 2006, Volume 1;60(1), Pages 66-73.

developing patience as an aid to navigating both recovery and challenge.

One Day at a Time: today versus forever - How will you measure victory? "One day at a time" allows us to declare total victory within 24 hours, while focusing on tomorrow's concerns once tomorrow arrives. It encourages abandonment of all victory standards that fail to permit celebration today.

"One day at a time," "baby steps," and "one hour" or "one challenge at a time" (when first starting out) are patience focus techniques that break large tasks down into entirely manageable events.



Photo National Cancer Institute

As Joel notes "this concept is taught by almost all programs which are devoted to dealing with substance abuse or emotional conflict of any kind. The reason that it is so often quoted is that it is universally applicable to almost any traumatic situation."¹¹

Think about the needless anxiety and delayed satisfaction of those who insist that victory can only occur if they stop using for the rest of their lives. Forget about tomorrow. Truth is, any worry or concern about tomorrow is wasted emotion unless we succeed today.



Photo National Cancer Institute

Many fail at breaking free because they convince themselves that the mountain is simply too big to climb. Still, it doesn't stop them from trying. Every few years they take a few steps up it, stop, and decide that it's still too big.

11 Spitzer, J, Take it One Day at a Time, WhyQuit.com, Joel's Library, 1985.

"Big bite" anxieties occur when we perceive that the task before us is bigger than our ability to navigate or endure it. "One day at a time" is a patience development skill that once mastered causes "big bite" anxieties to evaporate.

When cliff climbing, it's wise to focus on gaining a solid hold upon the rock beneath our hands, not looking up ahead at the remaining mountain to be climbed. It's wise to focus on where we'll next place our foot, not repeatedly looking down at the ground far below. Why intentionally foster needless anxieties?

How many times have we said, "This time I'm stopping forever!" "Forever" is an awfully big psychological bite that can make any task appear larger than life, or all but impossible.

For example, picture yourself sitting down at the dinner table and having to eat 67 pounds of beef. Imagine the anxieties associated with thinking we need to eat a large portion of a cow.

It sort of destroys the image of a nice juicy steak, doesn't it? Yet the average American consumes 67 pounds of beef annually.¹²

I start each seminar with the same two questions. "I need an honest show of hands. How many of you deeply and honestly believe that you'll never, ever smoke another cigarette for the rest of your life?" Rarely will a hand go up.

I then ask everyone to look around and to never forget what he or she is seeing. I want them to realize that they're not alone. Next I ask, "How



12 Davis CG et al, Factors Affecting U.S. Beef Consumption, USDA, October 2005, Outlook Report No. LDPM13502.

many of you deeply and honestly believe that you can go one hour without smoking nicotine?" Without exception, every hand goes up.

Why adopt a recovery philosophy that we are convinced cannot and will not succeed, when we already have a building block in which we deeply believe? Just one hour or challenge at a time, allow the hours to build into a day.

How does a person recover from a broken bone or nicotine addiction? By allowing time to heal, just "one day at a time."

If we insist on seeing and measuring victory only in terms of "stopping forever," then on which day do we allow ourselves to celebrate? Why wait until dead to celebrate? Who is coming to that party? Instead, consider adopting a recovery philosophy that celebrates every day that we remain free and healing.

And try not to see this recovery as being in competition with prior attempts. Although I've remained 100 percent nicotine-free since May 15, 1999, if we both remain 100 percent free today, your day's worth of freedom will have been no longer, shorter or less real than mine. We'll also remain equals in being just one hit of nicotine away from relapse. And when our head hits our pillow tonight we'll both have achieved full and complete victory today.

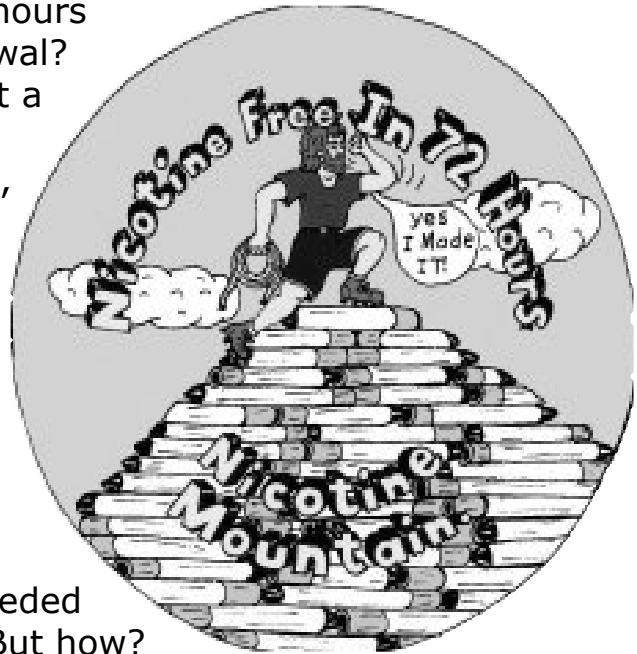
One Challenge at a Time: a task focus skill - Patience allows us navigate anxieties when confronted by challenge. Our goal is simple, to navigate challenge until challenge subsides, until our addiction's daily chatter goes silent.

We cannot build a beautiful wall with only one brick, receive a new baby after only one month of pregnancy, obtain a college degree after only one class, or cook a delicious holiday dinner in a few short minutes? Imagine getting half the meal cooked and then fleeing the kitchen, or building half a wall and then walking away.

Going the distance in life, completing each challenge and accomplishing our goal is normal and expected. Swimming half way across the river and then stopping is not.

So how do we navigate the up to 72 hours needed to move beyond peak withdrawal? Just one hour and challenge (if any) at a time. Managing impatience can be as simple as turning lemons to lemonade, while making each task smaller and savoring victory sooner.

Whether confronting a physical withdrawal symptom, struggling with a recovery emotion, encountering an un-extinguished subconscious crave trigger, or fixating on conscious thoughts about using, the objective is the same, to summon the patience needed to experience victory here and now. But how?



The first huge step is mustering the courage to initially say "no" to normal wanting within. Allow your rational thinking mind (your prefrontal cortex) to realize and discover that it has the ability to say "no" to the primitive impulsive mind (the limbic or lizard brain).

We smokers became conditioned to expect to sense satisfaction of nicotine urges and craves within 8-10 seconds of inhaling a puff of smoke. Is it any wonder that it may take a few victories before growing confident and skilled at saying "no" to use impulses?

Try to embrace recovery don't fight it. For example, crave episodes are good not bad. There is a prize at the end of each, breaking and silencing another use cue and return of another aspect of a nicotine-free life. When we take recovery just one challenge at a time, it isn't long before so many aspects of life are reclaimed that we have no choice but to accept the simple truth that



Photo by National Cancer Institute

everything done while nicotine's slave can be done as well or better without it.

As Joel notes, we're forced to realize that our thoughts of what life would be like as an ex-user were all wrong, that there is life afterwards and that "it is a cleaner, calmer, fuller and most importantly, a healthier life."

Challenge may involve an internal debate and the need to call upon the patience needed to allow time for honesty and reason to prevail. [Chapter 11](#) is loaded with coping techniques for handling subconscious crave episodes. And [Chapter 12](#) shares tips associated with navigating periods of conscious thought fixation.

Once off and running it's important to keep in mind that recovery is a journey not an event. Online at [Freedom](#) and [Turkeyville](#), our support groups, we often see those in early recovery growing impatient.

"Why am I still craving?" "When will comfort come?" Some endure a substantial degree of self-inflicted anxiety by intense focus upon the question of how long it will take for challenge to end. I like to think of it in terms of the time needed to heal a broken bone, but with greater variation from person to person, as every recovery is different.

In regard to psychological recovery, some let go and put their relationship with nicotine behind them far sooner than others. Some insist on clinging to varying use rationalizations for months. Some even longer.

But the ultimate result is the same for all. Patience transports you here to "Easy Street," where you begin experiencing entire days without once thinking about wanting to use. While here, the occasional thoughts of wanting to use will become so infrequent, brief and mild that they become laughable.

When it happens, it may begin to feel like our one challenge and day at a time recovery philosophy has outlived its usefulness. But Joel cautions us not to abandon it.

He warns that like never-users, ex-users experience horrible days too. A growing sense of complacency could also leave us toying with temptation in

social situations. We will each some day experience tremendous stress at home or work, and we each have loved ones who will eventually die.

The next few minutes are all within your immediate control and each is entirely do-able. The decisions, if any, made during those minutes are yours to command.

Find contentment in today's freedom and healing. It took years to walk this deeply into dependency's forest. It isn't realistic to think that we can walk out overnight. Patience. You'll soon be doing easy time.

Pack a Positive Attitude

Can we make ourselves miserable on purpose? No doubt about it. Throughout our lives we've experienced worry, fear, anger and irritability, only to find out later that our emotions were totally unnecessary, that our concerns didn't occur.

The single greatest source of self-inflicted anxiety in my life flowed from failure to understand my addiction. How could I seriously and intelligently confront something that I didn't understand? Although I often dreamed about freedom, it was easier to reach for that next fix instead. I grew to expect failure.

Combining intelligence with attitude can destroy baseless fears. Why not reassure your impulsive mind that there is absolutely nothing to fear, that coming home is good not bad.

Picture a board on the ground that's 10 inches wide and 50 feet long. Picture yourself easily and repeatedly walking its entire length, over and over.

Now, picture the same board suspended between two skyscrapers, fifty stories off the ground. What are the odds of you walking its length without falling? Not good.¹³

Recovery is grounded. Why allow false fears to destroy your will? Attitude can either escalate and fuel fears or serve as a calming influence that

13 Coue, E, Self Mastery through Conscious Autosuggestion, Malcken Publishing Co., Inc., 1922.

relaxes and reassures.

Why not choose freedom over bondage, happy over depressed, success over failure? Why not invite your subconscious to pick honesty, healing and safety over lies, toxins and disease?

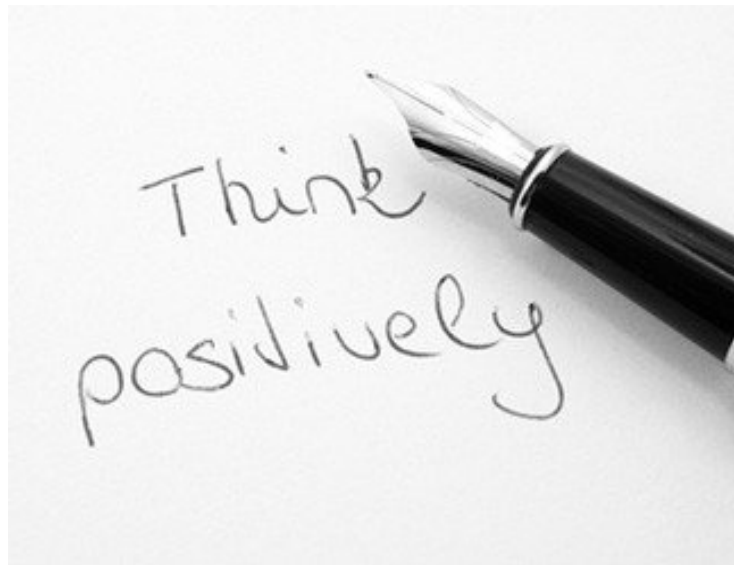
Why allow resolve, commitment and success to be controlled by dependency induced doubt, anxiety and fear? Why heap layer upon layer of anxiety icing on recovery's cake?

Do you remember when you first learned to swim and found yourself in water over your head? Did you panic? I did. Would I have panicked if I'd been a skilled swimmer?

The more knowledgeable and skilled we become, the easier and calmer recovery. Yes, there may be a few waves along the way. But why fear their arrival? Why not relax and do the backstroke until your swimming skills are needed?

Imagine a positive attitude becoming your subconscious teacher, in sharing the truth about coming home. Imagine confident honesty enlisting it to fight on the side that's right.

Get it to take its finger off of the button controlling your body's fight or flight panic response. Help your subconscious mind understand that what needs to be feared is your dependency. Gradually destroying your body, continued use was threatening survival.



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Why adopt an attitude that resists bringing wanting to an end? What harm is there in allowing this temporary journey of re-adjustment to become our most amazing period of self-discovery ever?

Why pretend that the board is too high, the swim too hard, or that there are monsters or demons where none exist?

Reflect on how repeatedly telling yourself that recovery "is too hard," "endless" or "nearly impossible" might tend to eat away at freedom's dreams and desires. Reflect upon how a positive can-do attitude would reassure your subconscious and help diminish self-inflicted stress, worry, anxiety, panic, anger and depression.

Allow your dreams to feel the influence of celebrating each moment of freedom, each challenge overcome?

Picture a plugged-in lamp but without a light bulb. The power switch is turned off. Picture intentionally sticking your finger into the bulb socket and leaving it there. Now picture all of your subconscious nicotine feeding cues being wired directly into the lamp's on-off switch.

If we expect to soon encounter another use cue and anxiety episode but don't know when, what will leaving our finger in the socket all day do to our nerves? Will it keep us on edge?

Will a constant sense of anticipation anxiety have us lashing-out at anyone entering the room? Will we feel like crying? Will worry and concern keep us from concentrating on other things? Will it wear us down and drain our spirit?

Conversely, what if we know that when a shock occurs that it will always be tolerable, that no crave episode will ever harm us, cut us, or make us bleed, break our bones, make us ill or kill us?

What if we know that the crave episode will not last longer than three minutes? What if we know that there's a valued prize at the end,



extinguishing another use cue and return of another aspect of life? What if we know that the only path to fully reclaiming life is to extinguish all use cues?

Honesty, confidence, understanding and attitude can make the time and distance between challenges more relaxed. Alternatively, we can allow our thinking to become so infected by fear, doubt and negativism that it becomes the instrument of defeat.

Instead of intense focus upon any anxiety felt when the light switch is briefly turned on, why not focus on learning to relax during the massive amount of time that the switch is off?

If we keep feeding ourselves the thought that recovery is too hard, should we be surprised when our emotions make us feel that it is? Why feed the mind failure? Why fear the swim and needlessly worry when some of us are not even in the water yet? Why fuel the impulsive mind in breeding powerful negative anxieties?



Photo by National Cancer Institute

Fight back with reason, logic and dreams. Look forward with confidence while knowing that nicotine will no longer define who you are. You, not a chemical, will now control your remaining time here on earth.

Embrace recovery as a wonderful journey back to the rich, deep, and tranquil inner calm that resided inside our mind before nicotine first arrived.

Permit yourself to grow stronger, not weaker. Let honesty answer addiction's chatter. Picture your brain and tissues healing, extra money in your pocket, extra time to spend it, and more bounce in each step.

While true that only action, not thought, can rob us of victory, why allow a negative attitude to invite failure? Marvel in the glory of taking back your mind.

The Value of Documenting Your Journey

While "one day at a time" is an excellent victory yardstick, imagine the value of being able to look back and see what each day was like.

Consider jotting down a few calendar notes or diary entries about what early recovery was like and the challenges overcome. Although not necessary to success, doing so could prove valuable later.

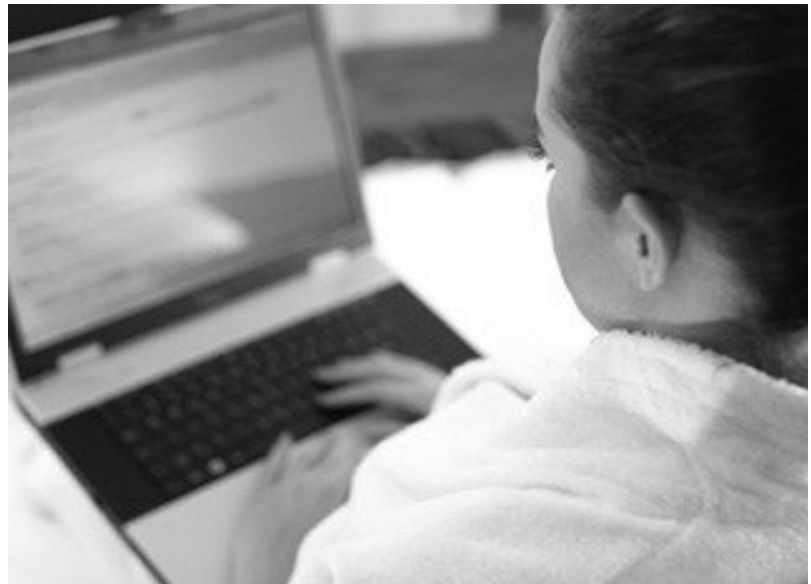


Photo by National Cancer Institute

Why would anyone want to vividly recall the first few days of recovery, days which could reflect a blend of frustrations, anxieties, crave episodes, anger, bargaining and sadness? The same reason we need to remember, in as much detail as possible, daily life as an actively feeding nicotine addict.

We've all heard that "those who forget the past are destined to repeat it." It's hard to imagine a situation where it rings truer than with drug recovery and relapse.

Humans tend to repress and inhibit negative emotional memories, and emotional experiences in general.¹⁴ Instead, we remember and replay the good, while forgetting the bad.

Imagine if it were otherwise. A vivid picture of all the pain, anxiety and hurt of all our yesterdays would be a heavy burden to bear.

¹⁴ Davis PJ, et al, Repression and the inaccessibility of affective memories, Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, January 1987, Volume 52(1), Pages 155-162; also see Depue BE, et al, Prefrontal regions orchestrate suppression of emotional memories via a two-phase process, Science July 13, 2007, Volume 317(5835), Pages 215-219.

While your mind may quickly suppress memories of the challenges overcome, ink on paper or words typed into a computer are durable. The best way to protect against complacency isn't by forgetting what bondage or recovery was like, but by accurately recalling them.

It's wise to make a record of both the reasons you want to break free and what the first couple of weeks were like. Consider sending yourself an e-mail before bed. And here's an example of why.

Imagine hitting what feels like a recovery plateau, where you no longer sense improvement. Imagine feeling stuck and wondering if it's going to remain this way for good, as if a rose bud had stopped opening.

Now imagine being able to look back and read your own progress notes. Like having a medical chart during a hospital stay, your record can provide accurate perspective of how far you've come.

It can help calm concerns that recovery has stalled. Although at times nearly impossible to see, I assure you, recovery's rose bud continues to slowly unfold.

Consider a present gift of future memory. Consider it free relapse insurance. A few memory-jogging notes when starting out could become invaluable during challenge, lulls or once complacency arrives.

Refueling

While challenge, time and negative memory suppression tend to erode dreams and desires, opportunities abound to reinvigorate the wind beneath our wings.

Ex-users - Ex-users can be an excellent source of support. Most already reside here on Easy Street. But a word of caution about ex-users. As just



Photo by National Cancer Institute

discussed, their memories of the challenges of early recovery have likely been suppressed.

While most will have forgotten the bad, some have continued to cling tight to a few old nicotine use rationalizations. Doing so has likely kept tantalizing "aaah" wanting relief memories associated with those remaining rationalizations teasingly alive.

Others will look back upon their years of use as having been "vile, disgusting, expensive, stupid, crazy" or insane.¹⁵ For them, breaking free is now seen as having been common sense, no big deal, a non-event or easy.

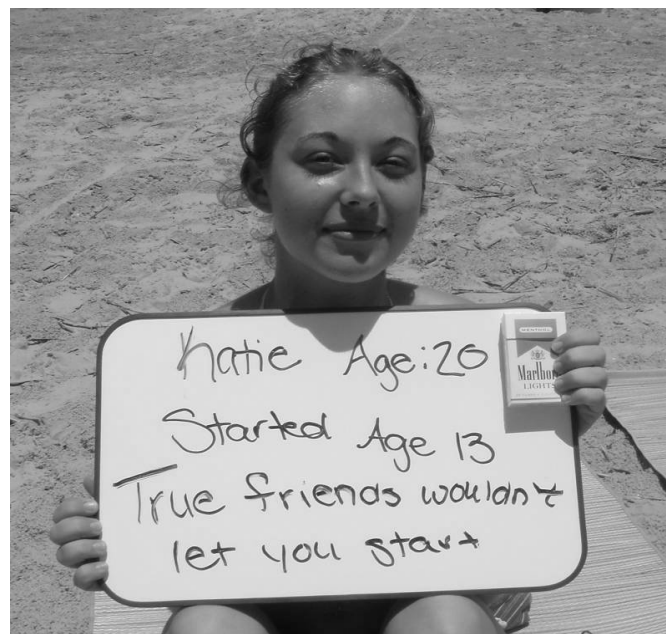
Ask the next ex-user you meet how long it has been since their last significant challenge. Try to get them to put a date on it. Ask how long the challenge lasted and what it felt like. How intense was it?

Then ask about the challenge prior to that. Again, try to get them to be accurate in dating and describing it. A few follow-up questions and I think you'll discover that the event was really a non-event, that it left very little impression.

Ask what they like most about being free. How has it changed their life? Did their success influence others still using? What do they think about while watching others use?

What do they most miss? Try to identify any lingering romantic fixations. Reflect upon the honesty of each. Reflect on how this ex-user succeeded, even though they refused to let go of this rationalization. Imagine if they had. Think about how it places them at greater risk for relapse.

Current-users - If questioned, friends or loved ones still using may not be as open and honest as



¹⁵ Spitzer, J, "I don't know if I have another quit in me", <http://www.ffn.yuku.com/topic/11406>, March 3, 2002.

Katie about their dependency, or about their dream of someday being free. But, words are not necessary. Their dependency will speak for them.

Carefully watching users can be motivational. Often you'll identify them by smell even before they light up.

Watch that first deep puff. Watch their reaction to it, their eyes as 8-10 seconds later nicotine strikes their brain. While doing so, keep in mind that they are not replenishing to tease you. They are doing so because they must.

While stopped in traffic, look for windows rolled down when rain, heat or cold suggest they should be up. Upon spotting the smoker, look closely. What motivated this nicotine feeding? Do they even realize that they're smoking or are they replenishing while on auto-pilot?



Like Pavlov's dogs, did they condition their subconscious to expect replenishment when driving?

Did traffic anxieties turn their urine more acidic, thus accelerating depletion of remaining reserves of the alkaloid nicotine? It's the same acid-alkaloid interaction seen during anger or when consuming alcohol.

Do they extend their arm out the vehicle's window in order to keep tobacco toxins from burning their eyes? And once replenishment is complete, what do they do with their non-biodegradable cigarette butt, with its 12,000 plastic-like cellulose acetate fibers?¹⁶

Society is increasingly treating those still in bondage as social outcasts. Notice the smokers standing around outside of buildings in the cold, heat, night, wind or rain. Carefully watch their gestures and posture.

It's almost as if they want all who see them to believe that the only reason

16 Polito JR, [Cigarette Butts](#), WhyQuit.com, July 4, 2002.

they are outside is to enjoy the wonderful health benefits of the great outdoors. But the need to return every thirty minutes or so betrays them.

Watch at the store counter when they re-supply. Are they buying a one-day supply or more? Are you witnessing a daily event in their life? Reflect on their choices.

If already in recovery yourself, what are the odds that this person is envious of you? According to a 2007 Gallop Poll of U.S. smokers, 74% of those polled said they would like to give up smoking, while 67% consider themselves addicted.¹⁷



The beauty of using unsuspecting current-users to recharge our motivational batteries is that they won't disappoint us. They wear their chemical addiction, or more appropriately, it wears them.

None awoke this morning and decided to put it on. In fact, we'll never in our lifetime encounter any now dependent user who awoke one day and said, "Hey, today I'm going to addict myself to nicotine!"

On a personal note, I hope that none of us ever forget that not long ago that was us.

Never-users - When first starting out, unless a secret closet smoker share your decision. Doing so will invite family, friends and co-workers to offer initial encouragement and support.

Their simple words of praise can



Photo by National Cancer Institute

17 Saad, L, U.S. Smoking Rate Still Coming Down, Gallup, July 24, 2008, <http://gallop.com>

inspire and make us look forward to more of the same. But be careful not to develop support expectations, to lean upon them or to transform their praise or comments into a crutch.

When teenagers, my daughters constantly nagged about my smoking. They both seemed genuinely excited the first few days of my final failed attempt. While their encouragement was extremely uplifting, it ended abruptly. I suddenly felt abandoned. Where was my support?

I'd leaned upon them far too heavily. I'd made them my crutch. I'd made their desire that I stop my primary motivation. It was a mistake. A mistake that left me feeling deprived of support, resentful and wanting to use. Why had they abandoned me? After relapsing I confronted them.

"Dad, we didn't want to bring it up any more because we could see you were succeeding." "We didn't want to remind you and make you keep thinking about smoking."

Is it fair to expect a person who has never been chemically addicted to anything in their life to appreciate the recovery process? Clearly not.

Invite never-users to be part of your support team but be sure to educate them. Let them know that helping you stay focused for the next 90 days would be fantastic. But don't count on them being there. See their support as dessert, never the main meal.

Industry marketing - Store tobacco marketing becomes sadly laughable to the trained eye. Extremely effective, it's a multi-purpose facade through which the dependency savvy brain easily sees.

Effective industry marketing accomplishes three objectives. It encourages youth experimentation,



provides use justification, and is bait for relapse.

Look closely. When is your mind first assaulted by use invitations? Are there roadside signs, signs on top of gas pumps, tied to lamp-posts, window signs, exterior building wall signs, signs hanging above candy racks or on the door as you both enter and leave?

Whether noticed or not, almost every aspect of marketing is designed to encourage starting, continued use and discourage stopping. Each time we returned to purchase more, our mind was fed justifications as to why we'd returned.

And when trying to stop, it proclaims why we shouldn't. It wraps around us while trying to purchase gas, food and medicine. Its aim is simple: to force our subconscious to notice it, to stir desire, inflame wanting and contribute to relapse.

Flavor, pleasure, to be true, cool, our gateway to friendship, adventure, rebellion or unbelievable prices, it suggests that we stand at that counter for every reason except the truth, because we must, because our brain is chemically dependent upon nicotine.

Think like a tobacco company. Look closely. What subliminal message is each ad or display attempting to pound into your mind? Where is the "responsible" merchant's message stating that smoking nicotine may be more addictive and harder to beat than heroin or cocaine? Where's the message warning students that they may only need to use nicotine a couple of times before becoming hooked for life?

Feel the industry's economic muscle as it purchased your subconscious focus at the checkout counter.

What tobacco company won the bidding war at your neighborhood sales location? Look at row after row of the same packs or cartons. The winner's products are the ones on top and most visible. See the winner's sign?

And what's the real purpose of the giant yellow "We Card" or other similar sign above the checkout counter? Don't you find it strange that there isn't

one for alcohol?

It's teen bait. Once secret industry documents suggest that the carding sign's primary purpose is to torment neighborhood youth with the ongoing tease that tobacco use is a sign of adulthood, a rite of passage, that it's what "real" grown-ups do.¹⁸

Look at the hundreds of brightly colored packs, boxes, cartons, tins, cans, bags, pouches and tubes. Collectively this power wall oozes the impression that users can't wait to awaken each day so that they can run down to the store and try a new flavor.

You're looking at the biggest tobacco fib of all. The entire colorful facade is orchestrated to scream the lie that use is a free-choice activity, that everyone's doing it.



In your mind, strip away the rainbow of color, the fancy packaging and the almost 700 documented tobacco flavor additives.¹⁹ Instead, see a vast array of different doses of nicotine, each engineered to penetrate tissues at varying rates of speed.

Turn store marketing on its head. Instead of being used by it, use it as motivation for staying free and keeping your money.

¹⁸ Polito, JR, [Convenience Stores - Nicotine Addiction Central](#), WhyQuit.com, March 18, 2006.

¹⁹ Polito, JR, [Cigarette Additives, Carcinogens and Chemicals](#), WhyQuit.com, February 7, 2005.

Social controls - How did you react to anti-smoking news stories or to stories about new tobacco health concerns? Did you instantly change the channel, turn the page or otherwise tune out? I did.

News stories that once fostered anxieties can now be used as a source of motivation in helping keep us clean and free.

In case you haven't noticed, there's a movement sweeping the globe as workers and non-smokers demand smoke-free air.

We're seeing stories of smoking being banned on all hospital property, in parks, playgrounds, outdoor sporting events, on beaches, in hotel rooms, and even in company or government owned vehicles.

We're also seeing proposed legislation attempt to ban smoking in all vehicles transporting a child. And smoking is now beginning to factor into family court child custody, visitation and child abuse decision-making.

Science is awakening to the realization that there may not be any living cell in the entire human body that isn't touched and affected by tobacco toxins.

Where allowed by law, employers are beginning to discriminate in refusing to hire anyone testing positive for nicotine. Some employers are threatening to fire all current employees who test positive for nicotine after being afforded a reasonable period of time to break-free.

Fuel and living costs are now rising faster than income in most nations. Millions of hooked parents are increasingly confronted with the choice of buying food for their child or nicotine for their addiction.

It's a situation made worse by cash strapped



governments that have become increasingly dependent on tobacco taxes, and the dependability of nicotine's grip upon the taxpayer's brain.

Personally, it's offensive that most politicians either accept tobacco industry campaign contributions or see those still enslaved as a highly dependable source of tax revenue. They just don't seem to get it, or maybe they do.

Whether we accept or deplore the way society treats those still in bondage, news of the latest assault upon them can be used as motivation to prevent assault upon us.

You! - Clearly, your most dependable source of support is "you"! Your three most valuable motivational assets will be:

1. Memories of life as an actively feeding nicotine addict;
2. Your reasons for wanting to be free; and
3. Memories of early recovery.

Again, the early part of this journey can be emotional. It's wise to anticipate and prepare for significant negative memory suppression. You will also suppress old use memories.

Find quality ways to preserve those memories. Make them available both as a recovery progress report and later as an aid in fending off complacency. Doing so will be like owning the best and quickest battery re-charger the world has ever known.

Whether your nicotine use was heavy or light, long or short, out in full view for the world to see or the best-kept secret on earth, your intelligence and conscious thinking mind is your #1 motivational tool.

Closet users - Pretend for a second that you are a closet nicotine addict. If a secret user, your family and friends either never knew you were hooked, or were told that you successfully broke free long, long ago.

Aside from all the lies we told ourselves to rationalize that next mandatory feeding, the closet user lives and breathes the need to constantly deceive the world too.

If a recovering closet-user, in addition to celebrating self-honesty, there's tremendous relief in at last being honest with those we love. Having lived in almost constant fear of being exposed, whether or not we come totally clean and share our secret, the emotional rewards of no longer living a lie can themselves be extremely supportive.

If a closet ex-user, where can you turn for support when your world thinks that you didn't use?

Internet refueling - If you don't own a computer or are not online, consider dropping by your local library as most now offer free Internet access.

Even if you have never touched a computer in your entire life, there is hopefully a library staff member who delights in teaching library patrons how to explore the Internet and print their discoveries.


Once online, a keyboard and mouse will allow you to explore a vast array of empowering recovery tools. Visit WhyQuit.com. Simply type whyquit.com in the address window at the top and then press "enter" or "return."

Welcome to WhyQuit! As the screen-shot on the next page shows, WhyQuit's home page is broken down into three categories. The left column contains links to motivational articles, the center contains links to educational materials, and the right column is the gateway to free online support.

The site is totally free, sells nothing, declines donations and is staffed entirely by volunteers. WhyQuit's motivation column includes stories of the ordeals endured by young tobacco victims and their families.

Clearly, WhyQuit intentionally shares horrific stories about the youngest of the young. It does so in an attempt to get visitors to appreciate that predicting whom tobacco will harm and at what age is like playing Russian roulette with a gun.

Motivation, Education and Support for Cold Turkey Nicotine Cessation



WhyQuit.Com

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Motivation

Why Quit Smoking?

We Died Young

- [Bryan Lee Curtis - age 34](#)
- [Noni Glykos - age 33](#)
- [Quentin Delgado - age 23](#)
- [Famous victims - under 60](#)
- [Our family member died young](#)
- [Your story](#)

Why We Died Young

- [Nicotine Addiction 101](#)
- ["Nicodemon's" Lies?](#)
- [Why I use tobacco](#)
- [Nicotine - the sine qua non of smoking](#)
- [Carcinogens, chemicals and additives](#)
- [Smoking, smoking and more smoking](#)
- [World cigarette pack warning pictures](#)

Our Living Nightmare

- [Deborah's stage IV battle - age 38](#)
- [Kim's missing lung - age 44](#)
- [Brandon's 2 missing legs - age 23](#)

How Tobacco Destroys the Body

- [Brain damage](#)
- [Circulatory disease](#)
- [Smoking's Impact on the Lungs](#)
- [Pregnancy and breastfeeding](#)
- [A Heart-Loving-Heart](#)
- [32-year-old smoker's arteries](#)
- [The secondhand smoke battle](#)

More Truth About Tobacco

- [Movies and clips](#)
- [The smoker's self mutilation](#)
- [Why are we dying so young?](#)
- [Is the risk of death exaggerated?](#)
- [If You Could Spend a Day with Me](#)
- [The smoker's body](#)
- [Cigarette butts and mother earth](#)

Why Quit Smokeless Tobacco?

- [Sean Marsee message - age 19](#)
- [Gruen's missing jaw - age 17](#)

Alternatives

- [Turkey's Triumphs](#)
- [The Smoker's Memorial](#)

Education

Joel's Library

Stop Smoking Library Categories

- [Why do people smoke?](#)
- [The real cost](#)
- [How to quit smoking](#)
- [Relapse prevention](#)
- [What about weight gain?](#)

Highlight Stop Smoking Articles & Videos

- [My cigarette, my friend](#)
- [Why do smokers smoke? \(video\)](#)
- [Are you a nicotine junky?](#)
- [The smoker's vow](#)
- [Quit smoking tip sheet](#)
- [Quitting by gradual withdrawal](#)
- [Is cold turkey the only way to quit?](#)
- [Minimizing common side effects](#)

Joel's free quit smoking materials

- [Who is Joel?](#)
- [Never Take Another Puff - \(Joel Spitzer's free PDF e-book\)](#)
- [Joel's video stop smoking lessons](#)
- [Daily stop smoking video lesson guide](#)
- [Joel's Jukebox \(audio lessons\)](#)
- [Ask Joel - Joel's question & answer site](#)
- [Language translations of Joel's work](#)

More Education On Quitting

- [Freedom from Nicotine - The Journey Home - \(John Polito's free PDF e-book\)](#)
- [Nicotine Cessation Tips - 8 pg pdf file](#)
- [WhyQuit's free quit smoking books](#)
- [How long does withdrawal last?](#)
- [NRT - do quitting aids work? Chantix](#)
- [Stop smoking benefits timetable](#)
- [Your guide to "Glorify Week"](#)
- [Take WhyQuit's quitting quiz](#)
- [Quit for Just One Hour at a Time](#)
- [Weight gain](#)
- [Crave and stress management](#)

Relapse Prevention

- [Tearing Down the Wall](#)
- [Caring for Your Quit](#)
- [Free relapse insurance](#)

Youth Smoking Prevention

- [Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow](#)

Support

Freedom - Our Yuku Support Group

A support classroom to stop smoking, quit oral tobacco and break free from NRT

Freedom is an open nicotine dependency recovery forum where 100% of the group's posts and materials are available to all, regardless of membership. A single-minded program, those applying for posting privileges must have quit all forms of nicotine delivery cold turkey within the past 30 days, without use of any products, pills, e-cigarettes or procedures, and remained 100% nicotine-free for at least 72 hours. A nicotine-free forum, any nicotine relapse - even one puff, dip or chew - permanently revokes posting privileges.

Is Freedom Right for You?

- [Mission Statement](#)
- [Relapse Policy](#)
- [Courtesies & Rules](#)
- [How to Join](#)

Critical Recovery Insights

- [The Law of Addiction](#)
- [The "one puff" files](#)
- [Tell a newbie how many seconds a day you still want a cigarette](#)
- [Index of highlight posts](#)

Key Freedom Destinations

- [Freedom's Home Page](#)
- [The first 72 hours](#)
- [Understanding nicotine dependency](#)
- [Navigating the 4 layers of recovery](#)
- [Relapse prevention](#)
- [Member messages & journals](#)
- [Free quit smoking meters](#)

Turkeyville - Facebook Support Group

A cold turkey quit smoking Facebook support group where the focus is on helping new quitters get a solid start

- [Group Rules & Mission](#)
- [Color Milestones](#)

Other support groups & online forums

- [Other stop smoking support groups](#)
- [Lung cancer & COPD support groups](#)

Physician, dental & wellness resources

- [WhyQuit's patient resources](#)

The center education column is home to all of Joel's materials and my articles. Here you'll find every lesson shared in Joel's book, more than 100 short articles on nearly every recovery topic imaginable.

You'll also find links to his free electronic e-book "Never Take Another Puff" and to Joel's nearly 200 video counseling lessons (many formatted as audio files for listening as well).

The right column provides support links and transports visitors to "[Freedom](#)," the Internet's most serious and focused peer support group, and to [Turkeyville](#), WhyQuit's new Facebook group. Both groups are exclusively for cold turkey quitters.

At both, education always comes first. It must. We discovered very early that a forum's ability to support and sustain recovery in a purely pep-rally type environment is dismal at best.

While the initial excitement of interacting with other ex-users is often tremendous, it eventually begins to wane. As it does, the forum's value and effectiveness in supporting success diminishes. If no education to fall back upon, group relapse rates become horrible.

Visitors to WhyQuit's support groups don't need to join in order to read each the forum's materials. In fact, most don't. But we still treat them like part of the family.

[Freedom](#) and [Turkeyville](#) function as virtual classrooms with enormous windows. Maintaining positive control over admissions ensures a classroom type learning experience, prevents chaos, and makes sure that each forum's seasoned volunteer educators are not overwhelmed.

Every message posted at [Freedom](#) and [Turkeyville](#) must relate to recovery. General socialization is not permitted, including celebration of birthdays,



anniversaries or holidays.

Clearly, neither forum is for those seeking to socialize or make new friends. With millions of tobacco related deaths annually, the groups take their missions seriously. Their goal is simple: to aid visitors and members in remaining nicotine-free today.

As for [Freedom](#) being 100 percent nicotine-free, there must be at least one place on planet earth where nicotine has no voice. Those applying for membership must certify that they stopped cold turkey without use of any product or procedure and that they've remained 100% nicotine-free for 72 hours.



Although it may sound harsh, applicants must agree to abide by Freedom's [relapse policy](#). That policy states that should any member relapse that they will permanently lose message board posting privileges. It encourages members to take recovery seriously.

One final point deserves mention. The rules for both groups prohibit mention of any commercially sold book, product, diet or procedure. The forum was built around the concept that every recovery lesson is made freely available to all without cost or obligation.

As such, the forum will not permit any suggestion that any reader need spend any money or make any purchase in order to succeed, including purchasing the [paperback](#) or [Kindle](#) version of FFN-TJH. If sharing links to FFN-TJH at any online site please share the link to WhyQuit's [free version](#).

Unlike [Freedom](#), there's no 72-hour nicotine-free waiting period at [Turkeyville](#) before you can join, and no relapse policy. The group's primary focus is in helping those just starting out in navigating early recovery.

Recovery meters - WhyQuit and Freedom offer visitors links to [free stop smoking meters](#). These are free small computer programs or apps that are either downloaded to and installed on your computer, laptop or mobile device, and designed for use while online.

Once we type in our tobacco use history (how often we smoked, the purchase price and the day we stopped), most will calculate the number of days, months and years we've remained free, the amount of money we've saved, and if a smoker, the total number of cigarettes not smoked and the amount of life expectancy so far reclaimed.

Most meters allow you to copy their calculations to your computer's clipboard for transporting and pasting into e-mails, documents created with your word processing program or for sharing on Internet message boards.

Like a car's odometer, they're a fun way of tracking, marking and measuring our journey home. Links to [free meters](#) can be found at both WhyQuit and Freedom.

Support limits - The above recovery support suggestions will hopefully stir your thinking. The only limit to identifying additional ways of keeping our recovery dreams fueled and vibrant is the limits of our imagination.

Our objective is simple. It's to stay sufficiently motivated long enough to allow the time needed to successfully navigate recovery's remaining challenges, if any.

But whether today is good or bad, whether we feel motivated or not, our freedom and healing will continue so long as we stick to one guiding principle ... no nicotine today!

Destroy All Remaining Nicotine

As nicotine addicts, many of us engaged in mind games while pretending to arrest our addiction. One such game was to keep nicotine on hand after stopping, for the purported purpose of proving that we were in full control, stronger than our addiction ... or just in case we need it.

This practice makes as much sense as someone on suicide watch carrying a

loaded gun, while fighting the urge to use it. Some carry their nicotine delivery devices with them while others knowingly keep a stash within quick and easy reach.



We'll never be stronger than nicotine but then we don't need to be. Our weapon is our intelligence. Feeling a need to tempt and toy with impulsiveness in order to prove conscious strength reflects abandonment of intelligence.

Why treat quick access to nicotine as though a life jacket? It's a jacket all right but not one that saves, one that enslaves.

The smart move is to destroy all remaining nicotine. Whether in the pocket of a coat hanging in a closet, in your other purse, hidden in the yard, on the balcony, in the garage, in a vehicle, under a seat, or at work, destroy it. And don't forget to empty the ashtrays too.

It's time to get serious. Check for cigarettes that may have fallen under furniture, beneath a cushion or under the car seat.

And throw out all old nicotine replacement products and e-cigarettes, smokeless tobacco and cigars too. Keeping nicotine handy is contrary to learning to live life without it.



Getting rid of all nicotine buys you precious seconds during challenge. With cue triggered crave episodes peaking within three minutes, a few more seconds of delay may be all that's needed to sense anxieties peak and begin to diminish.

"Don't ever forget how cigarettes once controlled your behaviors and beliefs," reminds Joel. "When you stopped smoking you admitted cigarettes controlled you. You were literally afraid that one puff could put you back. That was not an irrational fear. One puff today will lead to the

same tragic results as it would have the day you quit."

"Cigarettes were stronger than you before, and, if given the chance, will be stronger than you again, warns Joel. "If you want to show you are now in control, do it by admitting you can function without having cigarettes as a worthless and dangerous crutch."²⁰

You'll do just fine, even if your employment requires you to be near or handle nicotine products, or if you live with someone who

insists upon leaving their cigarettes, e-cigs, cigars, dip, chew or NRT lying around. It simply means that you'll extinguish use cues associated with those situations more quickly than most.

But mind games involving conscious temptation are fully within our ability to control. Be smart. Crush, throw-out or flush all remaining nicotine. It's an excellent means of proclaiming that the time for games is over, that you're serious about coming home!

Breathe deep, hug hard, live long,



Photo by National Cancer Institute

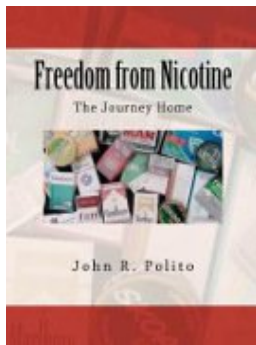
20 Spitzer, J, "I'm going to have to carry cigarettes with me at all times for me to quit smoking," 1988, Joel's Library, www.WhyQuit.com.

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Chapter 6: Common Hazards/Pitfalls	(P)	Appendix: Recovery Journal/Diary	(P)

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