



Embracing Crave Episodes

[John R. Polito](#) - [March 11, 2001](#)

Our body's fight or flight response has preprogrammed us to either stand and fight or turn and run when faced with challenge. If a brand new quitter (a newbie) then chances are that there is another nicotine feeding cue waiting around the corner that will soon spark a crave: a short yet possibly powerful anxiety attack.

As nicotine addicts, we conditioned our subconscious as to when to expect replenishment of our bloodstream's constantly falling nicotine level. The cue that triggers the crave could be a time, place, person, activity, event or emotion during which you normally smoked, vaped, dipped or chewed.

The good news is that the vast majority of subconscious cue triggers are extinguished and silenced by a single encounter during which the conscious mind intentionally says "no."

The good news is that the triggered crave anxiety episode will normally peak within three minutes (but keep a clock handy as cessation time distortion is real and can make minutes feel like hours). The good news is that there is a reward awaiting you at the end of each crave episode, the return of another aspect of life.

The good news is that the anxiety power of our nicotine use crave generator fizzles a bit with each passing day. With each encountered crave, there is one less triggering cue to extinguish. The good news is that entire days where you never once encounter an un-extinguished cue are fast approaching. The bad news is that if you're a newbie, then there is probably another crave episode just around the corner.

But is healing and reclaiming life bad?

So what approach are you using? Do you duck or run when you sense one coming or turn and fight? Is your game plan working to your satisfaction? Our recovery objective is simple - NO NICOTINE HERE AND NOW - but our natural instincts on how best to achieve our objective may not be the easiest path to travel.

Can we hide from our craves or will they find us anyway? Can we run away from them or will they catch us? It's the same with going toe to toe in battle, isn't it? Can we beat-up our craves and make them surrender or cry "uncle"? Can we scare them away? I think not.



Meeting, greeting and silencing all of our mind's subconscious crave triggers is a very necessary part of recovery.

Encountering and extinguishing each is good not bad. Why fear taking back life? Why fight being rewarded with a gift or prize, the return of another aspect of life? It's true healing in every sense.

The natural insecticide nicotine promotes cancer by both angiogenesis (growing new blood vessels that nourish existing tumors) and by inhibiting apoptosis (preventing the natural death of diseased cells). It induces DNA damage, hardens arteries and foster diabetes.

But what about a crave? Can a crave that peaks within a couple of minutes disease or kill you? Will it cut you, make you bleed or send you to the emergency room? Can it physically harm you? If not, then why fear it?

How much of the anxiety associated with your recovery will be self induced? Why agonize over the anticipated arrival of your next crave?

When it finally does arrive, will a nicotine starved mind immediately begin breeding additional anxieties? Will it pour gasoline atop these glorious moments of cue extinguishment and healing? Will panic activate your mind's fight or flight pathways, transforming the ground upon which you stand into a raging emotional inferno?



The anxiety associated with a craving for nicotine is as real as the nose on our face. But how much of that anxiety is self induced? Why not find out?

Be brave during the next episode. Instead of feeling a tremendously inflated experience driven by fear, fueled by anticipation and possibly tense due to a history of prior relapses, just once, resist the urge to fight or run. Don't be defensive. Don't fight back. Don't try to run or hide.

Instead, stand back and take slow deep deliberate breaths as you slowly and totally drop your guard. Then, reach out inside your mind and "touch" your crave. It won't injure you.

It's okay to be afraid but try to be brave just this once. In your mind, wrap your arms around the crave's anxiety energy.

For just one moment, clear your mind of as much chatter as possible so that you can feel and sense the true anxiety of your healing.

Feel your breathing rise and fall as you take slow, deep and deliberate breaths into the bottom of healing and happy lungs. Just this once, elevate yourself above any crave related chatter, worries, fears, emotions or thoughts. Let them come and go without interference or struggle. Instead, watch, sense and appreciate healing's anxiety turmoil.

A loving observer, there's nothing that needs solving. Strive to transcend and accept what's happening, not control it. It's good



not bad.

Now, try not to be afraid. Within your mind, see yourself reaching out to your crave episode's raw anxiety energy. Touch it, feel it, sense it and hug it. Doing so won't make it any more intense than it otherwise would have been. It is what it is.

You are witnessing the most frightening part of most amazing healing your mind and life likely ever know. Yes, there is anxiety present. But for the very first time, it isn't being fed and fueled by you. Now, continue to watch as you sense the crave's intensity peak and then slowing begin to decline.

Allow yourself a smile, to savor and feel pride in your healing. Strive to embrace and welcome each and every recovery opportunity. Enjoy coming home as you reclaim and take back life.

For there is a calm and quiet mind up ahead, one that will go days, then weeks and then months or even years without once having an urge or crave to introduce nicotine into your bloodstream. But don't take my word for it. Read more than 800 [accounts](#) of those you came before you.

For additional crave coping tips read [Chapter 11](#) of [Freedom from Nicotine - The Journey Home](#). Baby steps, just here and now, these next few minutes, yes you can!

Breathe deep, hug hard, live long,

John

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Additional Crave and Anxiety Management Tips

- [Subconscious Recovery, Chapter 11 of Freedom from Nicotine - The Journey Home](#) *by John R. Polito*
- [Are Crave Episodes Really Less Than 3 Minutes? Time distortion during nicotine cessation](#) *by John R. Polito - Freedom Thread*
- [Understanding the Emotional Loss](#) *by Joel Spitzer*
- [New reactions to anger as an ex-smoker](#) *by Joel Spitzer - Freedom Thread*
- [Using Attitude to Reduce Anxiety](#) *by John R. Polito*
- [The Urge Hits](#) *by Joel Spitzer - Freedom Thread*
- [Fixating](#) *by Joel Spitzer - Freedom Thread*
- [Embracing Crave Episodes](#) *by John R. Polito - Freedom Thread*
- [100 Coping Tips](#) *Freedom from Tobacco Members*
- [Low Blood Sugar Anxieties Following Nicotine Cessation](#) *by Joel Spitzer*
- [Caffeine Overdose Anxieties Due to Tolerance Changes After Nicotine Cessation Anxieties](#) *by Joel and John - Freedom Thread*
- [52 Proven Stress Reducers](#) *by the National Headach Foundation*

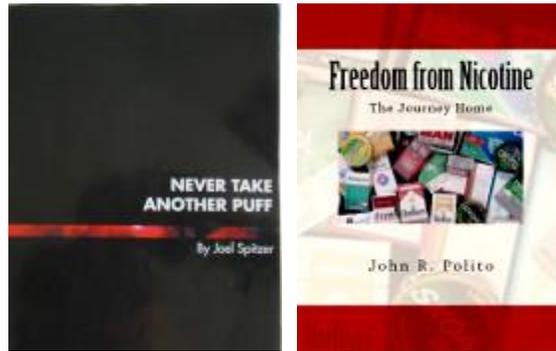
- [Basic Panic Attack Coping Tips](#) *by TRUST - Online Information*
- [The Smoking Dream's Anxieties](#) *by Joel Spitzer - Freedom Thread*
- [Relaxation Exercises](#) *by David G. Danskin; Kansas State University*
- [A Simple Breathing Exercise](#) *Women's Heart Foundation*
- [Riding Robust Dreams to Freedom](#) *by John R. Polito*
- ["You said it would get better. It's just as bad as the day I quit smoking!"](#) *by Joel Spitzer - Freedom Thread*
- [Thoughts that seem worse than the first days urges](#) *by Joel Spitzer - Freedom Thread*
- [Thoughts - Tearing Down the Wall](#) *by John R. Polito*
- [The Monster Under the Bed](#) *by OBob - Freedom Thread*
- [Breaking Links to Our Crave Generator](#) *by John R. Polito - Freedom Thread*
- [Nicotine Cessation - The Recovery Process](#) *by John R. Polito*

How to Quit Smoking

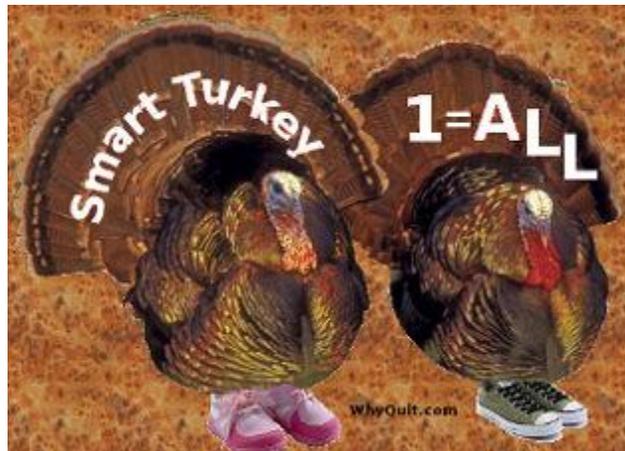


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Our Free Quitting E-books



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Learn More About Smart Turkey Quitting

- WhyQuit.com - WhyQuit is the Internet's oldest forum devoted to the art, science and psychology of cold turkey quitting, the stop smoking method used by the vast



majority of all successful long-term ex-smokers. Left to right, WhyQuit is organized under three headings: (1) Motivation, (2) Education and (3) Support.

- **"Never Take Another Puff"** - Imagine a free 149 page stop smoking ebook that's registered more than 4 million downloads and was written by a man who has devoted 40 years, full-time to helping smokers quit. Never Take Another Puff (NTAP) was authored by Joel Spitzer, the Internet's leading authority on how to stop smoking cold turkey. It is an insightful collection of almost 100 articles on every cessation topic imaginable.
- **"Freedom from Nicotine - The Journey Home"** - Written by John R. Polito, a former 30-year heavy smoker and WhyQuit's 1999 founder, Freedom from Nicotine (FFN) is a free nicotine dependency recovery book that documents the science underlying nicotine dependency and successful cessation. Whether hooked on cigarettes, e-cigarettes (e-cigs), bidis, kreteks, a pipe, hookah or cigars, on dip, chew, snuff or snus, or on the nicotine gum, lozenge, spray, inhaler or patch, FFN provides a comprehensive yet easy to follow road-map to freedom from nicotine.
- **Turkeyville** - Visit Turkeyville, Facebook's most popular quit smoking support group. The group's primary focus is the first few days and helping new quitters get started. Yes you can!
- **Joel's Library** - Joel's Library is home to Joel Spitzer's "Daily Quitting Lesson Guide." The Guide walks new quitters through the first two weeks of smoking cessation, recommending daily videos to watch and articles to read. Joel's Library is also home to more than 100 original short stop smoking articles, to his free ebook Never Take Another Puff, and to his collection of more than 200 video stop smoking lessons.



- [Nicotine Addiction 101](#) - WhyQuit's guide to understanding nicotine dependency.
- [Freedom](#) - Looking for a deadly serious and highly focused education oriented support group? Home to Joel Spitzer, Freedom is the Internet's only 100% nicotine-free peer messageboard support forum. Explore Freedom's hundreds of thousands of archived member posts on how to quit smoking.
- [Nicotine Cessation Topic Index](#) - An alphabetical subject matter index to hundreds of nicotine cessation support group discussions, article and videos.
- [40 Quitting Tips](#) - Key cold turkey nicotine cessation tips on how to stop smoking, vaping, chewing or sucking nicotine into your body and bloodstream.



Knowledge is a Quitting Method



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