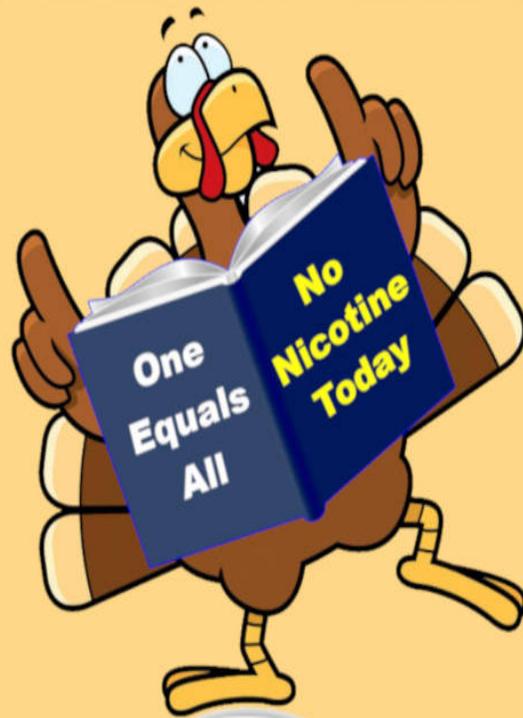


SMART



URKEY

The nicotine dependency recovery guide

John R. Polito

SMART TURKEY

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Medical Advice Disclaimer

Smart Turkey was written to support, not replace, the relationship that exists between a reader and his/her physician. Do not rely on any information in this book to replace individual consultations with your doctor or other health care provider.

Dedication

Smart Turkey wouldn't exist if not for the 49-year career insights of [Joel Spitzer](#), my 21-year teacher and mentor.



As Joel would tell you, “The way you get over withdrawal, the way you end being dependent on actively delivering nicotine is by stopping the delivery of nicotine. And once you do that, all you need to do to stay off of nicotine for the duration of your life is to stick to your original personal commitment to Never Take Another Puff.”

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Relapse
Only one rule

Why read Smart Turkey?

Why? Because each year more nicotine addicts arrest their chemical dependence by going cold turkey than by all other methods combined.

None of us were born knowing how to count, read, write or drive a car. Why should nicotine dependency [recovery](#) be any different?

Smart Turkey is about quickly learning nicotine cessation recovery insights.

The goal of “Big Nic” (the cigarette, e-cig, tobacco and NRT industries) is to keep you buying and using their nicotine until the day you die.

Smart Turkey’s goal is to assist you in rapidly becoming smarter and wiser than nicotine’s grip upon your mind.

Smart Turkey is about an hour’s read. Can you spare an hour to reclaim your brain, priorities, thinking and life?

I recommend that you NOT click on any link the first time you read this book so that you are not distracted. If you have concerns during your journey home, use the links as a gateway to developing a deeper understanding.

Knowledge is power. Why fight in darkness? Turn on the lights.

Why so hard?

Why does ending use “seem” so hard? Like alcoholism or being addicted to [heroin](#) or meth, nicotine addiction is [REAL](#) drug addiction.



Repeated use took our brain’s survival instincts hostage. Our dopamine pathways—our mind’s priorities teacher—started seeing nicotine [as if food](#) and ending its use as starvation.

Urges and cravings for nicotine, urges and cravings for food, who in their right mind wants to starve? It’s why, historically, half of adult smokers have smoked themselves to death.

The good news is that while hooked and using, we’re not in our right mind. Nicotine addiction is about [living a lie](#).

The truth is, without food, we die. Without nicotine, we detox, awaken, recover and thrive.

What was it like being you?

Try hard to recall the [calm, quiet and beautiful mind](#) that was home prior to your first ever use of nicotine. Can you remember going weeks, months and years without once feeling an urge, desire, wanting or need to use?

The reason you can't is because your brain dopamine pathways have been hijacked. A high-definition use memory was created each time we satisfied an urge. Each memory of use shouts the way to make wanting end, by bringing a new supply of nicotine into your bloodstream.

Most importantly, each use memory has up to 200% tighter brain cell connections (synaptic plasticity) than normal memories. It's why ending use quickly became almost as unthinkable as giving up food.

But, addiction is much more than simply being punished for waiting too long before using, and being vividly reminded by super memories how to make punishment end.

Additional urges were felt upon encountering the specific times, places, activities, people or emotions that we had trained ([conditioned](#)) our subconscious to expect a new supply of nicotine ([use triggers](#)).

And the need to use during those situations forced us to invent additional use explanations ([junkie thinking](#)).

Plus, a highly dependent relationship was created and [emotional use bonds](#) are real.

So, what would it be like for every second of every day to be [totally yours again](#)?

“The Law” applies to me

There are two critical steps toward enabling Smart Turkey to begin taking root.

Our odds of permanent success are increased when we [accept who we are](#) and acknowledge that recovery's [only rule](#) applies to us.

It's easy to see alcoholism as a true [mental illness](#) that can be fully arrested yet never cured. What's difficult is for us to look in the mirror and see REAL drug addicts looking back.

Truth is, nicotine dependency is a brain wanting disorder that's as real and permanent as alcoholism.



I'm a [REAL](#) drug addict

Try this. Repeat after me:

“My name is _____ and I'm a [REAL](#) drug addict in every sense. While I can fully and comfortably arrest my dependency, I'll remain on probation for life, always just one hit of nicotine away from relapse.”

But, do you believe it? If so, congratulations! You have a rock solid foundation for building a nicotine-free life.

Accepting who we are simplifies recovery's rules. In fact, there's only one.

The Law of Addiction

“Administration of a drug to an addict will cause re-establishment of chemical dependence upon the addictive substance.”

Sometimes, you’ll read that it takes a certain number of attempts before the average user succeeds in breaking free.

But, why? What lesson is eventually learned? And why can’t that lesson be learned before their first attempt ever? It can.

It’s called the [Law of Addiction](#). It’s that use causes relapse, that one equals all, that one nicotine fix would be too many, while thousands won’t be enough.

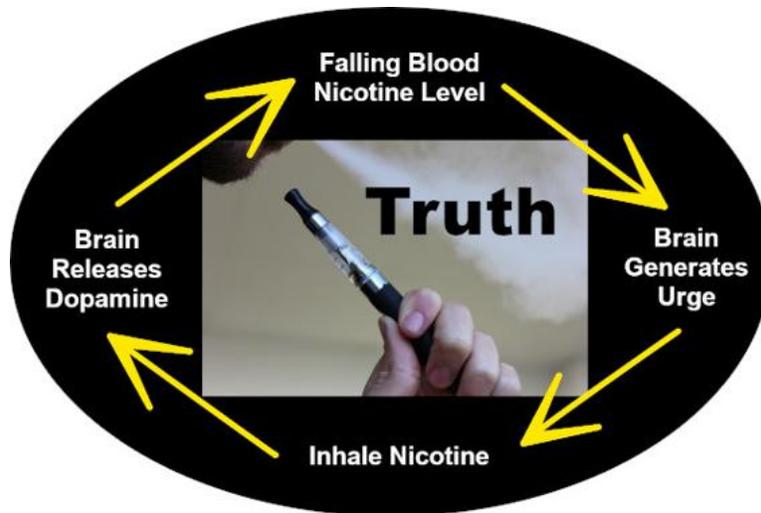
While most who attempt cheating when quitting walk away feeling like they’ve gotten away with it, we can’t cheat our compromised brain’s design.

Brain scan [studies](#) teach us that just one puff and up to 50% of dopamine pathway receptors become occupied by nicotine. It won’t be long before the cheater finds their brain wanting, plotting to obtain, or even begging for more.

See cheating as failure

Why play games? Treating a true addiction as though some nasty little habit that we can someday learn how to modify, manipulate or control is a recipe for relapse.

There is no such thing as just once. Recovery is all or nothing. It’s one of the few things in life where being 99% successful results in 100% defeat.



The tease of ["just one" or "just once"](#) is a lie. Why torment yourself? You're smarter than that.

On lifetime probation, once free, our brain will always remain grooved and wired for [relapse](#). Just one new super-use memory waking up all the others and the addict is back.

The only remaining question is, on which side of dependency's bars will we spend the balance of life?

Cold Turkey

Webster's defines "cold turkey" as "abrupt complete cessation of the use of an addictive drug".

Cold turkey is how the vast majority of nicotine addicts have arrested their dependency for at least 5,000 consecutive years.

It's fast, safe, productive, effective and free.

Quoting from page 15 of the Surgeon General's 700-page 2020 ["Smoking Cessation" report](#), "[M]ost smokers who quit successfully do so without medications or any type of formal assistance" and "cold-turkey quitters do as well or better than those who use over-the-counter NRTs."

Trust your instincts.

When to start?

Have you ever noticed how taking that first meaningful step is the hardest? So has Philip Morris, the maker of Marlboro, America's biggest selling brand.

Philip Morris' website tells smokers that the #1 key to success is to delay quitting, to "plan and prepare," to "choose a specific quit date."

The problem is that we now have [two studies](#), one from the U.S. (Ferguson 2009) and the other from the UK (West 2006), with nearly identical findings to the contrary: That planned attempts are 260% more likely to fail. But, why?

Does waiting and delay show a lack of [commitment](#) or does it simply allow time for anticipation and worry to weaken resolve? We're not sure. Maybe both.

Begin coming home the second you feel moved to do so.

Simply skip that next nicotine feeding and then celebrate. You did it! Baby steps. Now, get ready to do it again.

Success is about building upon a [commitment](#) to the next few minutes, to remaining free during that [next challenge](#), if any.

It's about getting serious and ending quitting games, about taking back our mouth, brain, priorities, time, thinking, coins, self-esteem, smile and life.

Leave e-cigs, NRT and cigars alone

Nicotine replacement products were accurately named. Like e-cigs, they're replacements.

During recovery, it's highly likely that commercials for these products will find and tease you. It's not a coincidence.

While replacement nicotine may subdue a craving, it feeds the addiction. It makes sure that another will follow.

A [2013 Gallup Poll](#) asked successful U.S. ex-smokers how they quit. By then, Nicorette nicotine gum had been on the market and heavily advertised for 29 years.

Question: What percentage of ex-smokers credited nicotine gum for their success?

Answer: Only 1 in 100, just 1 percent.

Nicotine weaning [isn't nearly as easy](#) as those pushing it want us to believe.

As for e-cig users, nearly two-thirds wish they could quit, while about half find themselves smoking cigarettes too (what's referred to as "dual use").

Both the NRT and e-cigarette industries have perverted the word "quitting." They don't mention nicotine dependency recovery and, for good reason, they never will.

Your gift to you

We [cannot quit for others](#). It must be our gift to us. Quitting for a child, spouse, parent, friend, doctor or religious leader creates a natural sense of self-deprivation that ultimately ends in relapse.

If quitting for another, how will an addict's junkie-mind respond the first time that person disappoints us? They're human. It happens.

While you may not yet love or even like yourself, if you want to begin feeling better about who you are, see recovery as your gift to you.

Allow friends and loved ones to inherit the benefits of possibly the most loving decision of your entire life.

Your freedom and health belong to you. No one should stand between you and your health.

Destroy all nicotine

Keeping any kind of nicotine handy when quitting makes as much sense as someone on suicide-watch carrying a loaded gun, just to prove they can.

Why pretend that you're stronger than nicotine when it has an I.Q. of zero? It cannot think, plan, plot or conspire. Your greatest weapon has always been your intelligence but only if put to work.

Why make failure convenient?

Triggered cravings almost always peak within the amount of time we needed to ingest a new supply of nicotine. You may be seconds away from a crave beginning to subside.

Seconds count. Allow yourself extra time to navigate challenges by building in delay. Gift yourself seconds.

Search, find, and [flush or destroy](#) all nicotine, cigarettes, cigars, replacement nicotine and vaping paraphernalia beyond your ability to salvage them.

Don't tease yourself with thoughts about or attempts to bring your addiction back to life.

Prepare for the possibility of going the distance and seeing what it's like to awaken to new expectations of nicotine-free days.

Allow this time to be for real. Let this be for keeps.

Fear

If only there was a way to let you feel what it's like after 90 days of freedom from nicotine—to experience your first day without a single

thought about wanting to use. Your [fears](#) would melt into excitement. After being trapped for years between [need and use](#), it's normal to have serious doubts when you start. And normal to fear [success](#) even more than failure.

Our addiction conditioned us to believe that permanently ending use would [suck the joy from life](#), that we'd lose [our edge](#), possibly [our friends](#), and that we'd [no longer be productive](#).

Thank goodness it's hogwash.

A [2009 study](#) found that successful ex-smokers were 21 times more likely to report feeling happier than less happy. That's 2,100 percent odds of feeling better.

Still, if on the captive side of dependency's bars, thoughts that our next nicotine fix will be our last ever can be terrifying. So, why terrify yourself?

Forget about forever. Simply commit to the next few minutes, the next hour, that next challenge, if any.

Before you know it, the little victories will build into an entire day. Then, simply take recovery one day and challenge at a time.

If after 2-3 weeks you're not beginning to appreciate what you've accomplished, it'll be you in control—not your addiction.

Attitude

A wise man once said, if you have a lousy [attitude](#) going in, there's a really good chance that during withdrawal you're going to have a super lousy time.

What if you viewed recovery as doing yourself a favor, recovering the calm and quiet mind that returns once addiction's chatter ends?

What if you were to embrace your healing instead of fearing or fighting it?

You're not depriving yourself but ridding your body of nature's most potent [insecticide](#). Withdrawing from poison is good, not bad. What truer sign of healing could there be than actually feeling it?

Crave episodes triggered by exposure to use cues normally peak within 3 minutes. Each is an opportunity to extinguish another subconscious use trigger and receive a prize, the return of a time, place, activity, person or emotion, during which you conditioned your mind to expect more nicotine.

A crave can't cut, bruise, hurt or make you bleed. Why fear and fuel it? Although hard to appreciate while happening, it's the most mindful moments of healing your life may ever know.

Take pride in each hour of freedom and each trigger silenced. Celebrate the full and complete victory each reflects. You did it again, you're getting the hang of this. At long last, "Yes, I can!"

Patience

Years of being able to satisfy urges for more nicotine within seconds conditioned us to be extremely impatient, at least when it comes to our addiction.

Reflect on the importance of [patience](#) to successful recovery. Baby steps, just here and now. This hour, that [next challenge](#), this day and then celebrate.

You'll never be asked to endure more than the next few minutes. They're all that matter and entirely do-able.

Commitment

[Commitment](#) is to decide, to pledge, and then do.

It's about creating a loyal memory muscle that continues working when the justifications for ending use are no longer at the center of our mind.

Remain loyal to your original day #1 commitment. Fully commit to staying free today.

Don't be afraid to tell people around you that you're free. Otherwise, any wild emotional swings during early withdrawal could leave them thinking that you're using drugs, instead of coming off of one.

Their understanding and support could be beneficial. Why fear or fight your healing? Embrace it.

Get as comfortable as possible being temporarily uncomfortable.

We promise, being home again and going entire days without once wanting to use is worth thousands of times more than the price of admission.

Victory

As mentioned, forget about quitting "forever." Like attempting the seemingly impossible task of sitting down to eat an entire cow, it's the biggest psychological bite imaginable.

Why breed needless anxiety by concerning yourself about next year, next month, next week or even tomorrow?

Instead, like eating one hamburger or nice juicy steak a day, why not adopt an entirely do-able victory yardstick, such as staying free here and now, just [one day at a time](#).

If we insist on seeing success only in terms of quitting forever, then on which day do we celebrate? Who is coming to that party?

Why not have lots of parties!

Focus on not allowing any nicotine to enter your body from the moment you wake until you fall asleep.

Be proud that you've stopped using. It's huge.

Win the moment. Just here and now, these next few minutes, yes you will!

Recovery layers

- 1. Correcting junkie thinking**
- 2. Ending my physical need**
- 3a. Navigating use conditioning**
- 3b. Crave coping techniques**
- 4. Breaking emotional ties**
- 5. Allowing use memories to fade**
- 6. Relapse prevention**

The balance of Smart Turkey is broken down into the six layers above.

Correcting junkie thinking is listed first because you can do it while still using, and doing so may make that first step easier.

Notice how the sections reflect all levels of our being—your physical, subconscious, conscious and emotional self.

Our objective is simple: To become far smarter and wiser than nicotine's grip on us.

1. Correcting junkie thinking

What if you truly believed that there was absolutely nothing good about spending the rest of your life as nicotine's slave?

Nothing!

With no sense of loss, imagine being unafraid to let go.

[Rationalizations](#) are defense mechanisms that allow us to make threatening conduct, such as nicotine use, non-threatening. You convince yourself that it's "not that serious."

Let's look at 7 common use rationalizations that try to explain or justify that next fix.

"It's how I deal with stress"

A [2013 study](#) found that roughly one million U.S. ex-smokers relapsed to smoking following the World Trade Center terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001.

But why? Unlike "Smart Turkeys," they continued to believe in the false message old use memories told them—that smoking reduces stress.

It's normal to believe that nicotine is a stress reliever, that it [calms us during crisis](#). How could we not? We'd felt it happen hundreds or even thousands of times previously. Or, did we?

According to a once-secret 1983 research memo by Brown & Williamson Tobacco Company, "People smoke to maintain nicotine levels" and "stress robs the body of nicotine." But, how?

Stress accelerates withdrawal's onset. It quickly turns urine more acidic. In users, this causes their kidneys to accelerate removal of the alkaloid nicotine from their bloodstream, throwing them into early withdrawal.

The false calming effect felt after inhaling nicotine during stress is simply nicotine satisfying early withdrawal.

The underlying stressful situation remains unchanged. If the tire was flat, it's still flat. If the bills were unpaid, they're still unpaid.

As ex-users, imagine greater calm during crisis as we're no longer adding withdrawal to it.

“I like it” or “I love it”

Think hard. What do you like, love or enjoy about nicotine?

Is it that you like or enjoy nicotine or that you don't like what happens when you go too long without it?

We tend to draw conclusions about what we must like by watching what we find ourselves doing.

Which statement is true? “I inhale lots and lots of nicotine, many times daily, so I must really love it” or “I inhale lots and lots of nicotine because I'm addicted to it”?

Ignorance is bliss.

Is it love when you get that "I need a nicotine fix...AND NOW" feeling?

Isn't saying “I love vaping” like saying “I love when I stop pounding my fingers with a hammer”?

If we can no longer remember what it felt like to reside inside our mind before nicotine took control, if we can't recall the calm and quiet mind we once called home, then what basis exists for saying that we love using nicotine more than we miss our pre-nicotine self?

How can we claim to love something when we have no true basis for comparison?

Just two weeks free and then reflect on what you [enjoy, like or love](#).

“Use relieves boredom”

It's easy to relate nicotine use to [boredom](#). However, as actively feeding addicts, we needed to replenish constantly falling nicotine reserves whether bored to death, having the time of our lives, and at all points in-between.

Still, nicotine use is more noticeable and thus more memorable when bored. If doing nothing, it's hard not to notice when feeding time

arrives. Yet, if busy, thinking, or excited, as if on auto pilot, we often didn't notice refueling.

Have you ever noticed the minor anxieties that occur when bored? It's why we talk about "relieving" boredom.

Boredom motivates the mind to take action. It causes us to seek accomplishment and the dopamine "aaah" that comes with completing a task, or anticipating its completion.

What's sad is a mind that views successful nicotine replenishment as an important accomplishment.

Maybe that's why the link between not using nicotine and boredom can seem so strong. The anxiety that comes with boredom tries to motivate us to get into action, to earn the next burst of dopamine. But, with boredom we'd steal it, over and over and over again by consuming nicotine instead.

Still, recovery presents the opportunity to experience boredom and to blame it on recovery. You believe you are bored because you are no longer consuming nicotine. Wrong!

If we used nicotine 12 times a day, and each replenishment took 5 minutes of our time, we now have an extra hour each day to either fill with some new activity or to sense the anxiety that comes with boredom.

But, let's not kid ourselves. We didn't vape, smoke, dip, or chew because we were bored. Never-users get horribly bored too but the thought of nicotine replenishment never enters their mind.

Nicotine depletion anxieties attempt to motivate replenishment. Boredom anxieties attempt to motivate accomplishment. Unfortunately, the nicotine addict's act of replenishment satisfied both.

Boredom can be a productive emotion. Recovery will clearly add additional free time to each day. Hopefully, you'll discover healthy and satisfying ways to spend it.

“I can’t drink without using”

During the first few days, this is true for most people. Amazingly, roughly half of all relapses are associated with alcohol use. If so, why drink something that diminishes self-control while in the throes of early withdrawal?

While it isn’t necessary to give up anything but nicotine during recovery, [early alcohol use warrants caution](#).

The key is getting beyond peak withdrawal before attempting use. Even then, it's good to have a plan and a back-up, and to be ready to execute both.

If you know that early alcohol use will cause you to fail and yet you drink anyway, at a minimum, it’s problem drinking. The bigger question is, are you dealing with [more than one dependency](#)?

“I’ll lose my friends”

Imagine convincing ourselves that if we arrest our chemical dependence that [our friends won't want to be around us](#) or that we won't be able to be around them.

Yes, it takes a bit of practice before getting comfortable around users. But, putting an end to all use conditioning is a necessary part of healing.

According to Philip Morris's [research](#), over 85% of smokers strongly agree with the statement, "I wish I had never started smoking."

Secretly, most of our friends who use, including e-cig users, feel the same. They wish they knew how to stop.

Imagine them soon having a supportive friend who is both knowledgeable and skilled at recovery.

Through subconscious conditioning, most of us became convinced that nicotine use was central to our life, including friendships with other users.

While recovery means that we'll no longer use while with friends who do, no relationship whose foundation is deeper than shared drug use

need be affected by the absence of nicotine.

Recovery should not deprive us of a single friend or loved one.

On the contrary, tobacco use has likely cost us relationships. Fewer and fewer non-users are willing to tolerate being around the smells, smoke and stink. Vaping and spit tobacco use are major turn-offs too.

Aside from no longer using nicotine, our current lives don't need to change at all unless we want change.

Mine did. I no longer sought situations that allowed me to feel comfortable smoking.

Fellow nicotine addicts don't normally try to make each other feel guilty about being hooked and using. In fact, we served as a form of "use" insurance for each other on those occasions when our supply runs out.

Obviously, I no longer frequented community ashtrays. In fact, for the first time in my adult life, I found myself totally comfortable sitting beside non-users and ex-users for extended periods of time.

Gradually, my circle of friends grew to include far more non-users and ex-users.

It was as if my addiction had been picking my friends.

“Now isn't the right time”

"I'll [stop after the](#)... next pack, next carton, next month, my next birthday, or New Years' day."

"I'll quit when school is over, while on vacation, after vacation, after I get a job, once I lose 12 pounds, after tax season, during the summer, after we move, once things improve at work, after the wedding, after I get promoted, after my surgery, once divorced, after my family member gets better, after the funeral, once I retire, when my doctor tells me I have to... what's the use in quitting now, the damage is done!"

I hate to think about how many times and years I lied to myself with such nonsense. "It's just too stressful right now." Rubbish!

As reviewed, ex-users experience significantly [diminished stress](#), as urine acidification is no longer accelerating nicotine elimination and adding early withdrawal to stressful situations.

Why did I limit myself to always purchasing only a day's supply, three packs? Because tomorrow was always the day I'd stop and I couldn't stomach throwing extra packs away.

My name is John and I'm a nicotine addict, albeit a comfortably recovered one.

“I can't quit”

While deep down I worried that this was true, it wasn't that I couldn't quit [but that I wouldn't](#).

We always had it within us to stop. We just wouldn't give recovery sufficient time to allow healing to work its magic.

More than once, I relied on the fact that withdrawal was beginning to ease off (after 3 days) as justification to declare victory and reward myself with “just one.”

I didn't realize that I was transporting myself back to square one, requiring another 3 days of detox and withdrawal. We're not that strong.

“Just one, just once”

This is likely the most costly and destructive use tease of all, that once we stop we can cheat the Law of Addiction.

Why torment yourself with a lie? Why pretend that brain imaging studies were all wrong, that one hit of nicotine won't cause up to half of our brain's dopamine pathway receptors to become occupied by nicotine—that our brain won't soon be begging for more?

["Just one" or "just once"](#) denies who we are, real drug addicts.

Whether free for 10 hours, 10 days, 10 months or 10 years, just one hit of nicotine and permanently compromised pathways will re-assign getting more nicotine the same priority as they assign to eating food.

Let go of the fiction of "just one" or "just once." Laugh at it.

Along with “stress relief,” it’s the most threatening cessation tease inflicted on the unschooled mind. But, that's not us anymore. We’re smart turkeys!

We understand exactly what happens if we use again. We know that for us, one equals all, that lapse equals relapse.

And don't say that you don't want one when you do.

Rather, acknowledge the desire but ask yourself, do I want the thousands of others that come with it, and all the baggage that comes with them?

2. Ending my physical need

The human body eliminates nicotine at the rate of roughly [half every two hours](#). It's why, for most of us, that first fix each day was so important. We'd slept through 3 to 4 elimination half-lives.

Once you stop using, all nicotine will have passed from your body within 72 hours (3 days). Your brain will have no choice but to begin restoring natural sensitivities, and physical withdrawal will have peaked in intensity.

If there already, welcome to your new nicotine-free body and mind. Congratulations, you did it. Celebrate being clean!

You may have noticed that over the years that you gradually found yourself using more nicotine. It's called tolerance. Your brain was growing and activating additional dopamine pathway receptors.

[Within 3 weeks](#), your brain will have returned dopamine pathway receptor counts to pre-nicotine levels. By then, physical withdrawal will be behind you.

Let's briefly look at withdrawal symptoms and how to minimize them.

Withdrawal symptoms

First, it's not unusual for smart turkey's to experience fewer or diminished symptoms, with many reporting surprisingly easy recoveries.

Still, within reason, it's fairly safe to blame most of what you'll feel during the first three days on withdrawal. But after that, you need to listen to your body and if concerned, give your doctor a call.

Remember, your symptoms reflect where you've been, not where you're going. See each as a sign of healing.

Most symptoms are blood sugar related

Each nicotine fix [was our spoon](#), releasing stored fats and sugar (glucose) into our bloodstream. It allowed us to skip meals without experiencing wild blood-sugar swing symptoms such as an inability

to concentrate, hunger-related anxiety, dizziness, a headache or time perception distortion.

It's important to relearn how to properly fuel our body by spreading out our normal daily calorie intake more evenly. Strive to eat smaller healthy portions more frequently, every 3 to 5 hours. Try not to skip meals.

Three days of natural juices

Unless diabetic, sip on natural fruit juice for the first 3 days. [Cranberry is excellent](#). The acidic juices will not only aid in quicker removal of nicotine, it will help stabilize blood sugars. But, only use it for three days as juices are rather fattening.

Other possible symptoms

A complete list of [potential recovery symptoms](#), including how long they normally last, is available at whyquit.com/ffn

Possible hidden conditions

Nicotine and other chemicals in cigarettes, tobacco and even e-cig juices are capable of masking underlying [hidden health problems](#).

These chemicals may also have been interacting with medications you were taking and a medication adjustment could be necessary.

Stay alert and if at all concerned, speak with your physician or pharmacist.

Caffeine/nicotine interaction

Amazingly, nicotine somehow doubles the rate by which the body uses up caffeine.

Studies have found that your blood-caffeine level will rise to [203%](#) of your normal baseline if no caffeine intake reduction is made when ending nicotine use.

This is not a problem for most light to moderate caffeine users.

Consider a modest caffeine intake reduction of up to 50% if troubled

by anxieties or if experiencing difficulty relaxing or sleeping.

Weight control

While normal to want to reach for extra food as a replacement for nicotine in stimulating the release of dopamine, unless you need to gain weight, the extra pounds can be demoralizing.

Take a slow deep breath. Do you feel the subtle “aaah” sensation while exhaling? Now, take a sip of cool water. Again, feel the sensation?

That’s dopamine being released and both were [zero calorie “aaahs.”](#)

As mentioned, it may take up to 3 weeks for the number of dopamine receptors to return to levels seen in non-smokers. But, unfortunately, that’s sufficient time to establish some [horrible eating habits](#).

If unable to resist extra food, reach for healthy veggies and fruits instead of candies, chips and pastries. Try pre-cutting and placing them in a bowl of water in the refrigerator, as convenient and ready to eat as cookies.

Talking about cookies, did you know that each cookie is roughly 50 calories? You’d have to walk a half a mile to burn 50 calories.

Studies have shown that brisk exercise diminishes appetite. If concerned about weight gain, if your health and doctor permit, consider adding extra activity or exercise to your day, at least for the first few weeks.

In addition, ending your meal may have been a nicotine use trigger. If leftovers are disappearing, you may need to establish a new healthy cue that your meal has ended, such as reaching for a toothpick or floss, clearing the table, doing the dishes, or stepping outside for a nice deep breath of fresh air.

3a. Navigating use conditioning

Use triggers

You have [conditioned](#) your subconscious to expect nicotine when encountering certain locations, times, events, activities, people or emotions. Be prepared for each to trigger a brief crave episode.

Encountering a trigger cannot trigger relapse unless nicotine enters the body. But, take heart. Most triggers are silenced (extinguished) by a single encounter during which we intentionally deprive the subconscious of the expected result—nicotine.

Subconscious trigger extinction normally peaks during the first week. Within the first 2-3 weeks, you'll silence everything except remote, infrequent, [holiday or seasonal triggers](#).

Infrequent cues may be associated with a vacation, a wedding, death, funeral, meeting an old friend, or an illness.

The good news is that any remaining subconscious use associations were likely weak to begin with, as death and serious illness were hopefully rarely experienced.

Also, like the strength of any relationship, the mind's anxiety craving generator depends on new use memories for its punch.

No new use memories are reinforcing thousands of old ones.

Thus, your crave generator may become so weak over time that future episodes become laughable reminders of the amazing journey you made.

Crave episodes are brief

In contrast to thought fixation—the "nice juicy steak" type of thinking can last as long as our ability to maintain focus and concentration—it's rare when any subconsciously triggered crave episode fails to peak within 3 minutes.

Time distortion

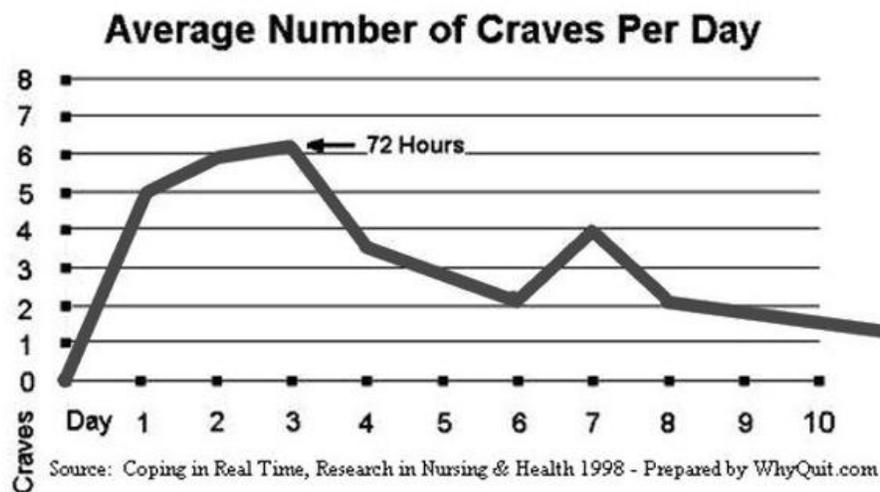
[Studies](#) teach us that early recovery causes significant time distortion. Although crave episodes peak within minutes, time distortion can make minutes feel like hours.

Keep a clock or watch handy to maintain an honest perspective on time.

Crave episode frequency

Unless hiding in a closet, you'll likely experience the bulk of your regular daily triggers within the first 3 days.

The following chart was created from a [1998 study](#) in which smokers going through withdrawal used palm pilots to record their cravings as they occurred. As you can see, the peak occurred on day 3 with an average of 6 episodes.



That's a total of 18 minutes of challenge on their most challenging day.

But, what if you're not "average"? What if you established and must encounter twice as many nicotine-feeding cues or yours are twice as long?

That's 36 minutes of significant challenge. Can you handle 36 minutes of serious desire in order to reclaim your mind, priorities and life? Absolutely. We all can.

What about that small day 7 spike? Could it reflect when they celebrated their first full week of freedom? Yes, for most of us, nicotine use was part of celebrations, and celebrations turned sour too.

Also, stay alert for subtle differences between crave triggers. For example, the Sunday newspaper is much thicker and may have required using twice.

Understanding the big crave

In the above-discussed cravings study, the average ex-smoker was experiencing just 1.4 crave episodes by days ten.

Shortly thereafter, it isn't unusual to begin experiencing entire days without encountering a single un-extinguished use trigger.

If a later crave episode ever feels far more intense, it's likely that it has been some time since your last significant challenge and you've dropped your guard and defenses a bit.

You may panic. It can almost feel as though you've just received an unexpected blow to the gut.

If this should occur, stop. Take a slow deep breath, and reflect on how long it has been since your last significant challenge. Smile. The [bigger, the better](#). What a wonderful problem to have.

Confronting triggers

Recovery is about re-learning how to comfortably engage all aspects of life nicotine-free.

Why hide from healing? Why delay coming home? Meet, greet and [extinguish](#) your use triggers. You don't need to give up anything except the highly addictive [insecticide](#) nicotine.

As you're about to discover, everything you did as a user can be done as well or better as an ex-user.

With each trigger extinguished, you'll receive a prize, another piece of a puzzle that once complete will reflect you comfortably, calmly and confidently engaging all aspects of life nicotine-free.

3b. Crave coping techniques

[Research](#) has found that [coping techniques](#) involving changes in thinking or doing (behavior) are highly protective against relapse. Maximum protection occurs when we're skilled in applying more than one coping strategy if needed.

So, how do you successfully navigate the sudden onset of a brief yet possibly intense crave episode? Let's review a few crave coping techniques.

Reach for your core recovery motivations

If a significant crave episode occurs, it's normal to forget many of reasons that motivated us in the first place. But, what if you could immediately pull out [a full list of reasons](#) from your pocket, purse or wallet?

Why not make them your first line of defense—a defense that pits reason against impulse.

As with achievement in almost all human endeavors, the wind beneath your recovery wings won't be strength or willpower, but robust dreams and desires.

If you have a smartphone, launch Notes and begin building your list. As un-expected benefits emerge during recovery, add them to the list.

Keep your dreams alive, vibrant and on center-stage.

Distraction crave coping

[Distraction or diversion crave coping](#) is any mental exercise or physical activity that occupies the mind long enough to allow challenge to pass.

A popular 3-minute coping exercise is to say your ABCs while associating each letter with your favorite food, person or place.

For example, the letter "A" is for grandma's hot apple pie. "B" is for warm buttered biscuits. You may never reach the challenging letter

"Q" before the challenge passes.

Counting exercises can be as simple as counting backward from 350 by 7s. That would involve your mind doing 50 simple math calculations.

Consider playing a hand of solitaire or reaching for a crossword puzzle. Can you draw?

Sing your favorite song, reorganize a closet or drawer, look through your photo album, play with your pet, phone a friend, read a book or magazine, check your mail or email, do the dishes or start a load of laundry.

Distraction isn't about avoiding a craving but about temporarily diverting your attention and focus until the intensity and risk of relapse subsides.

Physical distraction possibilities include turning to your favorite non-nicotine activity such as playing music or dancing, a brief period of physical exercise, going for a short walk or bike ride, taking a shower, or something as simple as brushing your teeth.

If you ever feel a need to vent, try screaming into a pillow, squeezing a tree, or biting your lip. I promise, the pillow won't scream back, you won't hurt the tree, and your lip will heal.

Slow deep breathing

It isn't normal to breathe deeply. Most of us breathe from the chest. It's called shallow breathing.

When you breathe deeply, your body takes in more oxygen and you exhale more carbon dioxide. The body "resets" itself to a more relaxed and calm state.

We normally breathe at a rate of 12 to 15 breaths per minute. [Research](#) shows that slow deep breathing at a rate near 6 breaths per minute — roughly one breath every ten seconds — promotes relaxation.

The use of slow deep breathing as a coping strategy isn't for everyone. Some of us have damaged our lungs more than others.

Your number of breaths per minute may need adjusting.

Also, initial attempts at controlled breathing can lead to hyperventilation with lightheadedness. A couple of practice sessions may be needed before trusting deep breathing as a go-to coping strategy.

Allow at least 2 minutes to complete the following U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs relaxation exercise:

1. Sit comfortably or lie down. Place one hand on your stomach and the other on your chest.
2. Breathe in slowly through your nose. Feel your stomach expand as you inhale. If you are breathing from the stomach, the hand on your chest shouldn't move. Focus on filling up your lower lungs with air.
3. Slowly exhale, releasing all the air out through your mouth. Use your hand to feel your stomach fall as you exhale.
4. To begin, try breathing at or near 6 breaths per minute (about one full inhale and exhale every 10 seconds). Return to normal breathing if you begin feeling lightheaded. If lightheadedness occurs again during your next practice session try adding 1-2 additional breaths per minute.
5. Repeat the above steps up to 10 times.

Listen to two additional audio deep breathing exercises at [WhyQuit](#).

Mindfulness crave coping

[Mindfulness](#) is a state of hyper-awareness of something. It's achieved by focusing on the present moment, while calmly acknowledging and accepting our feelings, thoughts, and bodily sensations.

While engaging in slow deep breathing, remain aware and monitor your crave. Accept your thoughts and feelings about it without judging them. See yourself as being separate from the craving.

One mindfulness strategy is to mentally reach out to and [embrace your crave](#). A crave cannot cut, burn, bruise or harm you.

Try to be brave. In your mind, wrap your arms around the crave's anxiety energy and then feel as it slowly fizzles while within your embrace.

Yes, another trigger bites the dust as you reclaim yet another aspect of life.

Muscle relaxation

Progressive muscle relaxation is the intentional tensing and releasing of successive muscle groups. It's based on the fact that muscle tension is the body's physiological response to anxiety-provoking thoughts and that muscle relaxation blocks anxiety.

A [2015 study](#) found that "progressive muscle relaxation significantly reduces cigarette craving, withdrawal symptoms, and blood pressure in smokers undergoing acute abstinence."

Before attempting the following exercise, stop if any movement causes you pain. Be cautious about stretching or tensing parts of your body that have caused you problems in the past. Consult your doctor first if unsure about safety due to an injury or condition.

Allow at least 10 minutes to complete this U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs muscle relaxation exercise:

1. Take a few slow, deep breaths. Inhale deeply through your nose with your mouth closed to a count of four. Exhale slowly through your mouth — also to a count four. On the exhale, imagine tension leaving your body, flowing out with each exhale. Repeat this 3 to 4 times. If at any point you feel dizzy or light-headed, return to normal breathing.
2. Continue to breathe deeply as you move into the muscle tension and relaxation parts of this exercise. You will begin with your feet and work your way up. As you inhale, tense and hold each muscle for a count of four. Relax that muscle group as you breathe out. Take several breaths before you move to the next part of your body. Allow time to feel the relaxation.
3. Tense the muscles of your feet by pointing your toes and tightening your feet as you inhale. Hold this tension briefly, and then

relax your toes and feet as you breathe out. Imagine the tension flowing out with your breath. Notice the difference between tension and relaxation.

4. Press the balls of your feet into the floor and raise your heels, allowing your calf muscles to contract. Feel the tension in your calves for a moment. Then release and notice your muscles relax. Again, have the tension and relaxation match your breath.

5. Tighten your knees and allow your legs to straighten. Feel the tightness in the front of your legs. Notice the sense of tension as you inhale. Release on the exhale, allowing your legs to bend and relax back onto the floor.

6. Squeeze the muscles of your buttocks. Notice the feeling of tension as you inhale. Hold this for just a moment. And on your exhale, release and allow your muscles to relax, letting the tension melt away.

7. Continue up through your body. Concentrate now on your stomach. Contract your stomach and continue to breathe. Hold the tension for a count of 4. Inhale deeply. As you exhale, let your stomach relax. Again, notice the difference the tension and relaxation.

8. Move your attention now to your hands. Curl your fingers into a tight fist in each hand. Hold your fists tight and notice the sense of tension as you continue to breathe. As you release your fists, let your hands relax back to a natural position. Notice the difference between the feeling of tension and relaxation in your hands.

9. Now, bend both arms at the elbow (like Popeye). Flex both of your arms by making fists and pulling your fists up tightly to your shoulders. Notice the feeling in the tensed muscles of your upper arms. Take another inhale and as you exhale and relax your arms down to your sides. Take notice of any change in what you feel as you go from a state of tension to relaxation.

10. Push your shoulders up to your ears now. Hold this “shrugging” position for just a moment. Feel the tension in your neck and shoulder muscles. Feel the tension melt away as you relax your shoulders back down. Continue to breathe in and out.

11. Finish by tensing the muscles in your face. Scrunch your face as if you just bit into something sour. Feel your eyebrows pull together, your eyes pinch tightly shut, and your lips purse together. Notice the sensation of tenseness in your face for just a moment. Then allow your face to relax. Notice the release of tension from your forehead, eyes, cheeks, mouth and jaw.

12. Now, conduct a body scan. Try to find any other spot of tension in your body. Notice it and let it go. Let yourself be still for a few moments. Just experience your relaxed muscles. Continue to breathe slowly and deeply. Feel any tension flow out. Feel your relaxation grow deeper with each breath.

Listen to 3 additional progressive muscle relaxation audio exercises at [WhyQuit](#).

Guided imagery

Guided imagery or visualization is a mind-body management technique where you call upon mental images to help induce relaxation or stress reduction.

The more it's practiced the more effective it becomes at diminishing stress.

A [2005 study](#) divided 71 smokers into two groups. While both groups received counseling, one also received guided imagery training, and was encouraged to practice it at least once daily. The long-term (2-year) success rates were twice as high in the guided imagery group.

Allow at least 2 to 3 minutes to complete the following U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs guided imagery exercise:

1. Position your body in a way that feels comfortable for you (either sitting in a chair or laying on a comfortable surface) and close your eyes.
2. Take a few deep breaths using the deep breathing technique described above.
3. Take a moment to imagine yourself in a scene where you feel relaxed. It can be a place you have been to in your past or a relaxing

scene you imagine. It can be indoors or out in nature. Choose something that is calming for you.

4. Although it is normal to have doubts this will work, give yourself permission to visualize it. Put yourself in the scene.

5. Use your senses to experience the relaxing sights, sounds, smells, textures, and physical sensations in your scene. Fill in as many details as possible.

6. Allow yourself to relax into this scene. Focus your attention on the peaceful calm of this place.

7. Continue to focus your attention on the details of the scene and the feelings of calm that flow from it. See if you can stay with the image for at least 60 seconds.

8. If you find your attention being pulled away by distractions, gently bring your awareness back to the scene. With practice, it will become natural and relaxing. If prone to falling asleep you might want to set a timer to alert you after a few minutes.

Listen to two additional guided imagery audio exercises at [WhyQuit](#).

Laughter

Let's close relaxation with laughter. First, try to laugh without smiling. Can you do it? Notice something missing?

[Research](#) shows that laughter activates various muscle groups for a few seconds each, which leads to general muscle relaxation which may last up to 45 minutes.

Laughter also induces random deep breathing. There's also evidence suggesting that among those with a sense of humor, that laughter and smiling can result in diminished anxiety and stress.

Helping your subconscious switch teams

Our subconscious is in control of our body's panic switch, our fight or flight pathways. Your primitive subconscious mind (the lizard brain) may see ending nicotine use as similar to going without eating or starvation.

Yes, your subconscious was as fooled as you were. For years, it guarded against blood nicotine levels falling too low and sounded alarms to prevent it.

Is it possible to get your subconscious to switch teams, to help protect against nicotine entering your body? What do you have to lose by trying?

Use your conscious thinking mind to calm and reassure your lizard brain, especially in the fleeting seconds before dosing off into sleep.

It's in those precious moments when communication becomes possible as the two draw near.

Here's a sample message while slumbering off:

“Yes, we did it! Please continue helping arrest our addiction to nicotine. Nicotine is an insecticide and poison. Help me ensure that tomorrow remains nicotine-free too. Aid me in staying as calm and as comfortable as possible as we celebrate breaking free.”

4. Breaking emotional ties

Emotional recovery phases

Chemical dependency on inhaled nicotine is one of the most intense, repetitive and dependable relationships you've ever known. It has infected nearly every aspect of your life.

Be prepared to experience a normal sense of emotional loss during recovery. Expect to experience up to five different [emotional recovery phases](#): denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance.

The order, timing and duration of the phases can vary. It's possible that one or more phases can be diminished or absent, especially if experiencing a more significant sense of loss (such as failing health), or if convinced that there was absolutely nothing good about using.

Denial

"I'm not really going to quit."

"I'll just pretend and see how far I get."

Cessation denial is a state of disbelief. The denial phase of emotional recovery questions and challenges whether a long and intense chemical relationship is really ending.

I started every seminar and clinic by asking for an honest show of hands to this question. "How many of you feel that you will never, ever smoke again?"

It was rare for any hand to go up. Even though they wanted to stop, there and then, they were in denial, as none believed they would.

Although we want to stop, the mind isn't convinced yet.

If convinced, why do so many of us treat recovery as a secret? Why leave an escape route such as that one hidden cigarette, or a means to quickly get more?

Denial is normal. But, be careful. If allowed, it can quickly transform disbelief into failure.

Anger

“Have I really had my last nicotine fix?”

“This just isn’t fair!”

The anger phase of recovery is a period of healing where we begin to awaken to the realization that it may actually be within our ability to pull this off and succeed. It's awareness that, just maybe, our last puff, dip, chew or vape ever is already behind us.

Durable nicotine use memories flowing from captive dopamine pathways elevated that next fix to one of life's top priorities. But, emotional recovery has now transported us from fear of withdrawal to fear of success.

Is it any wonder that anger—an emotional outlet—would be the mind's reaction?

It's now sinking in. Success is occurring in spite of denial. A relationship that was once high-priority is ending. This realization can feel overwhelming.

Now, all the new ex-user requires is some excuse, any excuse, to let it all out, to vent, to turn an ant-hill into a mountain.

While this high-energy phase of the emotional stage of goodbye is a normal step in recovery, the educated ex-user both recognizes anger's arrival and understands its roots.

Recognition is critical as it provides a protective seed of reason inside a mind looking for a spark, a fear-driven mind poised to abandon rational thought.

If allowed, that spark may activate the body's fight or flight response, releasing a cascade of more than one hundred chemicals and hormones.

The prospect of success is not a logical reason to get mad, enraged, argue or fight. The educated mind knows that emotion can be contrary to our well-being and best interests.

Anger ignores all positives while faking a sense of loss, a loss based largely on false use beliefs.

Bargaining

“Just one, just once more.”

“Maybe I’m the exception to the Law.”

“Please God, I’ve gone 2 days without.”

“I’ve earned it, just once more.”

Bargaining is back and forth negotiation in order to reach an agreement. It tends to give us a sense of control over the uncontrollable, to believe that there is a way to avoid a sense of loss.

There is no bargaining with our addiction to nicotine as it’s impossible to undo how our brain reacts to it. For us, one will always equal all.

Depression

“I’m lost without nicotine.”

“What’s the use?”

“Why bother getting up?”

Grief’s quiet stage, depression is what most people think of when reflecting on a sense of loss.

While depression creates space for healthy reflection, what if after careful evaluation of our relationship with nicotine, we become convinced that we’d been living a lie?

What if nicotine dependence created stress instead of diminishing it? Instead of liking or loving using, what if use killed and buried all memory of the calm and comfortable us?

How hard would it be to let go and move on from a relationship built upon lies?

As for depression itself, be careful. It’s possible for a normal sense of loss to be mixed with or reflect real organic depression.

Depression can reflect an underlying hidden condition or a possible need for a medication adjustment if already being treated. Don't hesitate to get seen or call a depression hot line if you or a loved one becomes concerned.

Acceptance

“Hey, I’m feeling pretty good”

“I can do this, this is great!”

“Best decision I’ve ever made.”

“I only wish I’d done it sooner!”

Acceptance doesn't necessarily mean that you'll become happy about breaking free, but that you've accepted it.

Now and then, you'll encounter a reluctant ex-user, who remains convinced that their chemical relationship had value. While clinging to obsessive thoughts of using nicotine obviously makes moving on more difficult, it can also increase risk of relapse.

5. Allowing use memories to fade

Think about the huge pile of use memories created during the thousands and thousands of times that you complied with your addicted brain's need for more.

The final and longest layer of recovery is rooted in the time needed to move beyond the influence of old use memories. But how?

Like a blanket of new fallen snow, new nicotine-free memories are being created each and every day. At times, it may be super hard to appreciate that the amount of time devoted to thinking about wanting to use [diminishes with each passing day](#).

Then, it happens. A [day arrives](#) where you go the entire day without once wanting to use.

After your first wanting-free day, such days gradually become more and more common, until it becomes your new sense of normal.

But, [how long](#) before their tease wanes? How long before that first wanting-free day? And can we shorten the time needed to reach Easy Street?

The answers are within and unique to you.

Why be tormented by the lie that each use memory tells you, that use is the solution to wanting? Clearly, it's the opposite.

Also, why continue to be teased by a biological need to feed that's gone within 2-3 weeks of ending use? There would be no ["aaah"](#) satisfaction sensation, as nothing was missing and nothing was in need of replenishment.

Conscious thought fixation

Unlike a less than 3-minute cue triggered crave episode, we can consciously focus on any thought of wanting to use nicotine for as long as we're able to maintain concentration.

Instead of trying to hide from thoughts of wanting, why not place each under honest light?

Flavor? If use is about flavor, then why can't you simply substitute and continue using the flavor from a non-addictive source?

Which is normal, to swallow flavors or to inhale them?

There are zero taste buds inside our lungs, the place that most of us inhaled and briefly held all nicotine flavorings.

"Just one" or "just once"? For us nicotine addicts, one is too many and a thousand never enough.

See and treat nicotine dependency recovery as if it were no different from alcoholism. See a bright line in the sand.

Why debate wanting "a" nicotine fix? Instead, ask yourself how you'd feel about having "all" of them back, about returning to your old level of nicotine consumption or greater.

6. Relapse prevention

Avoid crutches

A [crutch](#) is anything that is leaned upon so heavily in supporting recovery that if quickly removed would likely result in relapse.

Does it make sense to lean heavily upon a quitting buddy, who quits at the same time as you?

If not schooled in nicotine dependency recovery, their odds of successfully remaining free for a year are relatively small.

Instead, ask an ex-user or never-user for support, or visit free online support forums such as [Turkeyville](#) on Facebook:

facebook.com/groups/whyquit/

Avoid oral crave coping

[Oral coping](#) is a form of crutch substitution. Imagine the possibility of oral substitution causing use conditioning to survive for weeks, months or years after nicotine use ends.

While water provides a subtle and healthy "aaah" sensation, what would happen if water had become your mind's primary crave coping response and it was suddenly unavailable when a crave arrived?

Water is healthy and calorie-free. I fell in love with it. However, be careful that it doesn't become your go-to crave defense.

Any oral coping strategy that imitates nicotine use, or the handling of any object that imitates your nicotine delivery device, should be avoided.

Imitating any addiction-related behavior helps maintain that behavior, may delay suppression of old use memories, invite use fixation, prolong recovery, and thus elevate risk of relapse.

Reaching for food as an oral crutch can obviously add extra [demoralizing pounds](#). If you find yourself headed for the kitchen, take aim at healthier foods.

Can you eat an entire apple in 3 minutes? If so, that's 80 calories and 4 grams of fiber.

With more than half of all relapses associated with alcohol or other drug use (52 percent), the only worse oral crave coping strategy is reaching for nicotine gum, nicotine lozenges, or any other substitute form of nicotine delivery.

If you find yourself reaching for something more substantial than a toothpick or toothbrush, make sure it isn't fattening, that it will always be available within seconds, and is something you'd be able to do anywhere, and anytime, for years to come.

The only thing that meets that definition is slow deep breathing.

The smoking dream

It is entirely normal to experience [nicotine use dreams](#) now and then, especially during early recovery.

If a former tobacco user, be prepared for an extremely vivid nicotine-use dream as tobacco tars released by horizontal healing lungs come in contact with vastly enhanced senses of smell and taste.

I've had roughly a half-dozen use dreams since breaking free 22 years ago. Although horrifying, what's amazing is that after 30 years of heavy smoking, I haven't experienced far more.

Although I haven't had one in years, they're vivid reminders of the amazing journey I made.

Remember, we're safe so long as our use dreams remain nightmares. In that regard, they're protective and good, not bad.

Reward yourself

Visualize, feel and [celebrate your gains](#).

Consider putting aside the money that you would have spent buying nicotine and after a week or month, treating yourself to something you really want. Save for a year and go on a vacation.

See nicotine marketing as bait

Your recovery means thousands of dollars in lost profits to the neo-nicotine industry. “Big Nic” doesn’t want to lose you.

See store advertising and the hundreds of neatly aligned packs, cartons, tins and vaping products for what they truly reflect—bait.

[Get mad!](#)

Hidden inside the pretty colored packs and among the hundreds of flavor additives is what many dependency experts consider earth's most captivating chemical.

Don't be afraid to visit the store where you purchased your supply. Unless it's a nicotine or tobacco specialty shop, you'll likely need to meet, greet and defeat that trigger too.

While there, look for the warning to teens and young adults that nicotine is extremely addictive. Sadly, there is none.

Healthy support expectations

Is it [fair to expect](#) family and friends who've never been chemically dependent themselves to have any appreciation of the challenges or time required to achieve substantial comfort?

Instead, find a recovered nicotine addict and ask them if they'd mind being your mentor for the next 90 days. You can also join recovery support groups such as WhyQuit's [Turkeyville](#) on Facebook.

Watch nicotine addicts closely

Users don't vape, smoke or chew to tease you. They do so [because they must](#), in order to replenish a constantly falling blood-serum nicotine level that declines by roughly half every two hours.

Most refueling occurs while on autopilot. What cue triggered the public feeding you're now witnessing?

Watch acid-producing events such as [stress](#) or [drinking alcohol](#) reduce the time between feedings as the user's kidneys speeds up removal of nicotine from their bloodstream.

Witness their endless [mandatory need-feed cycle](#) of replenishment.

Thinking vs. wanting

There is a major distinction between thinking about recovery and wanting to use. For example, here you are reading about using and it's highly likely that, before I mentioned it, you weren't wanting.

After years of using, it's totally normal to notice every using addict you see. But, doing so doesn't necessarily mean that you want to.

As for thoughts of wanting, with each passing day, they'll gradually grow shorter in duration, generally less intense, and a bit further apart.

Non-user or ex-user?

[What should you call yourself](#)? It's understandable that you'd want to see yourself as a non-user. But there's a major distinction between a never-user and an ex-user. Only the ex-user can grow complacent, use nicotine, and relapse.

"My name is _____ and while I'm a non-user, I prefer to refer to myself as an ex-user because it reminds me that I'm just one hit of nicotine away from destroying one of the greatest accomplishments of my entire life."

Avoiding complacency

Complacency is self-satisfaction accompanied by unawareness of danger that is close by.

Easy Street becomes so easy that complacency is normal. Unfortunately, if allowed, it can destroy our healing and glory.

The ingredients for relapse include: (1) a [failing memory](#) of why we stopped, (2) [forgetting](#) the early recovery challenges or Smart Turkey helping make it too easy, (3) forgetting or [rewriting](#) the "Law of Addiction" so as to exempt or exclude ourselves, and (4) [an excuse](#) such as stress, celebration, illness, finances, weather, terrorism, war, death, or even a cigar at the birth of a baby.

Whether daily, monthly or just once a year, our recovery benefits from [nurturing and care](#).

But, where do we turn to if use and recovery memories have been [suppressed](#) and we kept no [diary or record](#) to refresh our recollection?

A few suggestions: Consider keeping your [“reasons” list](#) pasted on the fridge, visit an [online recovery site](#), celebrate each [anniversary](#), [interview users](#), re-read Smart Turkey, or visit and explore [WhyQuit](#).

Remember, everyone we love is destined to die. Relationships end, terrorists attack, wars occur, politics will always be taxing, and earthquakes, fires, floods, hurricanes and tornados kill.

Still, even when mom or dad dies, there is [no legitimate excuse for relapse](#). None!

As for this attempt possibly being easier than ever, every attempt and every person is different. There’s no guarantee that next time wouldn’t be your hardest ever, or that you’ll ever come this far again.

Protect your recovery as though your freedom permanently depends on it. It may.

Relapse

Remember that there are only two good reasons to use nicotine once free.

1. You decide that you want to go back to your old level of consumption (or more) and devote each waking hour of the rest of your life to use of a destructive insecticide (Google “neonictinoids”).
2. You decide that you really enjoy withdrawal and you want to make it last forever.

Only one rule

So long as neither option appeals to you, there is [one guiding principle](#) that will 100% guarantee your freedom: No nicotine just one day at a time, to never take another puff, dip, vape or chew!

If Smart Turkey was helpful, please share it with others. Together, just one user at a time, we can make a difference.

