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The First 72 Hours

Have you accepted the fact that you are a true drug addict in every sense ([Chapter 1](#))? Do you understand the [Law of Addiction](#), the only rule that we addicts need master and follow in order to stay free (Chapter 2)?

Have you discarded destructive use rationalizations such as the false tease of "just one, just once" and the lie that nicotine relieves stress ([Chapter 4](#))?



Are you aware of common hazards and pitfalls such as early alcohol use, blood sugar swings, how your blood caffeine level will double, and how extra food can become a replacement crutch ([Chapter 6](#)). If so, you're ready!

Are you a bit apprehensive? It's totally understandable. Still, slow deep breaths as you try your best to relax and embrace your healing and journey home.

Remember, when going smart turkey (educated cold turkey) without use of any product or procedure, nearly everything felt during the first three days is evidence of what may be the most profound healing your body has ever known. It's good not bad.

If coming home smart yet cold, rest assured, you will not experience any cessation product side effect or adverse event. Instead you'll witness and experience the response of your body and mind as they navigate a temporary period of deep and profound repair, cleansing and mending.

If a smoker, this will likely be your body's most intense healing period ever. Picture more than 50 trillion cells,¹ each receiving far more oxygen and far fewer toxins than normal.

Psychologically, that very first step in getting started is the biggest hurdle of all. It's here, during these early magic moments, that we re-discover how to breathe, move about, eat and go to sleep without introducing nicotine back into our bloodstream.

The minutes will pass whether we force ourselves to sit on pins and needles or permit ourselves to relax and remain as calm and comfortable as the moment allows.

A clock or watch will soon announce the passing of an hour. When it does, celebrate! You've taken that first giant step home. Congratulations, that's huge!

A new supply of the super-toxin and natural insecticide nicotine did not arrive ([Chapter 1](#)). If a smoker, additional brain gray matter was not damaged or destroyed.² Unhealthy and damaged cells throughout the body felt the flicker of hope that nicotine's ability to prevent natural cell death (apoptosis) would no longer force them to live on, that at last they'd be permitted to die.³ And a new round of nicotine-induced angiogenesis did not riddle though and harden plaque build-up within arteries, or accelerate tumor growth rates by providing them with a blood supply.⁴

Most importantly, we arrested our dependency for an entire hour. We traded sides of the bars. Our dependency was now our prisoner, and we were the jailer.

1 National Institutes of Health, [Human Cells 101](#), NICHD, <http://www.nichd.nih.gov> - page last updated 9/18/06.

2 Brody, AL et al, [Differences between smokers and nonsmokers in regional gray matter volumes and densities](#), Biological Psychiatry, January 1, 2004, Volume 55(1), Pages 77-84; also see Kuhn S, et al, Brain grey matter deficits in smokers: focus on the cerebellum, Brain Structure and Function, April 2012, Volume 217(2), Pages 517-522. Epub September 10, 2011.

3 Cucina A, et al, [Nicotine Inhibits Apoptosis and Stimulates Proliferation in Aortic Smooth Muscle Cells Through a Functional Nicotinic Acetylcholine Receptor](#), The Journal of Surgical Research, November 26, 2007; also see Zhang T, et al, [Nicotine prevents the apoptosis induced by menadione in human lung cancer cells](#), Biochemical and Biophysical Research Communications, April 14, 2006, Volume 342(3), Pages 928-934.

4 Cooke JP, [Angiogenesis and the role of the endothelial nicotinic acetylcholine receptor](#), Life Sciences, May 30, 2007, Volume 80(24-25), Pages 2347-2351; also see, Heeschen C, et al, [Nicotine stimulates angiogenesis and promotes tumor growth and atherosclerosis](#), Nature Medicine, July 2001, Volume 7(7), Pages 833-839.

Forget about forever, tomorrow or even two hours from now. All we control are the next few minutes, minutes during which nicotine need not and shall not enter our bloodstream.

You already know the only principle that need be followed in order to enjoy 100 percent odds of success, the [Law of Addiction](#) (Chapter 2). The following cold turkey tips are a summary of key recovery insights. Following each tip is the chapter number where you'll find an in-depth review.

Summary of Basic Recovery Tips

1. **[Law of Addiction](#)** - Administration of a drug to an addict will cause re-establishment of chemical dependence upon the addictive substance. Fully accept chemical dependency. Nicotine addiction is as real and permanent as alcoholism. The brain dopamine pathway wanting felt for nicotine is no different than the wanting felt by other drug addicts for their drug.

The same brain dopamine pathways that make thoughts of ending food use nearly unthinkable have been taken hostage by nicotine. It's their job to make activities that activate this circuitry nearly impossible in the short term to forget or ignore.

It's why withdrawal and recovery are necessary. It's the time needed to get clean and move beyond this brain circuitry's influence. It's why there is no such thing as just one, or just once. Remember, without food we die, without nicotine we thrive. ([Chapter 3](#))

2. **Measure Victory One Day at a Time** - Forget about stopping "forever." It's the biggest psychological bite imaginable. Instead, adopt a doable "one day at a time" recovery philosophy, or one challenge or hour at a time when needed. ([Chapter 5](#))

3. **Record Your Motivations** - Panic can occur in the heat of battle, with the primitive impulsive mind taking control. Rational thinking is suddenly



abandoned as the body's fight or flight response assumes control. Instantly, you've totally forgotten all the reasons that motivated us to begin this journey home. Then all of the sudden you recall that you made a list of your reasons, and that you have it with you. You pull it out, read it and before finishing, the challenge peaks in intensity and begins to subside. Victory is once again yours! ([Chapter 5](#)) ([Appendix: Form](#))

4. **Do Not Skip Meals** - Each puff of nicotine was our spoon pumping stored fats and sugars into our bloodstream. Why add hunger craves atop nicotine craves? Why invite your inexperience in dealing with hunger to add lots of needless extra pounds? Eat little, healthy and often. ([Chapter 6](#))

5. **Three Days of Natural Juices** - If your health and diet permit, consider drinking extra acidic fruit juice the first three days. Cranberry is excellent. It will both help stabilize blood sugars and accelerate nicotine's elimination. ([Chapter 6](#))

6. **Stopping for Others** - We cannot stop for others. It must be our gift to us. Doing it for others creates a natural sense of self-deprivation that's a recipe for relapse. ([Chapter 5](#))

7. **Attitude** - Although not mandatory in staying free, a positive attitude will diminish the anxieties felt, and accelerate both letting go and arriving home. Remember, your subconscious is listening. ([Chapter 5](#))

8. **Get Rid of All Nicotine** - Keeping a stash handy is begging for relapse. Totally destroy, beyond salvage, all nicotine products. ([Chapter 5](#))

9. **Caffeine/Nicotine Interaction** - Nicotine doubles the rate by which the body depletes caffeine. Consider a caffeine reduction of up to one-half if troubled by anxieties or poor sleeping. ([Chapter 6](#))



10. **Aggressively Extinguish Nicotine Use Cues** - Most use cues are extinguished by a single encounter during which the subconscious fails to receive the expected result - nicotine. Subconsciously triggered craves peak in intensity within three minutes. But normal cessation time distortion can combine with panic to make the minutes feel like hours. Keep a clock handy to maintain honest perspective. Don't hide from your healing and reclaiming life, attack it. ([Chapter 11](#))

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11. **Crave Coping Techniques** - One coping method is to practice slow deep breathing while clearing your mind of all needless chatter, by focusing upon your favorite person, place or thing. Another 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. It's unlikely that you'll ever make it to the challenging letter Q before the episode peaks in intensity and victory is once again yours.

Also, try embracing a crave episode's energy by mentally reaching out inside your mind and wrapping imaginary arms around it. A crave cannot cut us, burn us, shock us or make us bleed. Be brave just once. In your mind, wrap your arms around the crave's anxiety energy. Feel the sensation as its anxiety energy slowly fizzles and dies while within your embrace. Yes, another use cue bites the dust, and your healing continues! ([Chapter 11](#))

12. **Alcohol Use** - Alcohol use is associated with roughly half of all relapses. Be extremely careful with early alcohol use. Get your recovery legs under you first.

Once ready, consider drinking at home first without nicotine around, going out with friends but refraining from drinking during the first outing, or spacing drinks further apart or drinking water or juice between drinks.

Have an escape plan and a backup, and be fully prepared to deploy both. ([Chapter 6](#))

13. **Avoid Crutches** - A crutch is any form of reliance that is leaned upon so heavily in supporting recovery that if quickly removed would elevate risk of relapse. ([Chapter 6](#))

14. **Extra Fruit & Veggies** - To help avoid weight gain, pre-cut, prepare and have handy vegetables and fruits instead of candies, chips and pastries. Celery and carrots can be used safely as short-term substitutes. A 2012 study suggests that increased fruit and vegetable consumption may substantially increase 30-day cessation rates. ([Chapter 6](#))

15. **No Legitimate Excuse for Relapse** - Recognize that nicotine use will not solve any crisis. Fully accept that there is absolutely no legitimate excuse for relapse, including an auto accident, financial crisis, the end of a relationship, job loss, a terrorist attack, a hurricane, the birth of a baby, falling stocks, or the eventual inevitable death of those we love most. ([Chapter 14](#))

16. **Reward Yourself** - Consider using some of the money you save to be nice to you. You've earned it. ([Chapter 5](#))

17. **Just One Rule** - There is only one recovery rule which if followed provides a 100 percent guarantee of success: no nicotine today! ([Chapter 2](#))

Recovery Sensations - Good, Not Bad

The early days of an educated attempt will be a cakewalk for some, a challenge for others, and easier than expected for most.

Although it sounds strange, within reason, everything felt as you climb to the point where withdrawal's symptoms peak is beneficial and good, not bad.

What more honest signs of healing could we have? Does it make sense to fear healing? Why resist taking back the driver's seat of your mind? Why

fight the drive home?
Why fear returning to a
place where entire days
pass without ever once
wanting to use?

Don't fight recovery.
Embrace it. Hug it hard!

The balance of FFN-TJH
details each layer of
recovery: physical
recovery ([Chapter 9](#)),
emotional recovery
([Chapter 10](#)),
subconscious recovery
([Chapter 11](#)), and
conscious recovery
([Chapter 12](#)), before closing with homecoming ([Chapter 13](#)) and
complacency & relapse ([Chapter 14](#)).



Photo by National Cancer Institute

Again, there was always only one rule. It's that lapse equals relapse, that one equals all, that just one hit of nicotine will activate up to half of brain dopamine pathway receptors, forcing this circuitry to again make you believe that not using more is akin to starvation.

Breathe deep, hug hard, live long,

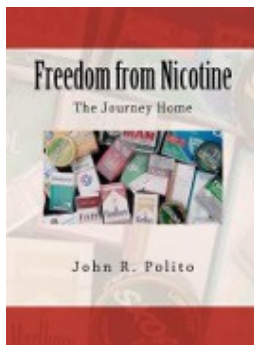
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John". The signature is stylized and fluid.

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