

Freedom from Nicotine

The Journey Home

Introduction

There are hundreds of quitting books but only one referenced and footnoted in the 699 pages of the U.S. Surgeon General's 2020 Smoking Cessation Report:

“Polito JR, Freedom from Nicotine The Journey Home, 2013.”[1]

As hard as this may be to believe, ending nicotine use need not be horrible or even bad. In fact, it's my hope that you'll someday soon look back upon this temporary journey of re-adjustment as your greatest personal awakening ever.

You see, nicotine addiction is about living a lie. Life here on Easy Street is calm, rich and wonderful, not stressful, boring or horrible.

With knowledge as your ally, you're about to discover that you've journeyed far from that peaceful pre-addiction mind that you once called home.

How many times have we heard the phrase "knowledge is power"? But when it comes to breaking nicotine's grip upon us, until now you've probably resisted devoting the time needed to educate your intelligence.

Instead, most of us turned to worthless products, pills, or procedures: to quick fix magic cures promising fast, easy, or effortless success.

You're about to become smarter and wiser than your addiction is strong. No longer its captive, somewhere along the way it will hit you, that knowledge and insight truly is a recovery method.

Understanding and the confidence flowing from it destroy needless fears that ignorance once festered into anxiety or even panic.

Think about it. It's nearly impossible to appreciate the beauty gradually unfolding before us if consumed and gripped by anxiety and fear.

And during prior attempts (if any) our fears were many: fear of failure, fear that life as an ex-smoker would be horrible, that we were leaving something valuable behind, that we'd be unable to cope with stress, that the next challenge would be too big to handle, or even fear of success, that we really had taken our last puff ever.

The anguish of attempting to break free in ignorance and darkness can easily overwhelm freedom's dreams. What once may have seemed beyond our grasp is brought within reach by destroying needless fears.

This book's objective is to remove the mystery and as much anxiety as possible, so as to afford you the ability to notice and savor the full flavor of coming home. Knowledge is about to put you in the driver's seat of your mind. Relax and enjoy the ride!

I wish I could claim credit for most of what you are about to read. I can't. The insights that follow weren't discovered during my own thirty-years of chemical captivity. Nor do they flow from my own failed history of roughly a dozen serious attempts.

This book is not the result of the invention of some new method or product, or of ideas or concepts born inside this mind.

Instead, nearly all of the lessons shared were mined from the discoveries and accomplishments of others. It's the reason for hundreds of footnotes.

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

Those selling stop smoking products want you to fear your natural instincts. They will never tell you that cold turkey continues to be the recovery method responsible for helping more nicotine addicts arrest their dependency than all other quitting methods combined.[1] [2]

These ex-users owe their success to ending use of all nicotine, not to devices that replace it, designer drugs that imitate it, vaccines that partially block its entry into the brain, or to magic herbs, vitamins, hypnosis, needles, lasers that imitate needles, to motion sickness shots that make you too sick to smoke, or to Billy Bob's Lima Bean Butter.

There are hundreds of millions of worldwide cold turkey success stories, and nearly all achieved victory without programs or books, including this one. Still, education and understanding hold promise to swell their ranks even more.

But it takes strong observational skills to notice the elephant in the room while accurately separating truth from fiction.

Frankly, this book would not exist without the insights and teachings of Joel Spitzer of Chicago. Since 2000, I've studied and shared Joel's clinical observations.

They are insights he began harvesting as early as 1972, first as a volunteer smoking prevention speaker for the American Cancer Society, and then as a smoking cessation counselor and paid staff member beginning in 1977.

I challenge you to locate any other person who has devoted their entire work-life, over 45 years, full-time, to helping smokers break free. More than 350 six-session stop smoking clinics, 690 single-session seminars, and an additional 20 years working online with smokers, Joel truly is the Henry Aaron or Babe Ruth of smoking cessation.

On January 20, 2000, out of the blue, a man I'd never met e-mailed me offering to share the more than 80

stop smoking articles he'd written.

Joel's articles quickly became the centerpiece at both WhyQuit.com (WhyQuit), a motivational website I started in July 1999, and at Freedom,[3] what was then an anything-goes, free online peer-support group that Joel could clearly see was floundering horribly.

Joel had written his collection of articles as follow-up reinforcement and relapse prevention letters, which were sent to graduates of his two-week clinics. During his program, he'd taught them to take recovery just one challenge and day at a time.

Now, for the first time, he used the closing of each article to remind them how to stay free, by simply sticking with their original commitment to "Never Take Another Puff!"

As I read through the 80 articles I was hammered by ringing truths on a wide range of cessation issues. Joel raised scores of concerns that I'd never considered. How could I have overlooked all this?

I was left stunned and humbled by how little I actually knew about smoking or stopping. Who was I to think that I was somehow qualified to create and co-manage an online stop smoking support group? This guy was the real deal.

Nicotine's relationship to eating, stress, alcohol, vitamin C, anger, its influence upon heart rate, depression, and sleep, how did I miss all this? Where had I been?

Why hadn't I seen smoking nicotine as true chemical dependency, how replacement nicotine undermines resolve, or grasped the necessity of extinguishing crave triggers or cessation crutch avoidance?

Before Joel arrived, Freedom's co-founder, Joanne Diehl, and I had grown horribly frustrated. Members were relapsing to smoking left and right. Failure was everywhere. It was as if our support group was somehow fostering defeat.

Each new announcement of a member's failure and return to smoking brought lots of virtual member hugs, and encouragement for them to once again jump into the pool. It was as if the group's affection and attention was an invitation for others to relapse too, so that they could return and enjoy their own relapse party.

More than once Joanne had wanted to pull the plug and shut down. But now, here was a guy whose entire life had prepared him to deliver on the forum's name, Freedom.

Without hesitation, we begged Joel to take charge of what was then little more than an anything-goes motivational pep-rally. Although he declined, he did agree to join us and assist as a co-manager and become our director of education.

I fondly named his collection of reinforcement letters "Joel's Library" and placed them center-stage at WhyQuit. Two decades later, freely available to all, that's where they remain.

The collection has grown to more than 100 articles and now includes more than 500 free video counseling lessons. Joel's life's work remains the heartbeat of our online work.[4]

Today, the often-repeated title of Joel's popular free e-book, "Never Take Another Puff," has become

relapse prevention insurance for countless thousands, including more than 13,000 cold turkey quitters at Turkeyville, our Facebook support group.

Roy, who was six weeks into recovery, said it well. "The 'Never Take Another Puff' mantra is one of the most powerful phrases I've ever heard in my life. It can move mountains. It was my only shining light in a mass of darkness and guided me back to a normal nicotine-free life. It is effective because it is so simple and innocent. It has the power of innocence."

I've searched long and hard for any work comparable to Joel's. Except for individual lessons here and there by particular counselors and authors, and Allen Carr's excellent assault upon smoking rationalizations, I've been unable to locate any collection of work that comes close.

What I did find were individual studies by scores of dedicated researchers, studies that aid us in better understanding the amazing effects upon humans of this chemical called nicotine.

I took my last puff of nicotine on May 15, 1999 at 10:00 pm. Since then, I've been on a quest for answers and at every opportunity possible have shared what I've learned.

So here it is in a nutshell. As health care futurist Joe Flower puts it, you're about to find yourself "in the mush," the same mush I encountered when Joel arrived.

According to Flower, there are four phases to change induced learning: (1) unconscious incompetence [not knowing that I knew almost nothing about my addiction], (2) conscious incompetence [Joel making me aware of how little I knew], (3) conscious competence [mastering Joel's teachings], and (4) unconscious competence [having those lessons become as second nature as walking].

As Flower suggests, once competence is achieved it becomes difficult to recall how we could ever have been anything else.[5]

Although the contents of Freedom from Nicotine are freely available at WhyQuit.com, it's my hope that the printed version reaches those without Internet access, non-visitors, and all requesting a printed version. Four hundred pages, hopefully low printing costs result in greater distribution.

If this book aids you in achieving conscious competence, please don't allow it to collect dust on some shelf. Consider sharing it with a friend or loved one still trapped in active dependency.

Being deprived of the insights needed to end our self-destruction is a horrible reason to die.

If just starting out, congratulations on your decision to reclaim your mind and life! You are about to live the time-tested adage that "knowledge is power! Yes you can!"

Breathe deep, hug hard, live long,

John

John R. Polito
Nicotine Cessation Educator

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1. U.S. Surgeon General, Smoking Cessation: A Report of the Surgeon General," January 23, 2020, see Page 15 under the heading "Perspectives on Smoking Cessation," Page 15, <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/2020-cessation-sgr-full-report.pdf#page=37>
 2. Doran CM et al, Smoking status of Australian general practice patients and their attempts to quit, Addictive Behaviors, May 2006, Volume 31(5), Pages 758-766; Fiore MC et al, Methods used to quit smoking in the United States: do cessation programs help? Journal of the American Medical Association, May 1990, Volume 263(20), Pages 2760-2765.
 3. Freedom from Tobacco - Quit Smoking Now was founded 09/08/99 as a free peer support forum at MSN Groups. On 02/21/09 MSN shut down all MSN Groups and we migrated Freedom to Yuku.com, reopening as "Freedom from Nicotine" on 02/18/09. On 08/05/17, after another host sale, Yuku migrated Freedom to Tapatalk where we closed the doors to new membership, making it a read-only forum. Today, 09/23/20, Turkeyville on Facebook with 13,000+ members is WhyQuit's only active support group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/whyquit>
 4. Spitzer, J, Joel's Library, www.WhyQuit.com/joel
 5. Flower J, In the mush, Physician Executive, Jan-Feb 1999, Volume 25(1), Pages 64-66.
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Freedom from Nicotine – The Journey Home

Originally released on January 1, 2009, the 4th revision was completed October 15, 2020. Individual book topics are shared below and a full 10.8MB 415 page PDF is available at WhyQuit.com/FFN.pdf.

All images have been removed from the following PDF chapters so as to make the files smaller and faster opening on mobile devices. All chapter topics (136) are available with images as [topic web pages](#) in HTML format.

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Only one rule. No nicotine today!

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