

Freedom from Nicotine – The Journey Home

Chapter 5: Packing for the Journey Home

When to Start Home: Now or Later?

Short answer? Now!!!

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

While such advice creates certainty that you'll have time to locate, purchase and toy with replacement nicotine or some other quitting product, it's deadly. Why? Because delay deprives smokers, dippers, vaporers, and chewers of significantly greater odds of success.

A 2006 study found that about half of all smokers attempt to stop smoking without any planning whatsoever. That's right, no planning and no packing at all.

The study's authors were shocked to discover that unplanned attempts were 2.6 times more successful in lasting at least six months than attempts planned in advance.[1]

Results from a 2009 study were nearly identical, also generating increased odds of 2.6.[2]

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

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

"Most people think that when others stop smoking that they must have put a lot of time into preparations and planning, setting a date and following stringent protocols until the magic day arrives. When it comes down to it, this kind of action plan is rarely seen in real-world [cessation]."[3]

In an email to me Joel wrote, "My gut feelings here, I think the difference between planned and

unplanned is that a person who is planning to stop isn't really committed." "If he were committed to it he would just do it - not plan it."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Joel wrote an article attacking such insanity back in 1984.[5] It opens with this rather lengthy list of cessation delay rationalizations, which fit snugly with Philip Morris' advice to continue using.

"I will stop when my doctor tells me I have to." "I can't stop now, it's tax season." "Maybe I will stop on vacation." "School is starting and I'm too nervous to stop." "I will stop in the summer when I can exercise more." "When conditions improve at work I'll stop." "Stop now, during midterms, you must be nuts!" "Maybe after my daughter's wedding." "My father is in the

hospital. I can't stop now." "If I stop now it will spoil the whole trip." "The doctor says I need surgery. I'm too nervous to try now." "After I lose 15 pounds." "I'm making too many other changes right now." "I've smoked for years and feel fine, why should I stop smoking now?" "I'm in the process of moving, and it's a real headache." "It's too soon after my new promotion, when things settle down." "When we have a verifiable bilateral disarmament agreement, I'll consider stopping." "It is too late. I'm as good as dead now."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

When to get started? Unless delay is associated with quality learning that is diminishing needless fears and anxieties, the sooner the better. But even then, you can pack as you go, or as you continue to read, learn and become smarter and wiser than nicotine's grip upon you.

Ask yourself, what moment will ever be a more perfect time to take back control of your mind than when wanting and urges flowing from hijacked dopamine pathways are again commanding use?

This books' lessons are presented in an order roughly paralleling recovery's sequencing and priorities. So, don't worry about finishing this book before taking that first brave step in saying "no."

Just here and now, these next few minutes, yes you can!

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1. West R, et al, "Catastrophic" pathways to smoking cessation: findings from national survey, British Medical Journal, February 2006, Volume 332(7539), Pages 458-460.
 2. Ferguson SG, et al, Unplanned quit attempts--results from a U.S. sample of smokers and ex-smokers, Nicotine & Tobacco Research, July 2009, Volume 11(7), Pages 827-832.
 3. Spitzer, J, Setting Quit Dates, WhyQuit.com/joel, 2006.
 4. Philip Morris USA, Quit Assist, Get Ready, web site visited July 31, 2008.
 5. Spitzer, J, "I will quit when ..." www.WhyQuit.com/ Joel's Library, 1985, note that article references to the word quit "have been here been replaced with the word "stop" in hopes of diminishing any sense of having left something behind.
 6. Internet World Stats, Internet Usage Statistics - The Internet Big Picture, www.internetworldstats.com - 07/17/12.
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Pack for Recovery

If you haven't yet started home, when packing for your journey, will you pack for quitting or recovery?

Instead of inviting mind/head games such as "quitters never win and winners never quit," why not begin by adopting a positive vision of what's about to occur?

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

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

Why not instead pack a healthy mental image of what's about to happen during this temporary journey of re-adjustment? More coins, more time to spend them, taking back your mouth, mind, and #1 priority, you're reclaiming control and "recovering" the real you!

The Oxford dictionary defines "recovery" as "1: a return to a normal state of health, mind, or strength. 2: The action or process of regaining possession or control of something stolen or lost." [1]

A new and exciting beginning or a frightening and much-dreaded end? Are you about to stop smoking, vaping, dipping or chewing or begin the greatest healing process your body and mind have ever known?

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

By simply thinking in terms of taking back, returning, and getting, instead of abandoning, forsaking, and quitting, you'll be pleasantly surprised at the calming effect upon needless anxiety generating sense of loss related fears.

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1. Oxforddictionaries.com, recovery, July 6, 2015.
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Document Your Core Motivations

An e-cigarette users handwritten list of reasons for wanting to quit vaping. What is the inner source that allows us to end once mandatory nicotine feedings? Strength, willpower, or desire?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Those successful in navigating recovery found creative ways to protect and safeguard their

dreams and desires. They somehow kept them robust, invigorated, and available at a moment's notice.

Our core motivations aid in fostering the patience needed to navigate an up to 5 minute subconsciously triggered crave episode. They provide resistance to the nicotine addict's romantic use fixations. Desire's energy stands up to junkie thinking that at times may linger inside the recovering mind.

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

Success is about well-protected and remembered recovery motivations. It's about uniting the realities of use with an understanding of the Law of Addiction (Chapter 2).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

oh so important.

Fear and panic may at times suggest that you flee toward your dependency's grasp; that you leave recovery behind. Failure to document and recall dependency's bad and ugly makes saying "no" to it more challenging.

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

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

Why allow time, challenge, and memory suppression to destroy freedom's dreams? Why run out of gas? Tank up with enough fuel to make it home. Consider spending a few minutes now to document life as an addict. While your list will never grow shorter, consider adding to it the benefits noticed during recovery.

Take a glance now at the sample recovery journal/diary at the end of FFN-TJH. It can be a single piece of paper that you copy/print, complete, and carry with you. Or, make your own!

Pack Durable Motives

Do this for "you," not others

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

- "My husband can't stand it when I smoke. I'm stopping for him."
- "My dentist is constantly nagging me about my dip causing gum disease. I'll stop before my next appointment."
- "I'm hooked on nicotine gum and my two teenagers are telling everyone that dad is a drug addict. I can't take it. I'll stop if they stop."
- "I'm pregnant and stopped for the baby."
- "Our pediatrician claims that my smoking is causing our daughter's illnesses. I'm stopping for her."
- "My doctor says that she won't do surgery if I'm still smoking. She leaves me no choice."
- "My neighbor said my cat smells like cigarettes. My cat deserves better."

While each is making an attempt, they are doing so for the wrong reasons. "While they may have gotten through the initial withdrawal process, if they don't change their primary motivation for abstaining, they will inevitably relapse," wrote Joel in 1984.[138]

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

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

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

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

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

Journey for better health, not fear of failing health

While fear of bad or even failing health can be a powerful motivator in causing us to contemplate recovery, the human body is a healing machine. If allowed, it mends and repairs.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

What if instead of each new health improvement realization eating away at our primary motivation, we looked upon them as rewards that left us wanting to celebrate? Imagine the disappearance of each health concern stirring our imagination about just how good things might become.

Again, initially, fear can be an extremely positive force. It may have been what motivated you to start reading FFN-TJH. But fear lacks staying power. We can only stay afraid for so long. We can only look at so many photographs of diseased lungs or mouth cancers before growing numb to them.

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

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

Do it for total savings, not daily costs

The final motivation we may want to consider shifting and recasting is cost.

The cost of satisfying the brain's demand for nicotine continues to rise. Governments are increasingly using tobacco tax increases in an attempt to motivate users to stop using, or so they say.

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

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

But if we focus upon total savings instead of the cost of our daily or weekly supply, our core

motivation is allowed to grow instead of serve as a source of increasing temptation.

I just glanced and according to my computer's desktop recovery calculator, at \$5.00 per pack of cigarettes (an addict's paradise, South Carolina continues to have almost the cheapest nicotine in America), during my 21 years of healing, I've saved \$130,577 (U.S.) by skipping 468,440 once mandatory nicotine feedings. But in reality, my savings have been far greater.

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

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

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

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

1. Spitzer, J, Joel's Library, Quitting for Others, 1984, <https://whyquit.com/joel>

2. Polito JR, Long-Term Nicorette Gum Users Losing Hair and Teeth, WhyQuit.com, December 1, 2008.

Pack Patience: One Day at a Time

Derived from the French word "pati," which means to suffer or endure, patience is the "quality of being patient in suffering." [1] Ironically, nicotine users suffer from the fact that stimulation of dopamine pathways by use of an external chemical fosters impulsiveness, [2] the opposite of patience.

Yes, the speed with which we were each able to satisfy wanting via a new supply of nicotine conditioned us to develop varying degrees of impatience. As you embark upon this temporary journey of re-adjustment, practice developing patience as an aid to navigating both recovery and challenge.

One Day at a Time: today versus forever

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

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

As Joel notes "this concept is taught by almost all programs which are devoted to dealing with substance abuse or emotional conflict of any kind. The reason that it is so often quoted is that it is universally applicable to almost any traumatic situation." [3]

Think about the needless anxiety and delayed satisfaction experienced by the mindset which felt that victory could only occur if they stopped using for the rest of their lives. Forget about tomorrow. Truth is, any worry or concern about tomorrow is wasted emotion unless we succeed today.

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

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

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

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

For example, picture yourself sitting down at the dinner table and having to eat 67 pounds of beef. Imagine the anxieties associated with thinking we need to eat a large portion of a cow. It sort of destroys the image of a nice juicy steak, doesn't it? Yet the average American consumes 67 pounds of beef annually. [4]

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

I then ask everyone to look around and to never forget what he or she is seeing. I want them to realize that they're not alone. Next, I ask, "How many of you deeply and honestly believe that you can go one hour without smoking nicotine?" Without exception, every hand goes up.

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

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

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

And try not to see this recovery as being in competition with earlier attempts. Although I've remained 100 percent nicotine-free since May 15, 1999, if we both stay 100% free today, your day's worth of freedom will have been no longer, shorter, or less real than mine.

We'll also remain equals in being just one hit of nicotine away from relapse. And when our heads hit our pillows tonight we'll both have achieved a full and complete victory today.

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1. Patience. (n.d.). Online Etymology Dictionary. Retrieved July 27, 2008, from Dictionary.com website.
 2. van Gaalen MM, et al, Critical involvement of dopaminergic neurotransmission in impulsive decision making, *Biological Psychiatry*, July 2006, Volume 1;60(1), Pages 66-73.
 3. Spitzer, J, *Take it One Day at a Time*, WhyQuit.com, Joel's Library, 1985.
 4. Davis CG et al, Factors Affecting U.S. Beef Consumption, USDA, October 2005, Outlook Report No. LDPM13502.
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One Challenge at a Time

Patience allows us to navigate anxiety when confronted by challenge. Our goal is simple, to move beyond challenges until challenge subsides; until our addiction's daily chatter goes silent.

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

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

So how do we navigate the up to 72 hours needed to move beyond peak withdrawal? Just one hour and challenge (if any) at a time.

Managing impatience can be as simple as turning lemons to lemonade in making each task smaller and tasting each victory sooner.

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

The first step is the biggest, mustering the courage to initially say "no" to the wanting building within. There's beauty in the rational thinking mind (your prefrontal cortex) discovering that it has the power to say "no" to begging flowing from the primitive impulsive mind (the limbic or lizard brain).

Those of us addicted to inhaled nicotine conditioned ourselves to expect to sense the satisfaction of nicotine urges and craves within 8-10 seconds of inhaling a puff. Is it any wonder that it may take a few victories before growing confident and skilled at saying "no" to the impulse to use?

Strive to embrace recovery, not fight it. For example, crave episodes are good, not bad. There is a prize at the end of each, breaking and silencing another use cue, and return of another aspect of a nicotine-free life.

When we take recovery just one challenge at a time, it isn't long before so many aspects of life get reclaimed that we have no choice but to accept a simple truth. Everything done while nicotine's slave can be done as well or better without it.

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

Challenge may involve an internal debate. If so, you'll need to muster the patience needed to allow time for honesty and reason to prevail. Chapter 11 is loaded with coping techniques for handling subconscious crave episodes. And Chapter 12 shares tips associated with navigating periods of conscious thought fixation.

Journey Patience

"Why am I still craving?" "When will comfort come?" "How long will it take before I stop thinking about wanting to vape?"

We often see members at Turkeyville who are a month or two into recovery and growing impatient. Once off and running, it's important to remember that recovery is a journey, not an

event.

Once beyond the first week, the challenges are becoming fewer, shorter in duration, and generally less intense. But after a few weeks, improvement gets harder and harder to see.

Some endure substantial self-inflicted anxiety by an intense focus upon concerns about when it will all be over, finished, and done.

Chapter 13 is entitled Homecoming. It's the chapter's primary goal to soothe such concerns. Here, the goal is to minimize the need for Chapter 13.

First, as detailed in Chapter 11 (Subconscious Recovery) and Chapter 12 (Conscious Recovery), challenge reflects healing and is good, not bad.

If related to subconscious conditioning, you're concerned about extinguishing your remaining use cues, about an end to the crave episodes they trigger.

What I hope you'll see is that each episode is a reward announcement. You're about to be awarded the return of a time, place, person, location, activity, or emotion during which you'd conditioned your mind to expect a new supply of nicotine.

As for conscious fixation, see its value. It's pointing to specific junkie thinking.

When you find yourself consciously fixated upon thoughts of wanting to use, it's a golden opportunity to use honesty to correct the tease of the specific use justification that's then and there bantering about inside your mind.

The sooner we're able to realize that the tease flowing from old use memories was created by an addict in need, the sooner it hits us that we're no longer that person.

As with ending any long and intense relationship, fixation is an opportunity to reflect, let go, and move on.

Back to the question of "how long" must we must stay composed, restrained, and diligent before the arrival of calm, quiet, and easy.

While the hundreds of Chapter 13 testimonials show significant variation -- as every person and recovery is different -- I like to think in terms of the time needed to heal a broken bone.

While some are able to quickly let go and put their relationship with nicotine behind them, others will insist on clinging to varying use rationalizations for months. Some even longer.

Still, eventually, the result is the same for all. Patience, time, and new nicotine-free memories

transport us here to "Easy Street," where we begin experiencing entire days without once thinking about wanting to use.

Once here, occasional thoughts of wanting to use will gradually become so infrequent, brief, and mild that they almost become laughable.

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

He warns that, like never-users, ex-users experience horrible days too. Also, negative memory suppression (both of the daily grind of life as an actively feeding addict and the challenges of withdrawal and recovery) will foster a growing sense of complacency.

If allowed, it can leave us feeling and dealing with temptation in social situations. We will each someday experience tremendous stress at home or work, and we will each have loved ones who will eventually die.

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

Strive to find contentment in today's freedom and healing. Celebrate at last being free.

It took years to walk this deeply into dependency's forest. Is it realistic to think that we can walk out overnight? Patience. You'll soon be doing easy-time.

Pack a Positive Attitude

Can we make ourselves miserable on purpose? No doubt about it.

Throughout our lives we've experienced worry, fear, anger, and irritability, only to find out later that our emotions were totally unnecessary as our concern failed to occur.

Always dreaming that today would be my last day as a smoker, the greatest source of self-inflicted anxiety in my entire life was caused by my failure to understand, and the inability to control, my addiction.

Not a "real" drug addict, how could I overcome something that I refused to admit existed? While I constantly thought about stopping, reaching for that next fix was vastly easier and faster.

Sadly, when it came to recovery, I was a walking, talking failure.

What I couldn't then appreciate was that I always had the ability to turn fear and dread into

excitement, that recovery understanding and a can-do attitude are seeds that allow it to happen.

I could have assured my impulsive mind that there was absolutely nothing to fear, that coming home and healing is good and wonderful, not bad. Instead, I was doing the exact opposite.

Try this. Picture a board on the ground that's 18 inches wide and 50 feet long. Now, picture yourself easily and repeatedly walking its entire length of the board, over and over again.

Now, picture the same board suspended between two skyscrapers, fifty stories up. What are the odds of walking its length now without falling? Not good.[1]

Recovery is totally grounded. Why allow false fears to consume and destroy our dreams? The choice of which board to walk is totally yours. Attitude can either escalate and fuel fears, or serve as a calming influence that relaxes and reassures.

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

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

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

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

Imagine a positive attitude becoming your subconscious's teacher, in sharing the truth about the beauty of arriving home. Imagine confident honesty convincing your subconscious to fight on the side that's right.

Encourage your subconscious to take its finger off of the button controlling your body's fight or flight panic response. Help it understand that what needs to be feared is your dependency, and nicotine finding its way back into your bloodstream, not the long-overdue healing associated with ending use.

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

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

Reflect on how repeatedly telling yourself that recovery "is too hard," "endless," or "nearly impossible," would tend to eat away at freedom's dreams and desires.

Reflect on how a positive can-do attitude would reassure your subconscious and help diminish self-induced stress, worry, anxiety, panic, anger, and depression.

Why not allow your dreams to feel the influence of celebrating each moment of freedom, each challenge overcome?

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

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

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

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

What if we know that episodes will almost never be longer than the time it took us to smoke a cigarette?

What if we know that there's a valuable prize at the end, extinguishing another use cue, and return of another aspect of life? What if we know that the only path to fully reclaiming our life is to extinguish all of our use cues?

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

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

If we keep feeding ourselves the thought that recovery is too hard, should we be surprised when our emotions make us feel that it is?

Why feed our mind failure? Why fear the swim and needlessly worry when some of us are not even in the water yet? Why fuel the impulsive mind in breeding powerful negative anxieties?

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

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

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

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

1. Coue, E, Self Mastery through Conscious Autosuggestion, Malken Publishing Co., Inc., 1922.

The Value of Documenting Your Journey

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

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

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

I'm sure you've heard the saying, "those who forget the past are destined to repeat it." It's hard to imagine a situation where it rings truer than with drug recovery and relapse.

Humans tend to repress and inhibit negative emotional memories, and emotional experiences in general.[1] Instead, we remember and replay the good, while forgetting the bad.

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

While your mind may quickly suppress memories of the challenges overcome, ink on paper or words typed into a phone or laptop are durable. The best way to protect against complacency

isn't by forgetting what bondage or recovery was like, but by accurately recalling them.

It's wise to make a record of both your motives for wanting to break free and what the first few weeks were like (see "Sample Nicotine Dependency Recovery Journal or Diary" at the end of Chapter 14).

Consider sending yourself an e-mail before bed. And here's an example of why. Imagine hitting what feels like a recovery plateau, where you no longer sense improvement. Imagine feeling stuck and wondering if it's going to remain this way for good, as if your rosebud stopped opening.

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

It can help calm concerns that recovery has stalled. And although at times nearly impossible to see, I assure you, recovery's rosebud continues to unfold.

Imagine the benefit of journaling each and every day. Imagine the relapse prevention benefit of re-reading your journal one, five, or even ten years later.

Consider making yourself a present gift of future memory. Look at it as free insurance against complacency and relapse. A few memory-jogging notes when starting out could become invaluable during challenges, lulls, or once complacency arrives.

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

Using Ex-users for Refueling

Ex-users can be an excellent source of dependency recovery support. The vast majority are long-term residents here on Easy Street. But a word of caution about ex-users. As just discussed, their memories of the challenges of early recovery have likely been suppressed.

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

Others will look back upon their years of use as having been "vile, disgusting, expensive, stupid,

crazy," or insane.[1] For them, breaking free is now seen as having been common sense, no big deal, a non-event or easy.

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

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

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

What do they most miss? Try to identify any lingering romantic fixations. Reflect upon the honesty of each. Reflect on how this ex-user succeeded, even though they refused to let go of this rationalization.

Imagine if they had. Think about how it places them at greater risk for relapse.

1. Spitzer, J, "I don't know if I have another quit in me," <https://whyquit.com/joels-videos/i-dont-know-if-i-have-another-quit-in-me/>

Using Users & Never-users for Refueling

If questioned, friends or loved ones still hooked and using may not be open and honest about their dependency, or about their dream of someday being free. But, words are unnecessary as their addiction speaks for them.

Users

Carefully watching users can be motivational. You'll often identify them by smell, even before lighting up. If a smoker, that used to be us.

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

While stopped in traffic, look for windows rolled down when rain, heat or cold suggest that they shouldn't be. Upon spotting the smoker, look closely. What motivated this nicotine feeding? Do

they even realize that they're smoking or are they replenishing while on auto-pilot?

Like Pavlov's dogs, have they conditioned their subconscious to expect replenishment when driving?

How's the traffic. Are traffic anxieties releasing stress hormones, causing their urine to turn more acidic, thus accelerating depletion of remaining reserves of the alkaloid nicotine? It's the same acid-alkaloid interaction seen when consuming alcohol.

Do they extend their arm out the vehicle's window in order to keep tobacco toxins from burning their eyes? And once replenishment is complete, what do they do with their non-biodegradable cigarette butt with its 12,000 plastic-like cellulose acetate fibers?[1]

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

It's almost as if they want all who see them to believe that the only reason they are outside is to enjoy the wonderful health benefits of breathing fresh air. But both their toxic clouds and the need to return every hour betray them.

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

If already in recovery yourself, what are the odds that this person is envious of you? According to a 2007 Gallop Poll of U.S. smokers, 74% of polled smokers said they would like to stop smoking, while 67% consider themselves addicted.[2]

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

None awoke this morning and decided to put it on. In fact, never will any now dependent user tell us that they awoke one day and said, "Hey, today I'm going to addict myself to nicotine!"

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

Never-users

When first starting out, unless a secret closet smoker, share your decision. Doing so will invite family, friends, and co-workers to offer initial encouragement and support.

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

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

I'd leaned upon them far too heavily. I'd made them my crutch. I'd made their desire that I stop my primary motivation.

It was a mistake. A mistake that left me feeling deprived of support, resentful and wanting to use. Why had they abandoned me? After relapsing I confronted them.

"Dad, we didn't want to bring it up anymore because we didn't want to remind you and make you keep thinking about smoking."

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

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

1. Polito JR, Cigarette Butts, WhyQuit.com, July 4, 2002.

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

Using Marketing to Boost Resolve

While some nations have banned tobacco product marketing, most have not, including here in the U.S.

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

Effective industry marketing accomplishes three objectives. It encourages youth experimentation, provides use justification, and is bait for relapse.

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

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

justifications as to why we'd returned.

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

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

Think like a tobacco company. Look closely. What subliminal message is each ad or display attempting to pound into your mind?

Where is the "responsible" merchant's message stating that smoking nicotine may be more addictive and harder to beat than heroin or cocaine? Where's the message warning students that they may only need to use nicotine a couple of times before becoming hooked for life?

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

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

As for the above convenience store photo that I took on 09/14/20 here in Goose Creek, SC, the winner was Philip Morris USA. As for Juul getting almost equal billing with Marlboro, Altria Group (formerly Philip Morris), acquired a 35% stake in Juul for \$12.8 billion on December 20, 2018.

And what's the real purpose of the yellow "We Card" sign on the front door in the first image above and similar signs at the checkout counter? Don't you find it odd that there isn't one for alcohol?

It's teen bait. Sponsored by Philip Morris, once secret industry documents suggest that the carding sign's primary purpose is to torment neighborhood youth with the ongoing tease that tobacco use is an adult activity, a rite of passage, that it's what "real" grown-ups do.[1]

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

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

In your mind, strip away the rainbow of color, the fancy packaging, and the almost 700 documented tobacco flavor additives.[2] Instead, see a vast array of different doses of flavored nicotine, each engineered to penetrate tissues at varying rates of speed.

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

1. Polito, J, Convenience Stores - Nicotine Addiction Central, WhyQuit.com, March 18, 2006.

2. Polito, J, Cigarette Additives, Carcinogens and Chemicals, WhyQuit.com, February 7, 2005.

Using Society's Use Controls as Fuel

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

But news that once fostered anxiety can now be beneficial, a source of motivation in helping us stay clean and free.

The following headlines were returned by an August 20, 2020 Google News search of the word nicotine:

- "Nicotine-based insecticides decimate wild birds": Sustainability Times, August 20, 2020
- "BAT on the spot over illegal sale of nicotine pouches In Kenya": Ghetto Radio, August 20, 2020
- "Nearly half of teens who vape say they want to quit": USC News, August 19, 2020
- "Vaping linked to risk of covid-19 in teens and young adults, a study suggests": Washington Post, August 18, 2020
- "IQOS (heated tobacco) replaces vaping as the next cigarette alternative": Bridge Michigan, August 17, 2020
- "Anti-vaping spots by FCB show humiliating side of nicotine addiction": MM&M, August 17, 2020
- "Hospital systems support tobacco tax measure": Lund Report, August 13, 2020
- "Nicotine replacement therapy market worth USD 3.54 billion by 2027": Fortune Business Insights, August 4, 2020

We've watched as the clean indoor air movement has slowly swept the globe, often with e-cigs and vaping being treated the same as smoking. Workers and non-smokers are demanding the right to breathe toxin-free air.

We've watched as smoking was banned in airplanes, in New York's 843 acre Central Park, on all hospital property in nearly every major city, in community playgrounds, in cemeteries, on hundreds of college campuses, at outdoor sporting events, on Hawaii's most famed beaches, on sidewalks in Japan, on all California beaches, and in every room in most hotels.

Smoke-free jails and prisons are the new normal. So is a ban on smoking inside company-owned or government vehicles. Governments are now taking aim at a ban on smoking inside any vehicle transporting a child. And smoking is increasingly a factor considered in family court child custody, visitation, and child abuse decision-making.

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

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

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

It's a situation made worse by cash strapped governments that increasingly became dependent on tobacco taxes, and the dependability of nicotine's grip upon the addict's brain.

Personally, it's offensive that most politicians either accept tobacco industry campaign contributions or look upon the enslaved nicotine addict as a highly dependable taxpaying cash cow. They just don't seem to get it. Or then, maybe they do.

At \$48.50 for a pack of Marlboro Golds and the nation's cheapest pack of cigs costing \$29.00, Australia has the highest cigarette prices in the world.[1]

It also has a ban on cigarette advertising nationwide, logo-less and colorless cigarette packs totally void of branding (plain packaging), with nearly the entire cigarette pack covered by photos of smoking-induced diseases or dead smokers.

So how's all that working? Is the government succeeding in motivating Aussie smokers to stop? No.

Here in the U.S. we have no disturbing photos on packs, the nation's average price in 2020 was \$5.51 per pack,[2] and it isn't unusual to see cigarettes being openly advertised and sold near schools.

What's fascinating is that the adult rate of current smoking in both nations is rather close, 13.7%

in the U.S. in 2018,[3] and 14.7% in Australia in 2019.[4]

The bottom line? Real drug addicts, coerced cessation isn't nearly as effective as one might think. So if you're thinking that breaking free would be easier if the price were to double, triple, quadruple, or quintuple, think again.

Vaping is currently significantly cheaper than smoking. But with tobacco companies buying up e-cig companies, governments battling teen addiction to Juuling, and concern over vaping technology being used for delivery of illegal drugs, there's every reason to expect the price difference to narrow.

The vaping addict's dream of being able to tank-up inside public buildings is under heavy assault too, as governments at all levels are amending smoke-free indoor air laws so as to treat e-cigs and cigs the same.

Let's face it, society will continue to increasingly see and treat the nicotine addict as a social outcast, leper, pariah, litterbug, and loser. Imagine what it's like for the pregnant smoker.

Whether we accept or deplore the way society treats those still in bondage, news of the latest assaults upon them can serve as motivation that helps prevent us from joining them.

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1. Krisinda M, Australian cigarette prices set to become the highest In the world, Nova FM, January 20, 2020, <https://www.novafm.com.au/lifestyle/shopping/australian-cigarette-prices-set-to-become-the-highest-in-the-world/>
 2. Fair Reporters, Cigarette prices by state, January 17, 2020, <https://fairreporters.net/health/prices-of-cigarettes-by-state/> - accessed August 20, 2020.
 3. CDC, Current Cigarette Smoking Among U.S. Adults Aged 18 Years and Older: <https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/campaign/tips/resources/data/cigarette-smoking-in-united-states.html> - accessed August 20, 2020.
 4. Greenhalgh, EM, Bayly, M & Scollo MM. 1.3 Prevalence of smoking -- adults. Tobacco in Australia: Facts and issues. Melbourne: Cancer Council Victoria; 2020. Available from <http://www.tobaccoinaustralia.org.au/chapter-1-prevalence/1-3-prevalence-of-smoking-adults> - accessed August 20, 2020.
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Using the Internet to Keep Recovery Fueled

What if you don't own a computer or a mobile device, or haven't yet learned how to navigate the web? What about enlisting a friend or family member?

Also, consider visiting your local library as it likely offers both free Internet access and web browser use training.

All you really need to get started is a basic lesson on how to use a web page search engine such as Google or Yahoo, how to move around or navigate a web page (a page selected from your search results), and how to print articles you wish to keep.

For starters, visit WhyQuit.com. To do so, simply move the mouse pointer to the address window at the top of the web browser page and delete the current address being displayed. Now, simply type "whyquit.com" in the address window and then press "enter" or "return."

Presto! Welcome to WhyQuit! The site is totally free, declines all donations, sells nothing, has no advertising, and is staffed entirely by volunteers.

Notice how WhyQuit's homepage is broken down into three categories: (1) Why Quit Smoking (motivation), (2) How to Stop Smoking (education), and (3) Help Quitting (support)

"Why Quit Smoking" motivation pages include heart-wrenching stories about young tobacco victims. For example, lung cancer was diagnosed when Noni was 32 years old and had just given birth to her first child, and when Bryan was 33 and enjoying his two-year-old son Bryan, Jr.

Visitors learn how the 33-year-old daughter of comedian Carol Burnett died. They meet Deborah who was 38 and her 11-year-old daughter, and Kim, a much-beloved member of Freedom who was 44, and her loving sister Kelly.

Clearly, WhyQuit intentionally shares horrific stories about the youngest of the young. We openly admit attempting to awaken smokers to the fact that predicting who tobacco toxins will kill, and at what age, is no different than playing Russian roulette with a loaded gun.

But with roughly one-quarter of adult lifetime smokers being claimed by their addiction during middle-age, young victim stories are far more common than smokers think.

The "How to Stop" link leads to Joel's Library, the 40+ years of cessation insights of my 20+ year mentor Joel Spitzer. Inside Joel's Library, you'll find links to more than 100 insightful stop smoking articles, to Joel's free ebook "Never Take Another Puff," to his daily recommended lesson guide, and links to Joel's more than 500 YouTube stop smoking videos.

"How to Stop" also leads to articles I've written, including this book. While full revisions to this book occur every few years, the most current and up to date version will always be available at WhyQuiton in HTML webpage format. As new studies are released or insights change, this is where they'll be documented first.

The "Help Quitting" link provides links to support sites. For example, imagine being in the company of more than 13,000 cold turkey ex-users. Exclusively a cold turkey group, Turkeyville is WhyQuit's fast-moving Facebook support group:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/whyquit>

Managed by two of Joel's earliest online graduates, Joy Kauffman and Sallie Hamilton, Turkeyville posting privileges are reserved for those who have abruptly ended all use of nicotine.

I challenge you to find any Internet support group that's more focused, single-minded, serious, or productive than Turkeyville.

At both forum's you'll quickly notice that education always comes first. It must. Why?

Because we discovered very early (1999-2000) that a forum's ability to support and sustain recovery in a purely pep-rally type environment ("You can do it!") is dismal at best. While the initial excitement of interacting with other ex-users is often tremendous, it eventually begins to wane. As it does, the forum's value and effectiveness in supporting success diminishes.

We learned that when members have little or no education or recovery skills to fall back upon, that group relapse rates become horribly unacceptable (less than 10-15% at 6 months).

Visitors to Turkeyville need not join in order to read and benefit from the forum's messages. In fact, most don't. Still, our volunteers treat visitor emails and their Facebook messages as though they're part of the family.

Thus, Turkeyville functions as a virtual classroom with enormous windows. Maintaining positive control over membership and posting privileges ensures a high-quality classroom-type learning experience for all.

It also prevents chaos and makes sure that Turkeyville's seasoned volunteer educators aren't overwhelmed when a major newspaper, magazine or other media source features our work and we're flooded with membership requests.

Every message posted at Turkeyville must relate to recovery. General socialization isn't permitted, including the celebration of birthdays, anniversaries, or your nation's or religion's holidays.

Clearly, Turkeyville isn't for those seeking to socialize or make new friends. Nearly seven million tobacco-related deaths expected by year's end, the group is deadly serious about its mission. Our goal is simple: to aid all who visit in remaining nicotine-free today.

As for Turkeyville being a 100 percent nicotine-free support site, there must be at least one place on earth where nicotine has no voice. Those posting to the group are certifying to all that they stopped cold turkey without the use of any product or procedure and have remained 100% nicotine-free.

Although it may sound harsh, applicants must also agree to abide by Turkeyville's relapse policy. That policy states that should any member relapse that they lose group posting privileges. Obviously, the aim is to encourage members to take recovery seriously.

One final point. The rules also prohibit mention of any commercially sold book, product, diet, or procedure. Both forums were built and are rooted in the principle that cold turkey is 100% free, without cost or obligation, and with no purchases necessary.

As such, the forum will not permit any suggestion that any reader needs to spend any money or make any purchase in order to succeed, including purchasing the paperback version of this book.

If sharing links to FFN-TJH at any online site please only share the link to WhyQuit's free versions. Otherwise, expect your post to be deleted or edited.

As for deleted posts, please don't post at Turkeyville if you have not yet started your recovery, or if your attempt involves e-cigarette use, replacement nicotine, Chantix, Zyban, hypnosis, acupuncture, or any gradual nicotine weaning scheme, or if you've relapsed and are using again.

Not only will you force the group's volunteers to waste time and energy in enforcing the group's rules, you're also inviting needless frustration. There are many online support groups dedicated to other quitting methods.

Again, Turkeyville is a place where nicotine has no voice. To our thinking, to do otherwise would be no different than allowing alcoholics to come to AA meetings drunk, with their bottle in hand.

Recovery meters

Under "Help Quitting," WhyQuit provides visitors links to free stop smoking meters. These are small computer programs or applications (apps) that can either be downloaded to and installed on your computer, laptop, or mobile device, or used while online without any need for a download.

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

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

And this is how nearly all online recovery calculators are used. You enter your use history, and then simply copy the calculated stats and paste them where you wish them to appear.

Here, I'm copying and pasting my stats as of September 2020, while using Harry's Quit Counter :

John - Free and healing for twenty-one years, four months and eight days while extending my life expectancy 1,625 days by avoiding the use of 468,131 nicotine delivery devices that would have cost me a minimum of \$130,482.19.

Like a car's odometer, they're a fun way of tracking, marking, and measuring your journey home. Links to free meters can also be found at both Freedom and Turkeyville.

Support unlimited

It's my hope that the above online recovery support suggestions will stir your thinking. You are not confined to just WhyQuit. The only limit to identifying additional means of keeping our recovery dreams fueled and vibrant is the limits of our imagination.

And our objective here is simple. It's finding creative ways to stay sufficiently motivated for as long as it takes to get comfortable.

Remember, whether today is good or bad, whether feeling motivated or not, your freedom and healing are guaranteed to continue so long as you stick to one guiding principle ... no nicotine, none!

Using "You" to Re-fuel Determination

Clearly, your most dependable source of support is "you." What are your most valuable motivational assets?

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

Again, while the early part of this journey can be emotional, it's wise to expect and prepare now for significant negative memory suppression. Also expect to suppress old use memories, including the hourly and daily grind of life as an actively feeding addict.

Find quality ways to preserve those memories. It's wise to have them available as a crave coping tool, to serve as a recovery progress report, and later as an aid in fending off complacency. Doing so will be like owning a high-quality battery charger.

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

motivational tool.

Closet users

Pretend for a second that you're a closet smoker. If a secret user, your family and friends either never knew you were hooked or were told that you successfully broke free long, long ago.

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

If a recovering closet-user, in addition to celebrating self-honesty, there's tremendous relief in at last being honest with those we love.

Having lived in almost constant fear of being exposed, whether or not we come totally clean and share our secret, the emotional rewards of no longer living a lie can themselves be extremely supportive.

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

Plan to gift & reward yourself along the way

Have you ever had a piggy bank or slush fund? What will happen to the money you used to use to purchase your daily or weekly supply of nicotine, money quickly burned, vaporized, or chewed-up?

Imagine daily or weekly spending it to bring extra moments of joy to your life. Imagine saving it up and purchasing something you've long wanted but didn't feel you could afford.

What if saving it was transformed into a recovery incentive program with an eye toward the purchase of a new wardrobe, a long overdue vacation, neglected dental work, or a brand new car?

Imagine money once used to enslave, deprive, and harm you being used to foster healthy living, fond memories, smiles, and fun.

Destroy All Remaining Nicotine

As real addicts in every sense, many of us engaged in pretend quitting games. I certainly did. It allowed me the peace of mind that I was working on the problem, that it was simply a matter of time, that someday I'd discover the key to success.

Like the recovering alcoholic's hidden bottle, clear and convincing evidence of gamesmanship

includes keeping nicotine handy after stopping.

The rationalizing addict has a number of available justifications. We could pretend that we forgot about our stash, that it wasn't a stash but simply an oversight, or it was our emergency backup, just in case the moment became too big to handle.

We could also play power games, that we needed to keep nicotine available to prove that we were stronger than our addiction and in full control.

The "stronger" tactic makes as much sense as someone on suicide watch carrying a loaded gun while fighting the urge to pull the trigger. Some insist on carrying their nicotine with them, while others knowingly keep delivery within quick and easy reach.

We'll never be stronger than nicotine. Brains over bronze, we don't need to be. Our #1 weapon has always been our intelligence but only if put to work.

Imagine feeling a need to tempt and toy with dependency rooted impulsiveness, in order to claim victory over it. It's rooted in a natural desire to at last prevail over years and years of yearnings endured by a chemically dependent mind.

But with moments of significant stress a normal part of life, it's a formula for failure. Why treat quick access to nicotine as though a life jacket? It's a jacket, but more like a straight-jacket that restrains and enslaves, not saves.

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

Keeping nicotine delivery handy is contrary to learning to live without it. Isn't it time to give "serious" a try? Check for cigarettes or a tin that may have fallen under furniture, beneath a cushion, or under a car seat.

Throw out all old nicotine replacement products (the gum, patch, lozenge, spray, and inhaler), all pipes, pipe cleaners, roll-your-own supplies and equipment, all papers, pen type e-cigs, tanks, mods, extra juice, coils or chargers, and any smokeless tobacco, spittoons, and any cigars. And that oh so special Cuban cigar cutter too.

Getting rid of all nicotine may buy you precious seconds during challenging moments. With cue triggered crave episodes peaking within three minutes, a few seconds of delay may be all that's needed to begin sensing anxieties peak and then start easing off.

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

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

"Cigarettes were stronger than you before, and, if given the chance, will be stronger than you again, warns Joel. "If you want to show you are now in control, do it by admitting you can function without having cigarettes as a worthless and dangerous crutch." [1]

You'll do just fine, even if your job requires you to be near or handle nicotine products, or if you live with someone who insists upon leaving their cigarettes, e-cigs, cigars, dip, chew, or NRT lying around. It simply means that you'll extinguish those use cues sooner than most.

Mind games involving conscious temptation are very much within our ability to control. Be smart. Don't just break remaining cigarettes in two, as being done by the woman in the above photo. Crush, throw-out or flush all remaining nicotine beyond your ability to straighten, repair, tape, filter, scoop up, or otherwise reclaim it.

Doing so is a way of proclaiming that this time is different, that the time for games is over, that at last I'm serious about coming home and seeing what it's like to experience the real me!

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

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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