

SEVENMINUTES

The Nicotine Anonymous Quarterly

A FORUM FOR NICOTINE USERS WHO DON'T USE

VOL. XI, ISSUE NO. 1

FIRST QUARTER, 2000

STILL SMOKING?

Gwynn A., Alberta Beach, Alberta, Canada.

When I was 23, I tried to quit smoking for the first time. What a horrible experience that was! I ate continuously for 24 hours, sitting up in bed eating crackers all night, because the moment I stopped eating, I went crazy with desire for a cigarette. Finally, after 24 hours, my husband begged me to smoke again. He said I was so bad-tempered he couldn't stand me.



That was to be the reason I gave up on quitting smoking for the next 30 years - always because I was so bad-tempered with everyone - myself, the people I loved and strangers too. Being without a smoke made me "beside myself." I came to understand the real meaning of that phrase. Without a smoke, I literally stood "beside myself" and watched this bad-tempered, wretched person who had no patience and bad manners to boot.

Why couldn't I quit? To this day, I am not sure I know the answer. The only answer I know is that if I had been as addicted to alcohol or street drugs as I was to tobacco, I would be on skid row. Thank goodness, I at least had an acceptable addiction. Except that, in the past 10 years, it too became unacceptable.

And then I got interested, very interested, in being healthy. Well, it's quite two-faced to give other people advice on how to get healthy and then sneak off behind some building to have a quick puff and hope you don't smell like smoke when you go back to the group. So I had to quit this wretched habit. But how?

I had tried all the methods smokers try. None lasted. All drove me crazy, literally made me "beside myself" personality-wise.

So, I did several things. I began taking hormones, laid in a stock of herbs, and joined Nicotine Anonymous. I knew I had to find a support group - people who wanted to quit, but understood what it was like to really be an addict. I found a Nicotine Anonymous group where anyone who wants to become a non-smoker is welcome.

The first night I attended, I participated in the Serenity Prayer, the Twelve-Step Program and we ended with the Lord's Prayer and told each other to keep coming to the meetings, whether we managed to quit smoking or not. That night, I went home, smoked a few cigarettes, gathered up all my ashtrays, matches and packages of cigarettes and had a bonfire of my smoking paraphernalia before going to bed. The next morning I warned all my friends to stay away from me for three days and started taking the herbs and continuing with the hormones. An old boyfriend made the mistake of stopping in to see me unannounced. I told him he could stay for awhile but only if he refrained from arguing with me about anything. That lasted about 20 minutes and then he started an argument. I escorted him to the door with a loud, "OUT!"

After three days of being alone with my bad temper, it began to dissolve. I was proud as punch that I had quit smoking when I attended the next Nicotine Anonymous meeting. More seasoned members cautioned me not to be proud, but to be humble and grateful that a Higher Power was helping me. - Continued on page 9

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Our Preamble

Nicotine Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women helping each other to live our lives free of nicotine. We share our experience, strength and hope with each other so that we may be free from this powerful addiction. The only requirement for membership is the desire to stop using nicotine. There are no dues or fees for Nicotine Anonymous membership; we are self supporting through our own contributions. Nicotine Anonymous is not allied with any sect, denomination, political entity, organization or institution; does not engage in any controversy, neither endorses nor opposes any cause. Our primary purpose is to offer support to those who are trying to gain freedom from nicotine.

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Letters to the editor, articles or graphics for inclusion in SevenMinutes may be sent to:

SevenMinutes c/o NAWSO P.O. Box 126338 Harrisburg, PA 17112-6338

Subscription requests, circulation additions and deletions may be sent to the same address.

Articles may also be sent by E-mail to <info@nicotine-anonymous.org>

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THE TWELVE STEPS

- 1. We admitted we were powerless over nicotine--that our lives had become unmanageable.
- 2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
- 3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God, as we understood Him.
- 4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
- 5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
- 6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
- 7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
- 8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
- Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or
 others
- 10. Continued to take personal inventory, and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.
- 11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry it out.
- 12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to other nicotine users and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

The Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol--that our lives had become unmanageable. 2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity. 3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God, as we understood Him. 4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves. 5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs. 6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character. 7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings. 8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all. 9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others. 10. Continued to take personal inventory, and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it. 11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry it out. 12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to other alcoholics and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

The Twelve Steps reprinted and adapted here with the permission of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. Permission to reprint and adapt the Twelve Steps does not mean that A.A. is affiliated with this program. A.A. is a program of recovery from alcoholism - use of the Twelve Steps in connection with programs and activities which are patterned after A.A., but which address other problems, does not imply otherwise. The original Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous are reprinted above.

NEWS FROM NAWSO



Dear Friends and Fellow Addicts,

On behalf of the Board, I am pleased to submit this summary of the Officer's Meeting held on October 16, 1999 in Los Angeles, California.

- The Board approved a motion to accept literature orders via credit card. GMK Remote Office Management, which handles our administrative and secretarial functions, will be set up to accept such orders using their fax line and by regular mail. Please look for more information about this on the web, in SevenMinutes and via email as we get closer to having this new system in place. (This new practice has been established with members outside of the United States in mind who were paying excessive fees for purchasing our literature with US currency.)
- We have inched closer to establishing a toll-free number. The Board approved a motion to establish an 800 line and *Scott J.*, Chair-Elect, will be researching the best rates to present for Board approval in January.
- Mike K. is spearheading a project to sort through and file the many, many boxes of NAWS materials that we have collected over the years. If you live in the Southern California area and are interested in participating in this archiving project, please contact him at 818-703-8545.
- In an attempt to further clarify our position on links on our website, and in the spirit of Keeping it Simple, the Board voted not to have any links to any groups at all at this time.
- Our next mailing to groups will include a meeting confirmation form. We are going to try to improve our system for tracking meetings in order to provide the most accurate information possible. Please look for this new form in future mailings to groups.

Our meeting ended in plenty of time to take a walk along the "other" ocean and return for the 5:00 p.m. Nicotine Anonymous meeting held just downstairs from the Board meeting. It was a truly humbling experience to look around the room and see that among the people present were some of the earliest members of the fellowship. In addition, there was a woman with three days off nicotine reminding each of us of our own early days and helping us to keep focused on our purpose as a Board - to carry the message.

Several of us attended the Southern California Intergroup meeting the following morning where I learned that lively discussions are not unique to the New York Intergroup! Thanks in particular to *Jack R., Joe S.* and *John N.* who handled our lodging, transportation and other logistics. We'll be back on January 15, 2000 for our final quarterly Board meeting before the Conference. Please join us if you like or let me know about any issues you'd like addressed on your behalf.

In grateful service,

Martha K.

Chairperson

Nicotine Anonymous World Services

A LIFE OF FREEDOM

Gina F., Jackson, GA



My name is Gina and I am a Nicotine Addict. Nicotine Anonymous has given me a life of freedom that I never dreamed possible.

I started smoking at 16 but then I quit at 19 for one year and then doubled up on my drinking. The crisis day finally came when I returned to smoking and I loved every minute of it. Someone asked if I had a desire to stop using Nicotine. I never did but I did get the desire to start living and stop dying. I loved smoking. It was my friend through every tribulation in life. I smoked on the phone, in the car, at work, in bed, after sex, watching TV. Whatever the occasion was I smoked. They were my VERY, VERY best friend. Today I have to watch for loneliness and self pity because that is when the compulsion usually returns for me. They say the thought that I can smoke successfully has to be smashed. I tried so drastically to quit on my own and just COULDN'T. Every two weeks I was quitting and stopping. I was told if I don't ever start again, I don't ever have to quit again. To pick one up is total insanity for me, to undo what I have already done. The pamphlet, "Tips for Gaining Freedom from Nicotine" gave me so much hope and told me what to do when the seven minute urge started. I got some water or went for a walk. I didn't let people cause me to smoke. I crushed a carton of cigarettes like a mad woman one night. I was so full of anger at what nicotine had done to my life. When I started loving me, I quit letting people walk on me by me lighting up and killing myself. I started standing up to people instead of lighting the cigarette.

In 1986, I had to give up drinking so my smoking doubled. In 1988, my stomach had all kinds of trouble and they said I needed to quit so I quit for four months. I became so suicidal that I had to return to my addiction. Then in 1989, I was hospitalized for depression and they started saying that my smoking was what was causing my anxiety to go wild. But I couldn't believe them. The quits did help me to see that when I wasn't smoking I wasn't near as anxious. All along I thought smoking was calming my anxiety and the honest truth was it was causing it to get worse. But the days of bronchitis started getting my attention. I was in the doctors' offices for about one week out of the month. They wanted to do surgery but they said if they did the surgery and I continued to smoke I would have to keep continually having surgery. I became very tired with lack of energy and of course, the doctors said it was smoking. I just couldn't believe that smoking was causing all of these problems for me. I was so caught up in the muck of denial I couldn't see the truth. I started the smoking cessation classes only to return to smoking. I couldn't let go or give up the control.

My Dad said he would build me a brand new house when I retired from the Air Force. A guy dropped a cigarette on the porch and burned up the porch and blackened the blocks. Thank God he didn't put it on foundation like he planned or my new house would have been burned up. The real sadness was I still smoked and couldn't stop. Four of my AA friends died from smoking. I was praying and I just got this power that God wanted me to start Nicotine Anonymous meeting. Harry S., a doctor friend who had quit would help me. So I was going to prove to God that Harry doesn't have time for such nonsense. Well, I called Harry and he said sure and Sherry will be glad to help, too. At one time, we all three kept the windshields pretty fogged going out. My Higher Power led me to that group. On July 24, 1995, my NIC A friends said, "Gina, if you don't light up tonight, you'll have 24 hours." Somehow I didn't light up and was able to let go of trying to control nicotine. It always controlled me. I've got a deal with nicotine - if I don't mess with it, it don't mess with me. I started two more groups but they collapsed and some of my friends said they were a failure. But they weren't, because I didn't smoke. I had no groups, so I went to a World Service Conference in Chicago and people started emailing me and Zulma got me to join the AOL online meeting. My recovery was so important that I changed my Internet service. John O., the Chairperson would email and talk to me about things going on. He said, you like this computer stuff, huh. So he asked would I be interested in doing email servant and it gave me hope. I was finally connected to Nicotine Anonymous people, at least every week. Later the email coordinator resigned and he asked would I be interested in being The World Services Email Coordinator. I said, I would try. It has been a great gift. I get to see what

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happens to people that smoke and I get to see what happens to people that live this program and watch their lives change. Just to know I was a small part of it makes me feel so good. They asked me to join them at the Clean in the Catskills retreat. That was a big turn around. I met so many people that gave me so much support. The swimming and mountain hike and all the exercise helped me to realize that the exercise would help me to deep breathe. I once had a friend get emphysema after quitting because he wouldn't deep breathe. It helped me to get honest with my addiction. It took a while but I did join a health spa and now with water aerobics, I have met so many more people. I feel good about me.

The Officers meeting was to be in Long Island, New York and I desperately wanted to be there to discuss the growth of Nicotine Anonymous on the Internet. I was able to stand up for what I believe. I believe we can help a lot of people stop using nicotine through the Internet and getting meetings online. In the beginning, I thought I had lost. But I was proud that I could stand up for me and my friends. That day was my 4th year free from Nicotine, July 24th. They gave me cake, a balloon and lots of hugs and people telling me how proud they were of me. One lady was there that I remember from three years ago when I was so fragile. When I saw her I knew I had made a lot of progress. I cried all the way back to the RV park because now I had four hard years of starting and stopping and now four easy years with Nicotine Anonymous.

How did I get to New York from Georgia? I'd been wanting to drive this RV up there and see the sites but everyone said, wait until you meet someone. So, I finally just accepted the fact that I wasn't going to meet anyone. I talked to *John O*. one night online and he said it sounded like a good idea. If I needed help, they would help me. I knew then that I was really going to get to do it. The people in Nicotine Anonymous gave me hope to make my dream come true. I bought this truck and a 25 foot Fifth Wheel RV. I got everything inspected and friends taught me about it. On the Virginia state line the transmission blew out. I was hoping it was the \$200 deal but in my guts I just knew it was fried. I prayed the serenity prayer and sure enough it was the whole deal of \$800. In New York the brakes went out. In New Hampshire, I hit a dumpster and tore a hole in it. But I kept thinking, I am doing what I always wanted and it can be fixed. I met a man in Pennsylvania that fixed a lot of things for me and taught me more about the RV.

I was going over the mountain in West Virginia and the truck started to overheat so I went to pull off the road. It wasn't a rest stop. It was a treacherous hunting path and nowhere to turn a RV around. I really thought I was in Death Valley. The brakes on the truck and trailer started to skid and I saw the lake below and I just started praying, "God please don't let me go down there where John Kennedy , Jr. is." Then the thought came, "you've got to offload this camper and go get help." The Navy base called a tow guy but he couldn't come until morning. I woke at 5:30 because I couldn't sleep and went back up the mountain. My RV was still there and I found a turn around. I went back to call the tow guy and this insane thought came that said, "YOU CAN DO IT." I know it was my Higher Power. I went back up the mountain and hooked that RV up and pulled it off of the mountain. I called my friend back in Pennsylvania that was helping me learn about RVs and I asked him if they had any spaces left. He said, "yes, your spot is still empty" and they held it. I went back to Pennsylvania to give me some space and time to calm down. The tailgate came off and tore the gas line. He fixed everything for me. The fifth wheel wouldn't work right but he got it fixed. Meeting those people in Pennsylvania was a miracle. We were all retired military with RVs and we had a common bond, too.

On the way home, the electric brakes caught fire and a guy motioned for me to pull off. I always knew my Higher Power was there. I didn't even think of smoking, because I have a program with loving caring people to handle things without a cigarette. I just kept doing the next right thing. I got to do what I always wanted to do. I got to see some of northern United States. Me and my two dogs got to hike in the White Mountains on the Appalachian trail. I got to see a lot of history in Boston. I went into New York City on the train and it made me feel like a teenager when I worked at the Loews Grand in Atlanta. I drove that RV through Brooklyn and I did a lot of things that I never thought I could do, including driving an RV out of Death Valley without Nicotine.

A PRAYER Don U., Long Island, NY

Dear God,

I feel powerless over my addiction. I come before you and humbly ask you to help do for me what I cannot do for myself. My faith falters as I struggle. Renew me. Help me to see the truth. Give me your strength that I may be free, for I have never known true freedom. Show me the way. Love me and carry me through this volatile time, for in my heart I know with you all things are possible. Build for me a foundation of unshakable faith, and. give me the confidence to believe in myself, and the fellowship which surrounds me. Guide me, nourish my spirit, give me life. Although right now it feels painful, I know I must do this. I do this as a gift for you, for all you have given me, and for my life.....

Amen

TRADITION THREE

Lenna M., Houston, TX

This is a work in progress - several Nicotine Anonymous members were asked to write long forms of the Nicotine Anonymous Traditions for inclusion in the revision of Nicotine Anonymous: THE BOOK. This is one of them.

The only requirement for Nicotine Anonymous membership is a desire to stop using nicotine.

Those of us who are part of Nicotine Anonymous want to include every nicotine user who wishes to join us. We have been freely given the precious gift of recovery from the deadly disease of nicotine addiction. And all that was asked of us was that we have some small desire to stop using nicotine. How could we now presume to deny this gift to others? We may not share a newcomer's beliefs. But there are those among us who found it necessary to shed all our old beliefs to find peace in our recovery.

You don't have to have already stopped using nicotine to join us. Some of us did not even feel we had a desire until day after day, week after week, meeting after meeting we finally got it and finally got free. There is only ONE requirement for membership, a desire to stop using nicotine. You don't have to belong to any other group, believe in God, donate money or work the steps in a certain way to join us. We are not afraid of the emotions you may express when you stop using nicotine. You are not required to be rational or lucid or say all the correct things at meetings. We've been there. We would not exclude you from our program for any reason including your race, reputation, creed, sexual orientation, gender, disability or place of origin. If you are not sure the desire to stop using nicotine is within you, but you are willing to find out, you are welcome here.

Most of us lived in the well of denial, alienation and pain that is caused by nicotine addiction for many years. We would not leave a suffering addict at the bottom of that well alone now that we have the rope of recovery that we can toss down to them. Granted, they must be willing to take hold of the rope in order to climb out and join us. But, that is all we require. Some of our members feel they were actually pulled up out of their addiction by the simple act of asking for help. Others find that the gift of recovery from nicotine was more difficult to accept, having to struggle up that rope and slip back down many times before becoming fully free of their addiction. There are those of us who have been through the worst of our addiction and come out free on the other side. We are not only aware of the dangers of nicotine addiction but also very grateful for the spiritual gift of recovery that makes our freedom possible. So, we keep showing up at meetings and tossing down the rope of our truth; which is our experience, strength and hope, to others.

Sometimes, there was a problem with the word desire. We did not want to give up our drug. Perhaps we feared that we could not live without it. Despite attending many meetings or possibly abstaining from nicotine use for periods of time, we felt sure that we had no honest desire to stop. However, once we discussed this issue with other members, we found that in the beginning others did not necessarily fedha tremendous desire to stop either. Some had even repeated in meetings that they did not want to put down nicotine at all. Some of us only wanted to live and were afraid we would die if we continued to use nicotine. Some only had a desire to find our Higher Power's will for us. Some wanted to improve our health. And many of us wanted to want to stop using nicotine. We have come to understand that any of these or even the simple willingness to show up at meetings can be defined as a desire to stop using nicotine. Also, there have been those who had difficulty with the word nicotine. While they felt they had a desire to quit smoking or chewing tobacco, they may not have felt ready to give up some other nicotine delivery systems. We have found that this also is a good place to begin and that a desire to stop using nicotine in all forms will follow in time.

Once clear of the smoke screen nicotine placed between our true desires and our thoughts, we realized that we do indeed have a great desire to stay free of this cunning and dangerous drug. Now most of us not only have a desire to remain free of nicotine, but we also have a great desire to really live our lives. For many of us going back to using nicotine would mean giving up wonderful new joys that have been added to our lives. Things such as hiking, aerobics, sharing time with friends, intimacy in our relationships, our new found health and even the ability to sit still through a movie or a plane ride would be taken from us if we returned to our addiction. Our desire to continue with our new lives now far outweighs any desire we may still have for our drug.

So, if you wish to become a Nicotine Anonymous member, come join us. If you are willing to call us or walk into our rooms, we have faith that the desire to stop is within you. No matter who you are, no matter how many other addictions you may have, no matter what your troubles are, you will find we have them too. We want you here with us. We are keeping you in our thoughts and hope you will choose to join us in the wonderful life and freedom we have found after nicotine.

Welcome to Nicotine Anonymous!

ANANNIVERSARY STORY Beverly R., North Fort Myers, FL

Since my 11th anniversary is November 3rd I would like to share a little of my story. I smoked a lot, and I never wanted to quit. I liked smoking. There were a whole lot of things that I wasn't keen on like my hair, body and clothes smelling like an ashtray, always having my "stash", being rude to nonsmokers and the list goes on and on. But I loved smoking, I loved the rituals. But then I couldn't breathe so well. Had to stand by the bed and cough, cough, cough to get any air moving. I got scared. But I loved to smoke.

I had tried before to stop, half heartily and for all the wrong reasons.

This time it was for real. I "switched down and quit." Gum and Patches were not available to me at that time. I changed brands every three weeks for eight weeks until I reached the day marked "Quit".

It was no fun but it got better every day, each day one step closer to feeling good emotionally, physically and spiritually.

I could not have done it without the weekly meeting of Nicotine Anonymous and the support of the folks that attended and still attend that meeting. I try to make it a weekly happening for I am one puff away from a pack as one of our members said. I do not want to smoke ever again. For me, I have been shown nicotine is a mood altering drug and I would not like to alter my moods again.

I am grateful...

Beverly R.

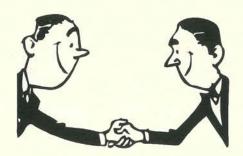
As that old saying goes, take what you like and leave the rest and it is real OK if you don't like any of it..

Happy smobriety....

KEEPING IT BY GIVING IT AWAY Curt R., West Hartford, CT

I have been smober now for almost 7 months and it hasn't been easy. I chewed nicotine gum before I got smober and that helped me get off the smokes. I then found out about Nicotine Anonymous on the web and purchased the "Nicotine Anonymous" book. With experience in another 12 step program, I was familiar with the "One Day at a Time" concept and applied it to my nicotine use. The answers to the questionnaire in the Nicotine Anonymous book helped me out quite a bit. I related to a lot of the answers. Although I have yet to go to a NicA meeting, the literature has kept me smober. I read the NicA book every day at work during lunch and also brought along the 12 stories book. These two books were the turning point in my smobriety and I hope to continue to stay smober - one day at a time.

Since the books were so helpful to me, I gave one to a friend of mine who is incarcerated and he now has two weeks without a smoke! I have also given a book to a woman I know at work who's husband is trying to stay off the smokes. By purchasing extra NicA books, I know I am helping out Nicotine Anonymous and my friends. But more important than that, I know I am helping to keep myself smober by keeping myself concerned about my fellow nicotine addicts. I know from other 12 Step programs that in order to keep smober I must help other addicts. The only way I can keep my smobriety is by giving it away.





Nicotine Anonymous World Services is seeking servants for a variety of positions within the fellowship. Please see the contact information below if you would like to learn more about these service opportunities. Remember: you have to give it away to keep it!

<u>SevenMinutes committee members</u>. Compile, edit and arrange articles and stories from our members for our "meeting on a page." Published quarterly.

Writers and poets. Share your experience, strength and hope in SevenMintues.

<u>Literature servants</u>. Edit and revise *Nicotine Anonymous: The Book*, Parts I and III. Correct grammatical errors and expand these sections.

<u>Email and snailmail penpals</u>. Share your experience, strength and hope with members who cannot attend meetings or are looking for support between meetings.

<u>Telephone and email servants</u>. Respond to telephone calls and email from people taking their first step on the journey. One day of service per week from the comfort of your own home.

Translators. Carry the message to non-English speaking addicts.

Networking committee members. Connect people in isolated areas and assist in creating new meetings.

Outreach committee members. Spread the word about Nicotine Anonymous to health professionals and the media.

Archiving committee members. Sort and organize correspondence and other materials dating back to the beginning days of the fellowship. (This project will be located in Southern California.)

For further information about any of these service positions, please contact: Martha K., 19 Central Avenue, East Quogue, New York 11942, (516) 653-3483, Mof316@peconic.net

STILL SMOKING? continued from page 1

Well, I certainly knew God was helping me quit. What I sincerely wondered though, was why hadn't He helped me all the other times I had tried so terribly hard to quit. I still don't know the answer to that. Except, perhaps, to make me more compassionate to people who have faults. My smoking was a fault for all the world to see for 38 years.

I certainly had no right to judge anyone else for their shortcomings. I have learned to be humble about quitting smoking. I think the Third Step Prayer is worth repeating here:

Relieve me of the bondage of self. Help me abandon myself to the spirit. Move me to do good in this world and show kindness. Help me to overcome and avoid anger, resentment, jealousy and any other kind of negative thinking today. Help me to help those who suffer. Keep me alert with courage to face life and not withdraw from it, not to insulate myself from all pain whereby I

insulate myself from love as well. Free me from fantasy and fear. Inspire and direct my thinking today; let it be divorced from self pity, dishonesty and self-seeking motives. Show me the way of patience, tolerance, kindliness and love. I pray for all of those to whom I've been unkind and ask that they are granted the same peace that I seek.

Anyone who cannot beat smoking alone is welcome to attend Nicotine Anonymous meetings.

And remember the Serenity Prayer:

God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference.

Overheard at a meeting ... One of our members was sharing that he was very grateful to Nicotine Anonymous because he quit smoking in the "NICOTIME"

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