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Seven Minutes

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My NicA story...

I hated cigarettes when I was growing up. My mother smoked around us kids, as did my grandmother and anyone else who smoked. It was no big deal in the sixties and seventies. People smoked in grocery stores and doctor's offices back then.

I hated the stench, the way it burned my eyes and nose. I remember trips in the car when it rained, and our mother would keep the windows up so we'd all but smother or when it was hot she'd have the windows down, her ashes flew through the back window and hit us kids, usually right in the face. I asked her I don't know how many times to stop smoking.

When I was thirteen I looked to my mother to learn how to be a woman, I asked her again to quit smoking, and she flat out said "no." I asked her why she smoked, hoping to make sense of it and she said, "It makes me feel better. If I'm mad, I feel better when I smoke and if I'm sad, I don't feel as sad when I smoke."

Being an abused kid, anger and sadness were my constant companions at that point in my life. I remember thinking; *smoking will make me feel better.* That's how I started; I stole cigarettes from my mother.

After a few months I realized I didn't feel any better and I'd had enough of it. Sadly, my body had other ideas. Even though I hadn't been intentionally inhaling, I'm sure I inhaled some of the smoke, and the chemicals were being absorbed by the mucous membrane of my mouth. Within a few hours of my decision not to smoke anymore a nicotine fit hit me, I tried not to smoke, but then gave in. I was already a nicotine addict, though I didn't think of it in those terms.

Shortly after that my mother set me up. She thought she'd been smoking more than usual. She drank every day and I didn't think she'd be able to keep track. She left a full, unopened pack of smokes on the TV to find

out how they were disappearing. I didn't dare open them and filch any because then she'd know, so I took the whole pack and let her think she'd lost them. Well, since she'd set them there to bust me she of course knew I'd stolen them.

She made me hand over the pack, then she made me smoke and inhale. I was so sick after inhaling the first one she didn't make me smoke anymore.

The next day she made me clean out our disgusting refrigerator and I remember hating her so much I made myself a promise; she'd never be able to hurt me again.

Knowing I was hooked I decided to inhale. I was thirteen and nicotine taught me to blame better than I ever had before.

My feelings got hurt, so I'd smoke, I was sad, so I'd to smoke, I was bored, so I'd smoke; nicotine ruled me.

My mother tried to stop me a few times but her threats were lame. So, she gave me permission and supplied them for me before I turned fourteen.

My sister also smoked and I remember when I was eighteen and she fifteen we had our cartons lined up on the hearth: hers, mothers, dads and mine.

I got pregnant with my first child when I was twenty-one and wanted to stop smoking for the babies sake. When I was around six weeks pregnant a drunk driver killed my sister. Having smoked at my emotions for eight years, I'd never developed coping skills. If I hadn't been pregnant I wouldn't have survived my sister's death.

I smoked while pregnant, I smoked around the baby after he was born. It was all I could do to put one foot in front of the other. I was married to a very abusive man, and devastated by my sister's death. She'd been pregnant too. My husband didn't allow me to have friends, and I didn't know how to not allow him to do that.

I didn't know it then, but I was emotionally disabled and would never be able to work. Cigarettes seemed to be my only friends.

The Twelve Steps of Nicotine Anonymous

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.
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 nicotine users and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions reprinted and adapted here with the permission of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. Permission to reprint and adapt the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions 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 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 Traditions of Nicotine Anonymous

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon Nicotine Anonymous unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority — a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for Nicotine Anonymous membership is a desire to stop using nicotine.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or Nicotine Anonymous as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose - to carry its message to the nicotine addict who still suffers.
6. A Nicotine Anonymous group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the Nicotine Anonymous name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every Nicotine Anonymous group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Nicotine Anonymous should remain forever non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. Nicotine Anonymous, as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Nicotine Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the Nicotine Anonymous name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, TV, and films.
12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to

place principles before personalities.

The Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity.
2. For our group purpose, there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as he may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.
6. An A.A. group ought never endorse, finance or lend the A.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every A.A. group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
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12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

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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My NicA story...

When I was thirty-three I joined another Twelve-Step program. My sponsor took me to Nicotine Anonymous. I smoked but went with her until I had about ninety days in the other program, then I told her to leave my smoking alone, that it was the one vice I had left and I wasn't giving it up. I remember telling her I couldn't handle both recoveries at the same time, not that soon. Just now, thinking about that, I didn't have to handle both recoveries, I can't even handle one, that's what my Higher Power does. It could have been done, I just didn't want to quit. I've always had a tendency to tell myself I can't do things. I keep doing things my way and things keep getting worse, and then I end up, by the love and strength of my Higher Power, doing the right things I was trying to avoid.

Over the next ten years I tried to quit nicotine every now and then by using patches and eating everything in sight. The longest quit was eight weeks. I gained thirty pounds, picked a fight with my then-husband and blamed him for my relapse just like always.

The last few years I smoked I truly hated it. Almost every single time I lit one I looked at it and just could not believe I had to do it yet again. I smoked around thirty a day.

I saw the commercials on TV, we all have, I think of a smoker's lung compared to a non-smoker's. And of the major heart artery full of fat from smoking. All of the truth.com commercials and they really were making an impression on me but they weren't giving me a comfortable, stress-free way to quit, so I kept smoking and feeling sorry for myself that I "had" to smoke.

I have panic and anxiety disorders that are acute and chronic. A severe panic episode forced me to go to the emergency room in 2002. I was forty-one and thought I was having a heart attack. I'd been diagnosed with my condition ten years before but never that bad. I felt convinced I was dying, equally convinced smoking was causing the heart attack. They hooked me up to a heart monitor and left me in a room for six hours, doing a chest x-ray close to the end of that time. A doctor finally came in and told me that my heart

was fine, but that I had emphysema. I cried later that day as I thought about how I'd ruined my lungs with smoking, how my life would be shortened by my own hand, how hard it would be for my son, and how I needed to quit smoking.

Monday I called my doctor and saw him the next day to find out what I needed to do for emphysema. Inhalers? Oxygen? Life expectancy? What was I facing?

He told me that a chest x-ray alone couldn't diagnose emphysema and he didn't believe me when I told him the ER doctor had diagnosed me with emphysema. He called the ER, was told the same thing I told him, and he ordered a lung test for me at the hospital. It measures breathing volume and capacity of the lungs. It turned out I didn't have emphysema. The tech that ran the test told me that when we were done, also telling me that I hadn't done any damage that wasn't reversible yet, and to quit smoking.

I left the hospital peeved at the ER doctor for scaring me, but later forgave him because I knew he meant well ... he wanted me to stop killing myself. So I thought about it for another year while I kept smoking.

The following September I was back in the ER with panic, sure I was having a heart attack again and sure that smoking was the cause. That time they put me on the cardiac ward for twelve hours and monitored me all night, complete with blood work every three hours. I was dehydrated, because smokers don't tend to drink much water, so they had to take one draw out of the back of my hand. My doctor discharged me, and I lit a stupid cigarette right outside the hospital doors.

A few months later, on January 11, 2004, my twenty year old son came to me with our eleven year old cat and showed me her mouth. Her jaw was swollen and she couldn't eat. I thought she had an abscessed tooth, so I called the vet and got her in right away.

They took one look in her mouth and told me she had bone cancer in her jaw. The world suddenly seemed very fragile to me, and I couldn't believe what was happening. They said they could biopsy it and hope it was benign, but that they never were. They said they could remove her lower jaw and we could try tube feeding her, but that it's a horribly cruel

thing to do and didn't recommend it as she probably wouldn't live more than two months.

I knew it was from second hand smoke, I felt it in my heart and soul. My son, a smoker as well and our sweet cat had been around smoke their whole lives. I asked the vet about it, and she was very kind, not wanting us to feel guilty, and said that it could be from anything. I asked around later and found out that cats of smokers often get bone cancer in their jaw because they lick the nicotine and other chemicals from cigarettes off of their fur. It was as though she'd been chewing tobacco her whole life.

We had the vet give her a shot of morphine and took her home for one night to say goodbye to her. It was my son's cat and his choice. Ironically, I'd set a quit date for January 23 before we found out Sondra was dying. Too little too late for my sweet little friend.

We had her put to sleep the next day, and I tried to be there for Sondra and to support my son as he helped his best friend die. The pain and guilt were overwhelming. I cancelled my quit date because I didn't feel I could handle it on top of losing Sondra to the very thing I found myself saying I couldn't give up. How sick is that?

After that my boyfriend nagged me about quitting, though he smoked, too. I got tired of hearing it and one day said angrily, "March first, okay? Now leave me alone!"

March 1 showed up and I was not a happy camper. I had the patches, straws, and joined an on-line Nicotine Anonymous group. I did quit that day, and I spent a lot of time in the meetings and chat rooms for the next fourteen days. On the fourteenth day, by the end of the night, I was exhausted from struggling not to smoke, and I made up my mind I was going to give up my quit. Oddly, it took me an hour to smoke, and I was very sad. I knew it wasn't because I was mad or sad or glad or any other thing but just tired of fighting cravings. That's because I hadn't listened to a thing people said in the group.

My Nica story...

I'd been in the other Twelve Step program for over ten years and I thought I had all the answers, yet I hadn't been using any of them.

The next morning my first waking thought was the same one I'd had every morning for nearly thirty years, *I want a cigarette*. I said to myself, *Oh no you don't. Get a patch on and get to a meeting and figure out what went wrong!* I'm so glad I did. I believe that was a Higher Power moment.

I found out my addict brain hadn't wanted me to listen or use the tools of the program. I hadn't surrendered the addiction to my Higher Power once in that two-week trial run of mine, and that was where I needed to start. I knew I was powerless and had known that from the time I was thirteen, so Step one wasn't a problem. It was relying on a Power greater than myself to restore me to sanity, then turning my will, life, and addiction over to "It's" loving care that I needed to do right away, and I did. With every craving, that's what I did. Every time a craving came I stopped what I was doing, closed my eyes, and simply felt it as it became overwhelming and then, admitted that it's what nicotine addicts go through.

Then I'd say this prayer, "Please, please, do for me what I cannot possibly do for myself," and I'd feel a strength possess me, and I'd know I could get through that craving. I had to do it dozens of times a day, but it was a cake walk compared to poisoning myself.

I learned by listening and identifying in meetings that when I try to fight something more powerful than me, I'm going to get my butt kicked, pure and simple. To fight a craving is to invite the addiction to dinner and serve it my life, because I am going to lose. "Surrender to win," took on a fresh new meaning for me.

I lived in meetings then, was at the chat room all hours of the day and night, posting on the boards, talking to my sponsor and new friends, crying my eyes out, laughing my tail off, learning to live in the moment, drinking water like a fish, and walking through fire.

Two weeks after my relapse I stopped using the patch altogether. I read on the internet what nicotine had done to my brain, and I was so angry I ripped my last

twenty-one mg. patch off and gave my addiction to my Higher Power. I didn't want the garbage in my system anymore. When people ask me if I used the patch or went cold turkey, I'm not quite sure what to say since I didn't "step down" with the patches and the cravings were just as bad while using them as when I stopped. All I knew for sure was that I had faith my Higher Power would and could get me through, and I was right.

Sixteen days after taking off the last patch I threw a relapse at guilt. I said something horrible to my then-boyfriend and felt very guilty, as well as totally stressed. He has a mental condition and had checked himself into an observation house, and I didn't believe he was being honest about his mental state. Anyway, I found a cigarette, went out on my patio, and smoked half of it. It made me so sick and brought absolutely no relief. However, being the hard headed nicotine addict I am, I smoked the second half of it two hours later expecting different results, but the results were the same as before, and I knew a few things at that point:

1. I had to deal with my emotions in a rational manner by praying and working the Steps on the situation.
2. Smoking was not going to help whatsoever, and
3. I was getting to make a new choice as an adult as opposed to trying to make an adult decision when I was only thirteen. I made the adult decision, talked about my relapse in a meeting the next day, and by the love of my Higher Power and the sanity of this program I haven't put nicotine into my body since then.

At five weeks quit my teeth died, every single one of them and I had to have them all pulled. I was forty-three and had gum disease. The surgeon general not a week later said just that, "smoking causes gum disease that leads to loss of teeth."

My Higher Power wasn't leaving me any room for denial and I'm grateful for that.

Two weeks after my oral surgery my boyfriend left. Being disabled and having no housing assistance available to me, I was scared half to death. Being toothless, I couldn't even hope to manage a part

time job so I had to sell my car.

The ex took the computer away and I was looking at being without the group's support. My sweet sponsor, editor of this newsletter, called me every single day and helped me have a meeting. She'd read the shares to me, it was all type-share then, and then she'd type my share.

A dear friend in the group talked to a couple of co-workers and at the end of two-weeks had a great rebuilt Gateway computer at my house so I could go back to meetings, it still makes me cry. I'm so grateful to the loving people I got to meet that care about me and helped me go to any lengths to stay quit. Shoot, they went to those lengths with me.

Three months after my teeth had been pulled, then four months quit, I still didn't have dentures, and I had to have a second surgery to get the bone work done they had neglected the first time around. My ex came and helped me after the surgery.

My son, being an active drug addict, wasn't around to help at all, I don't have any other family and I'm a shut in now, so I was very alone and very scared. The group saw me through that, too.

With the money from the car I moved to a one-bedroom apartment. Shortly after the move my muscles felt really painful. Since my dog had to go out several times a day, I was feeling miserable. I thought it was from moving, but when it got worse I saw my doctor. My thyroid had taken a nosedive and wasn't producing nearly enough hormone. Come to find out, thyroid dysfunction is common when we quit smoking. My Higher Power and the group got me through that, also. Did I want to smoke at those things or the myriad of other things that have happened since? Of course I did, I'm a nicotine addict. My quit was the only good thing happening in my life and I wanted and needed it. It gave me something to hold on to, a purpose, the only joy I had then. With my quit came the group that helped me learn to see what was good about life, to surrender on deeper levels and to never give up on my Higher Power.

You people taught me not to give up

My NicA story...

five minutes before the miracle happens and I've needed tons of miracles, so I haven't dared give up. Today I know a freedom I never thought I could have. I've been completely nicotine free since April 15, 2004. I have a beautiful relationship with the Higher Power I only thought I knew for ten years in the other program. I also know me better today, though I have a lot more to learn and more miracles to pray for. That means I need to keep coming back.

Of all the awesome things I've heard in meetings, this is one of my favorites: "I didn't smoke to feel good ... I smoked so I wouldn't feel bad." Today I know that none of us are exempt from loved ones or body parts dying from nicotine, and I know that no one ever died from quitting. Surrender to win, and you will.

Valerie J.
Bremerton, WA

To the perils of others and myself...

As a child I never used sugar or caffeine to any extent so my first addiction was to tobacco. Ironically it would also be the last to part. I have several early memories of experimenting with that weed with its roots in hell as the bible bangers used to say. I don't remember which incident was first. I do know that by the age of fourteen I was hopelessly addicted. My addiction was not a result of anything my parents did or didn't do. Nor was it a result of Hollywood glamorizing or Madison Avenue marketing. It was a decision I made for my self albeit an ill informed one.

It was a time of transition, the period between late childhood and early adolescence. Change and growth are always fraught with pain and I thought smoking would ease the process. Kids of that era like the ones of today were often the victims of bullying. I was no exception. When bullied, however, I responded with massive retaliation. I found that in a fight, size and experience are not as important as willingness. I also discovered that most people go through a process to get in the "fighting zone." The process usually consists of escalating threat, warnings and

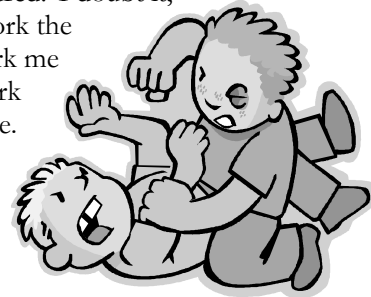
challenges. I dispensed with the process and launched my attack as soon as I felt threatened. In my first encounter with my tormentor, an older boy, I nearly tore his upper lip off. He had to have reconstructive surgery and his parents were livid. The only thing that saved me from serious trouble was the authorities thought me too small and wimpy to do such damage. A couple of more incidents of this ilk and the bullying ceased. I continued to smoke cigarettes and in a couple of years I added a new dimension to my debauchery. I began to use beverage alcohol in heroic amounts. The drinking changed the direction of my violent tendencies. Instead of fighting to defend myself I was engaging in drunken brawls. By the time I graduated from high school I had had my nose broken twice, fractured every bone in my right hand and acquired a gorgeous scar on the back of my head courtesy of a "Kentucky" christening (being struck on the head with a whiskey bottle.)

After graduation I worked for the railroad. I augmented my tobacco chewing and smoking with snuff dipping and my drinking escalated. At the end of the summer I enlisted in the Marines and was sent to Parris Island recruit training depot aka boot camp. It was thirteen weeks of brutal discipline, murderous heat, ravenous insects and complete absence of both substance nicotine and beverage alcohol. Apparently discipline and self-denial didn't improve my disposition. In the last week of training I fractured another recruits jaw. The marines attributed the incident to boyish high spirits and I was allowed to graduate with my platoon. I was sent to Viet Nam and spent eleven months in a combat zone. I was wounded twice during my tour. I continued to use tobacco in all forms, to drink as much as possible whenever possible and I commenced to use drugs. Marijuana, amphetamines, heroin and whatever I could steal from the corpsman's bag. I returned to the States to serve out my enlistment. A real war had not diminished my capacity for violence. During a barracks brawl I bit off another marines finger. I was honorably discharged and returned to civilian life. A year or so later I stopped smoking and began to use smokeless

tobaccos in large amounts. That was to be my pattern. Never being able to quit nicotine just changing the form. I would go various lengths of time without cigarettes but would use snuff instead. Sometimes, for variety, I would smoke foul smelling cigars the size of baseball bats. By this time I had also amassed a collection of pipes, that when in use, smelled like a crematorium. My drinking and drug use escalated, and due to the nature of my work, I found myself in barroom brawls all over the world. Then, in 1981, I stopped drinking and joined A.A. When I ceased to drink I ceased going to bars, I avoided parties where there might be drinking or drug use. I severed friendships that had a component of drinking or drug use to them. The violence stopped.

Twelve years later I gave up cigarettes and fifteen months ago I gave up snuff. Almost at once the violence resumed. Instantly I became that frightened little boy who felt menaced. I got into three violent encounters during early abstinence. For a while I was given a reprieve from the consequences of my behavior. In the fourth incident my opponent was taken by ambulance to the emergency room and I was taken to jail. The charge was assault with great bodily harm. He was blinded in one eye as a result of the fracas. I was sentenced to county jail time. I couldn't believe - it I was a quarter of a century sober. I had been nicotine free for a year. Why was I being persecuted for defending myself? The answer came to me on the last night of my incarceration. I had not taken the second or third step. That night in my cell alone I humbly and honestly asked God to lift my insanity and to send the reptile part of my brain to the back of my skull where it belonged. Since then all of my withdrawal symptoms have been lifted. I have participated in no violence. I have gone on to work the fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh steps. Am I cured? I doubt it, but when I work the steps they work me and they'll work for anyone else.

David G.



Can you answer any of these questions?

What is your nicotine addiction like? What is working for you?

What are you grateful for today, either being free of nicotine or having found Nicotine Anonymous?

Do you remember your first days free of nicotine? What helped you?

Have you felt fear of doing something new that reminds you of your active addiction?

How have you dealt with anger since being free of nicotine?

How do you work the Steps in your life?

How has a Step-study helped you?

Do you have a Nicotine-free anniversary or special occasion coming up?

Are you looking for some service to do for the Fellowship?

Do you want to contribute to your recovery and contribute to the recovery of others as well?

Do you ever feel great after sharing at a meeting?

Do you like to write?

Do you NOT like to write? Can you record yourself sharing about your freedom from nicotine, and then transcribe it onto paper?

If you answered ANY of these questions, then YOU HAVE A SHARE FOR OUR NEXT MEDITATION BOOK!

You do not have to think you are "writer." Basically, if you are a member of Nicotine Anonymous, then you have a tidbit to share! If I waited till the moment I thought I'd speak eloquently I'd never have opened my mouth at a meeting and I never would have eventually gotten free of this deadly addiction! Similarly, if 365 times, some of us would have felt stuck in our fear that the meditation we wrote is not good enough, our fellowship would not have a whole book being published!

Send your short piece to
dailymeditations@nicotine-anonymous.org
World Services
419 Main Street, PMB# 370
Huntington Beach, CA 92648
FAX (714) 536-4539

Personal Story...

Since I was sixteen years of age I reached for some "thing" to "do something for me." I am now fifty-six and I can practice my civil duty and vote in the general election of the United States government. Since 1978 I've known about Nicotine Anonymous, through a sister, and the need to quit nicotine had become all too immediately apparent.

Twenty years ago, in another state, I entered a Twelve-Step program. I smoked until I was forty-nine years old--having made all too many "geographical cures"-- and in a N.E. Tri-state area visited Nicotine Anonymous about twice a month.

Spiritually, Eastern and Western types of meditation worked along with Chris-

tian Prayer. Emotionally I've grown but a little, now I can list some feelings. Socially and intellectually I have grown but a very little also.

Today, election day, though I was able to call the American Cancer Society to try to add our advertisement, in gratitude, for seven years sobriety and this life in Nicotine Anonymous meeting in Hawaii, on Oahu. Thanks and Mahalo in native tongue, to all the other Twelve-Step programs in this area. The NicA meetings have even attracted others before Outreach spread the word out to the communities.

In 1973 I graduated with B.A. in sociology but don't see how I'll ever graduate from Nicotine Anonymous.

Valerie F.
Hawaii
5-26-2000

*Charlie the Chimp at a South African zoo is now addicted to smoking and even hides his cigarettes.
Author unknown...*



Give Back!

You Can't Keep it Unless You Give 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. Please share this flyer with your group. Remember, you have to give it away to keep it.

E-Mail Volunteers-Share your experience, strength and hope with people around the world who email us. Help them find meetings and answer questions about NicA. Provide about thirty minutes a week from your home or office computer.

Telephone Servants-Respond to telephone calls from people taking their first step on the journey. One day of service per week from the comfort of your own home.

Email/Penpal Coordinator-Responsible for receiving email requests for pen pals; adding names to the email pen pal list; and sending out the list.

For further information about any of these service positions, please contact:

E-mail: info@nicotine-anonymous.org

Write: Nicotine Anonymous World Services 419 Main Street, PMB#370
Huntington Beach, CA 92648

*Looking to do Twelfth Step work? Help wanted
in NicA cyberspace office!*

E-mail Volunteers

Duties: Share your experience, strength and hope with people around the world who email us. Help them find meetings and answer questions about Nicotine Anonymous. Provide about thirty minutes a week from your home or office computer.

Qualifications:

1. Nicotine free for at least ninety days. That means free from nicotine in all it's forms including smoking, patches, gum, inhalers, chewing, etc.
2. Member of Nicotine Anonymous - meaning you attend meetings and belong to a person-to-person group or are a member of our on-line chat group or communicate via mail or email with other members if meetings are not available where you live.
3. Have an email address and are willing to accept and transmit messages to people around the world who will be writing to us.
4. Some computer literacy - Familiar with using email and know how to access web pages for information. (If you haven't seen our Web Pages yet, take a look!) www.nicotine-anonymous.org
5. Willing to give back - what can I say?

That's about it. Join other volunteers who are doing this rewarding Twelfth Step work. Training provided (it's rather simple.)

For more info contact Alan, Email Coordinator, NicA World Services at:

info@nicotine-anonymous.org

Newcomer's Corner

Some inner child work by Jan...

Mommy please! Ever heard that? Ever done that?

I was lying in bed having a big old fat nicotine craving and I really wanted to smoke, so I accepted my craving and then analyzed it. Suddenly I realized that the part of me who wanted to smoke was like a small child in a grocery store screaming for a bag of cookies.

Screaming, whining and having a tantrum about wanting those cookies: I could imagine myself. "Mommy, please, please, please can I smoke? Can I? Can I? Can I? Please, please, please, Mommy I want a cigarette. Let me have a cigarette right now. If you don't I'll scream, I'll cry and I'll hold my breath until I turn blue.

I smiled at that child and was the wise parent: "No honey, it's bad for you. Sorry, but you can't." The craving went away!

I did that yesterday and I did it again this morning. Just threw a tantrum and then let my mature self and my Higher Power tell me no in a kind and caring way.

It's funny how things workout. I just wanted to share this and maybe it will help someone else. Maybe I'm just crazy, but it's working for me./

Jan

I have not had a cigarette since March 16, 2005 by the grace of God and NicA.

I recently came across something I wrote perhaps a year or less before my quit date and would like to share it in Seven Minutes...

What my addiction says is that it will give me release from the tension – any tension.

Nicotine says to me it is tough, offers companionship, shows rebellion and that it's fun but in reality what it's

doing to me is robbing me of life, real life and stealing the magic.

I stink, I can't breathe, my heart races, my chest feels like its wrapped in iron and nicotine gives me no breaks.

When I see people who are living clean and free of nicotine I'm anxious and a part of me sinks with shame. I want to join them but can't my addiction holds me back.

My addiction says it's not affecting me, tells me I'm healthy and strong but that's a lie.

Also for the last thirty years my addiction tells me one more won't hurt and that

I can smoke just a few.

My addiction absorbs my money, zaps my energy, and makes me sick: physically, spiritually, emotionally and mentally.

Then my addiction tells me I cannot quit.

Footnote:

As of this date I have been nicotine free since March 16, 2005—by the grace of God and NicA.

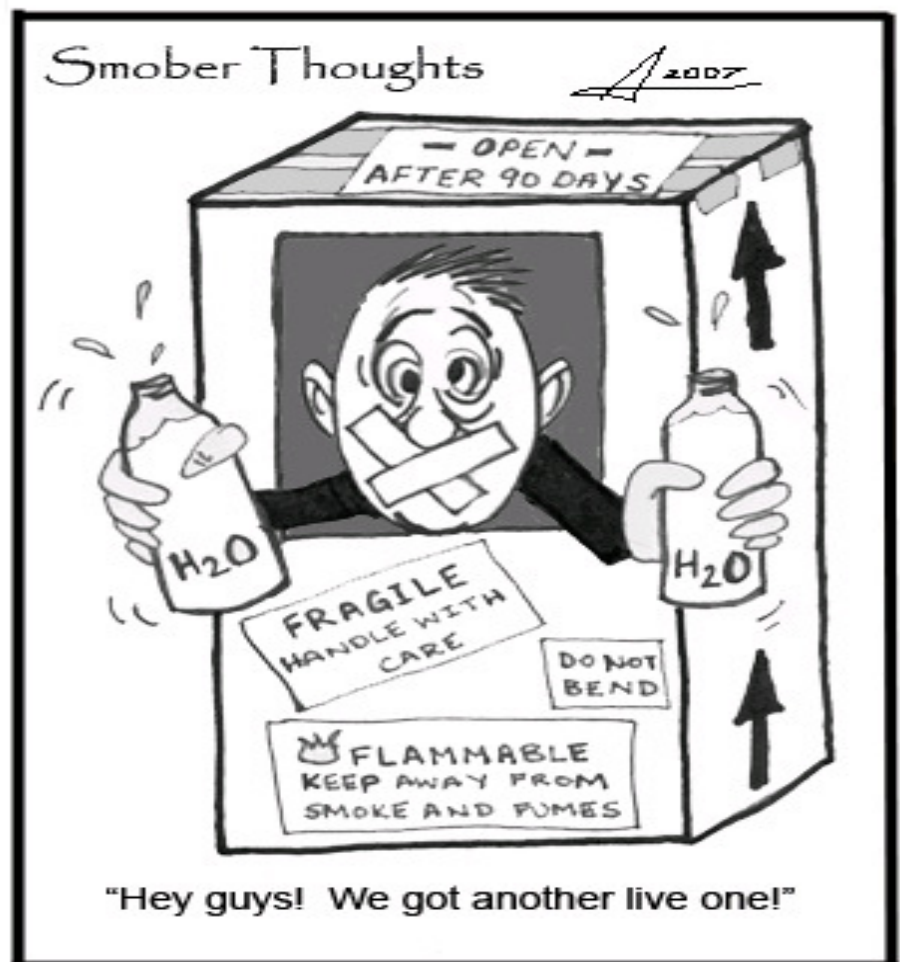
Robertta D.

Athens Butte Kickers NicA Group
Athens, Ohio

A cartoon by member Carole A...

Estero, Fl.

5-9-2006



Grace shares on Step One...

Me powerless? You bet. In fact, I didn't even have much trouble with that admission. I knew it to be true. I could not quit.

Sometimes ten minutes without a cigarette was too much for me.

The hard part of Step One for me was the "unmanageability." As far as I could see, I was "managing" just fine. In fact, cigarettes did not make my life "unmanageable," they made it "manageable." When my life got unmanageable was when I attempted to go without smoking. That's when the panic, fear, horrible physical cravings, anger and etc. all set in. Smoking equals manageable, not smoking equals unmanageable or so I thought.

It was not until coming here and trying to listen with an open mind that I could see just how unmanageable my life really was and it took meetings, reading the literature, working with a sponsor, and sharing with all of you to see that I was not alone and everything about my smoking showed my life to be out of control.

I did use pre-written questions when I first got here and they really helped me to look at the truth of my smoking. I typed it all out and that helped to. Having to think back and then look at it in black and white made it pretty much an unavoidable truth--I was powerless over nicotine and my life was unmanageable.

The thing that was kind of weird was that I was not new to Twelve Step programs. I'd been participating in "working" the Steps in my life for over six years. I thought I pretty much knew what I was doing and that I would have an advantage when it came to "working" this particular program.

On my first attempt to quit I guess I

managed to somehow pay lip service to the First Step and not really "take the Step."

Step One is the only Step that is suggested we take 100% the first time around. All the others we can work on for the rest of our lives.

I knew this, yet I attacked my quit with all the will power I could muster. I was prepared to "fight the good fight."

Now, answer me this? If I am powerless, the part I thought I knew, what good is my will power going to do me? And what good is fighting going to do me?

I was beyond miserable for almost three months during that first quit attempt. Then, I relapsed big time. I say big time, because it took less than twenty-four hours for me to be back to smoking two-plus packs a day. I am a hopeless, powerless addict and my life is unmanageable.

After another six to seven weeks of smoking but staying close to Nicotine Anonymous and allowing this program to ruin my smoking, I attempted another quit. But, this time around I started the first morning of my first day on my knees, openly admitting that I was totally powerless over nicotine and that I could not possibly quit.

I told God that I was willing to go through the pain of withdrawal and willing to use all the tools available to me through this beautiful program. I beseeched him to relieve me of the bondage to nicotine. I surrendered.

Thank-you all for allowing this quit to be a possibility!

Grace S.

Homegroup: Voices of Nicotine Recovery, online PalTalk

<http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/voicesofnicotinerecovery/>

Barbara shares from the heart...

When I was seventeen, I threw

away my virginity. The guy was nineteen and a heavy smoker. A poet, hip, he talked a lot about Bob Dylan, Allen Ginsberg and other cool stuff. He carelessly knocked me up and I risked my life to have an illegal abortion. I didn't want to be trapped and I was afraid of my father.

I remember thinking after that that the reason I began to spit so much was maybe from the anesthetic used in the abortion, because it was after the abortion I started spitting.

Now, thirty-one years later and no children, and after longer and longer time, (three years) off tobacco, I realize I stopped spitting when I stopped cigarettes. That means I must have really gotten hooked on smoking back then at that scary alone hurting time, not earlier when I first began fooling around with it. Poor kid.

I'm so glad I got to get this far.
Barbara F.

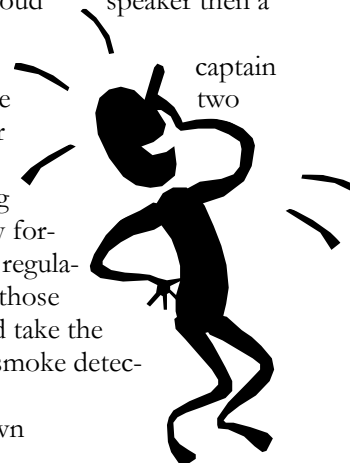
A joke...

Two voices, one male and one female, overheard on a plane:
"I think everyone's asleep, let's go"
"This one's empty ... no-one's looking... you go in first"
"It's a bit cramped - let me sit down"
"Have you got the condom? Quick - put it on"
Sniff sniff
"Ah perfume - you think of everything"
"This is great...." (long sigh)

Static on the loud speaker then a new voice.

"This is the speaking, to those people in the rear toilet. We know what you're doing and it is expressly forbidden by airline regulations... Now put those cigarettes out and take the condom off the smoke detector!"

Author Unknown



Recovery by the Bay

Nicotine Anonymous World Services Conference XXII

April 20–22, 2007 Novato, California

Inn Marin is approximately 20 miles north of the Golden Gate Bridge and is easily accessible from the San Francisco and Oakland airports. If you are not planning to rent a car, we recommend you use San Francisco for your travel plans, as shuttle service from Oakland only runs once every 2 hours. Inn Marin will pick you up from 7:45 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., at the Marin County ground transportation centers for both airports, with at least 24 hours advance reservation. Call the Inn with your flight information and they will schedule your tentative shuttle and give you instructions for your arrival.

DEADLINE TO REGISTER WITH THE HOTEL IS MARCH 20, 2007

HOTEL RATES (PER NIGHT):

The Inn Marin has given us a special price of

\$95.00 for a single or double standard room (one king bed)

\$125.00 for a standard suite (includes living room with pullout bed) (It's an extra \$10 for each additional adult.)

\$140.00 for a jacuzzi suite (same as standard suite with a jacuzzi in the bedroom)

(Prices do not include taxes or gratuities. Rates will be honored three days before and after the conference, so stay awhile! Rates do include a continental breakfast.)

Register with Inn Marin by phone at 800-652-6565 (or

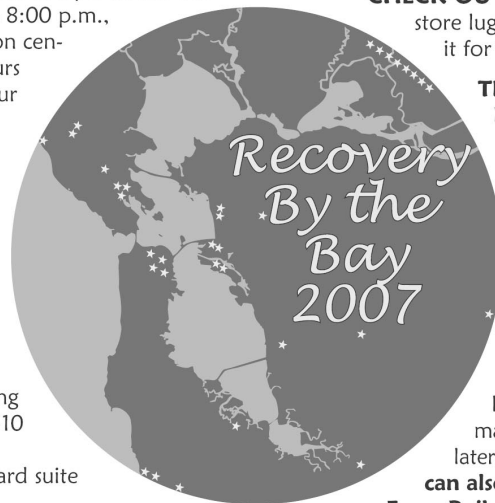
415-883-5952), or by fax at 415-883-5058. The group block code is NICA, and the group name is Nicotine Anonymous. To register **online go to:** www.innmarin.com, and enter the promotional code NICOTINEA under rate information.

CHECK-OUT TIME is 11:00 A.M. If you can't store luggage in your car, the hotel can store it for the day.

THE AFTER-CONFERENCE ACTIVITY

will be a ride on the Golden Gate Ferry to San Francisco. We will board the ferry in Larkspur (10 minutes from the hotel) at 3:30 and return on the following ferry to arrive back at Larkspur at 5:20. The ferry provides snacks and parts of it are covered in case of rain. Transport to and from Inn Marin will be arranged (if you have a car, your help will be appreciated). Pre-registration is not necessary. You may also wish to stay in SF to return later. The last ferry leaves SF at 7:00. **You can also catch the BART train near the Ferry Building to get to either airport.**

Those returning to the hotel after 5:20 will be responsible for their own transportation. Parking at the ferry is free, and there is public transportation to the hotel. Get more details at the registration desk when you arrive.



Please complete one form per person. Send payment and forms to Northern California Intergroup NicA; 2215-R Market Street, #229, San Francisco, CA 94114. Make checks out to Northern California Intergroup.

You can also register online at www.nica-norcal.org using a credit card.

Please contact Conference Chair, Catherine C. at

ConferenceChair@nicotine-anonymous.org for more information.



NAME: _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

PHONE _____ E-MAIL _____

- I will be a registered delegate.* My group name is _____
- I would like a roommate** Male Female
- I will need transportation to the Larkspur Ferry (after conference activity) and back (see above for more information).
- I can provide transportation to and from the ferry for _____ people
- Special needs _____

*Delegates must be registered with World Services by **no later than March 20**. NAWS Secretary, 419 Main St., PMB #370, Huntington Beach, CA 92658; e-mail secretary@nicotine-anonymous.org. Include name, address, phone, e-mail and group represented.

**Every effort will be made to help you find a roommate. However, you will be responsible for contacting each other and making arrangements for your stay at the hotel.

FEES

\$25	Early Registration OR	\$ _____
\$35	Late Registration (after 4/13/06)	\$ _____
Meals:		
\$45	Dinner buffet	\$ _____
\$25	Breakfast buffet	\$ _____
T-Shirt Quantity		
\$15 ea	Small # _____	\$ _____
\$15 ea	Med. # _____	\$ _____
\$15 ea	Large. # _____	\$ _____
\$15 ea	XLrge. # _____	\$ _____
\$18 ea	XXLrge. # _____	\$ _____
Optional NAWS donation		
\$ _____		
TOTAL Enclosed		
\$ _____		

Write to:
Nicotine Anonymous
PO Box 1516
LONDON
SW1H 9WT

Tel: **020 7976 0076** (please leave a message)
Web: www.nicotine-anonymous.co.uk

United Kingdom meetings...

This message was posted on the online message board about meetings in the United Kingdom. To check out the NicA UK homepage go to this link. <http://www.nicotine-anonymous.co.uk/>
If you want to start a meeting in UK call 020-7976-0076 for a starter pack.

From the Chair...

Most of the past two quarters have been spent on issues involving our web site and host server issues. The developer who had been providing service for us has not returned calls or emails from Robin L. our very overworked web servant. Our web site security certificate expired and we have been unable to access the data needed to get it renewed.

Robin began the search for a replacement. Ultimately we entered into a contract and the new developer began the process of taking over, only to discover the site backup that Robin had received from our prior developer was incomplete. The owner of the server hosting our present site could not access our database, and the new developer has had to recreate our site. The recreation is on the internal server for the new developer and will be launched when it is complete, reviewed and tested.

There have been occasions when our web site has not been working, so if you visit and it does not work, please try again later. Because of the difficulties with our site we have not posted new items in months, but have a number of items ready to post when

the new site is launched.

On a related matter, there have been some issues with our emails; some officers or servants have not been able to access their email. We apologize for delays in responding.

One bright spot has been Annette A. and Willie S. agreeing to be the liaison committee with Checko on literature issues. They developed a review and approval process that was approved at our January meeting to allow us to get literature published more efficiently. After we have worked with the process and ironed out the wrinkles, we will publish it in Seven Minutes and add it to the Policies and Procedures posted on our web site.

Gerhard who was the keynote speaker at the last conference has volunteered to translate *Nicotine Anonymous: The Book* into German. Bill P., who is our translations "committee" may be looking for help. We have a small flow of translation offers, and are always excited to have a member express an interest in making translations.

I hope you are making plans to attend the conference, and I hope you will consider taking on a position as an officer.

Susan K. has been the editor for

Service is the Key...

Only You can tell your story.
What was your life like as an active addict?
What happened to get you in the door?
What were your breakthroughs?

Personal stories, articles, poems, art, jokes or adds pertaining to nicotine, nicotine recovery and Nicotine Anonymous can be sent to SevenMinutesEditor@nicotine-anonymous.org or snail mail to *Seven Minutes* c/o NAWSO
419 Main St., PMB #370
Huntington Beach, CA 92648

Seven Minutes, and has done a truly outstanding job. She decided to release the position and make room for someone else. Kim F. a member from the U.K. has accepted the position and Susan will be working with him as they make the transition. Thank both of you.

Kate W.
Chair

Tobacco is a dirty weed. I like it.
It satisfies no normal need. I like it. It makes you thin, it makes you lean, It takes the hair right off your bean It's the worst darn stuff I've ever seen.
I like it.
Graham Lee Hemminger, Tobacco

There are some circles in America where it seems to be more socially acceptable to carry a hand-gun than a packet of cigarettes.
Katharine Whitehorn



NAWSO
Profit & Loss
January through December 2006

Jan - Dec 06

Ordinary Income/Expense Income	
Income	
4000 · Donations	5,964.85
4100 · Literature Sales	40,844.64
4290 · Shipping & Handling	5,855.76
4299 · Conference Profit (Loss)	<u>1,540.89</u>
Total Income	54,206.14
Cost of Goods Sold	
5000 · COGS	<u>23,492.95</u>
Total COGS	<u>23,492.95</u>
Gross Profit	30,713.19
Expense	
6000 · Office Expenses	23,564.24
6600 · WSO Expenses	<u>11,279.46</u>
Total Expense	<u>34,843.70</u>
Net Ordinary Income	-4,130.51
Other Income/Expense	
Other Income	
8000 · Interest Income	<u>543.77</u>
Total other income	<u>543.77</u>
Net Other Income	<u>543.77</u>
Net Income	<u>-3,586.74</u>



Register Online
for the
2007
Nicotine
Anonymous
Conference
in Novato, CA
April 20-22

You can now register for the NicA conference **online** through the Northern California Intergroup's web site **www.nica-norcal.org**. It is perfectly secure using your credit card and PayPal. (Early registration ends 4/13/07!)

Sign up today and don't forget to make your reservations for the Inn Marin **before March 20th!** (800-652-6565 or www.innmarin.com)

E-mail Catherine at catnica@comcast.net for more information (510-527-3907).

My name is Susan K., editor of Seven Minutes...

I want to say good-bye to everyone and welcome Kim F. as the new editor. I've enjoyed my time with Seven Minutes and I'm also looking forward to Kim F. adding his touches to what the past editors and myself have added.

Being editor of Seven Minutes is an excellent way to do service work, a very rewarding experience.

I would also like to add this, Seven Minutes belongs to Nicotine Anonymous, it's our newsletter and it's up to us to send in the stories, art, articles, jokes, poems and etc. to keep this newsletter going.

Please don't be shy; every member of Nicotine Anonymous has a share that will help other nicotine addicts while at the same time we help ourselves. The member who hasn't quit but who has the desire to quit has much to offer as does the newly quit and the members who've managed to keep a quit for weeks, months, or years. We are all the same, one puff away from a pack a day.

Writing is one of the tools I've used through out my journey and has seen me through eight years plus of smobriety.

Also, Seven Minutes is a great venue for advertising new meetings; get togethers, new online meeting sites and other important NicA news.

Yes Seven Minutes is a great way to carry the message around the world, reaching out to nicotine addicts in every nook and cranny of our earth. Mention Seven Minutes at your meetings and let all members know we are here and an excellent way to help others.

Susan K.
Hull, Ga.

BIRTHDAY CONGRATULATIONS!

JUDI D., 1-8-2002

VALERIE F., HAWAII 5-26-2000

ROBERTA., ATHENS, OHIO 3-16-2005

(ATHENS BUTT KICKERS GROUP)

BILL C., 12-29-1983

VALERIE J., BREMERTON, WA. 4-15-2004

REINALDO C., 10-21-2005

BILL C., 12-29-1983

NAEEM A., PAKISTAN 1-13-2006

ELAINE C., LOS ANGELES, CA 3-22-2004

JASON C., PALM BEACH, FL. 2-24-2006.



Birthday Announcements

Name: _____

The above-named member of Nicotine Anonymous stopped using nicotine

on _____ and has _____ years of freedom!

Mail to: Nicotine Anonymous World Services

419 Main St., PMB#370

OR Huntington Beach, Ca. 92648 USA.

Email to: sevenminuteseditor@nicotine-anonymous.org

SEVEN MINUTES Newsletter Order Form CHECK OUT OUR NEW LOW MULTI-YEAR RATES!!!

Seven Minutes is a quarterly publication of N AWSO news, articles and letters; it is - "a meeting on a page." Your subscription will help *Seven Minutes* continue as the official conduit of this fellowship of recovering nicotine addicts. You may pay by check or money order (in US Funds only), or Credit Card.

	<u>Subscription Rates</u>	<u>U.S.</u>	<u>Canada</u>	<u>Overseas</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> New Subscription	1 Year	\$9	\$11	\$14
<input type="checkbox"/> Renewal	2 Years	\$17	\$19	\$27
<input type="checkbox"/> Address Change	3 Years	\$25	\$27	\$39

Name: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip _____

Ph#:(____)____ Email Address: _____

Please send check or money order, in US Funds only, payable to: NAWSO,
419 Main Street, PMB#370, Huntington Beach, CA 92648

Credit Card(Check One) Mastercard Visa American Express Discover Card

Name on card _____ Signature _____

Card # _____ Exp Date _____

Billing address _____

Try visiting our website at: www.Nicotine-Anonymous.org You can contact us by email at: info@nicotine-anonymous.org.

(Revised 07-08-05)

Outreach online...

A drowning man catches at straw...

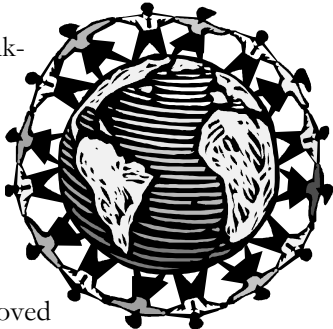
I am thankful to all of you, for encouraging me on my one-year milestone and for sharing my grief. You, my family, my loved and dear ones, with you I have discovered new meaning in life, in the world and in myself. By imbibing the ideas presented in your posts or meetings, my cravings runaway and I retain my freedom, freedom from dependence on treacherous drugs: nicotine and tranquilizers. These drugs had in turn made me dependent on other people and I was like "a drowning man, who catches at straw."

Now I am far better than I was one-year back and getting better physically, emotionally and intellectually. Thank you once again
Your Friend in Recovery
Naeem,
Pakistan
Nicotine free for one year and twenty-eight days.

Ian responds to Naeem's online post, "a drowning man catches at straw."

Thank you for your posts recently, and also big love and respect to Naeem on the recovery - thanks for another sign that it can be done.

I am really glad to see the posts returning all of a sudden, and I feel very heartened by this since I'm at the end of my tether with this slavery of nicotine addiction. I was re-reading some of the NicA literature sheets, which I have recently acquired as well as the books, and one of the observations I saw was that nicotine "alters our perception of the truth." Now, this is something, which, while objectively obvious to my non-smoking friends and family: I by definition hadn't been able to understand. My "truths" surrounding nicotine and cigarettes actually being illu-



sions... thinking back I felt like I knew something like this for ages, but reading this simple guidance in the literature put it in a different light. I suffer greatly from the addict's fondness for making things complicated. That is to say at least, with my alcoholism for instance, I am able to look at my 'foible' for the complex with a wry smile and say "well, that's part of me" since as far as alcohol goes I am, for today and a few days past, sober.

However, I now begin to appreciate the sinister side of being unable to keep things simple, if in fact what is happening is that my addiction to nicotine is fighting hard, and using anything it can find against me to keep me hooked into this idea that I too must keep involved in my side of the fight.

Slowly even as I write these certain ideas, about how it might be to surrender and work this program, are making more sense. If my perception of the truth is distorted by nicotine, then one of those distortions certainly is the recurrent thought which reads: "I cannot give up this fight, and trust to a Higher Power."

By definition I will not on my own be able to see that this is not true. This is how I make things complicated.

Another of the phrases, which I saw in this NicA sheet, was (if we romance it, we chance it,) which also felt very striking, as I realized that in every one of my failed quits so far, this is what has happened. I'm not sure how to stop this happening, except to vastly increase my contact with other members of Nicotine Anonymous by any means possible, realizing (another new thought) that my presence could help someone else even if I haven't stopped.

Having said that, I have a huge desire to get out of this vile limbo. Much as I am frightened, I am beginning to realize that probably no nicotine withdrawal craving can be as bad as this horror-go-round of on/off/on/off rubbish that is my life at the moment.

Bless you all if you have read this far, I hope to post more soon, as I didn't want to just sit this time and not at least try and give something back for the inspiration freely given in these

posts.

Ian C.

Oxfordshire, UK

These two posts are from the Internet online group and meetings at unofficialnicanon.

<http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/unofficialnicanon/>

A new type share meeting...

Linux and Mac users we now have type share meetings only, located at <http://client4.addonchat.com/sc.php?id=181040>.

You do not have to join the room in order to make meetings, just create a nickname and password. There are no advertisements.

Find out more at the link below.

<http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/nicotinerecovery/>

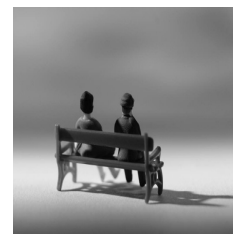
A Truth About Being A Junkie

"I wake slowly. Already my body is a twilight: Solid. Cold.

At the edge of a larger darkness."

Eavan Boland (B. 1944)

It could never happen to me, not to me. Leaving my bed, creeping through a dark alley, knocking on a door with peeling paint, pit bull chained to a stake at the side of the house wanting my life.



I cannot see myself at the mall searching the faces for the one.

The one that has a cheap little baggie—not even the zip lock kind—full of what he promises is a promise.

Knee twitching, eyes watering or dry, but red with need.

It is fierce, this addicting thing. I do not want it. I never planned to plan my life around the next one—can't run out—check the drawer—more there, in case I wake in the night, slowly, alone.

Continued on page 15...

A truth about being a junkie...

It is one o'clock on a sunshine afternoon, Barnes and Noble, a green sack filled with poetry and sales receipt.

Coffee in a cup with a sleeve for my own protection—I look around.

There is an iron bench with a lone older man.

He is smoking and has his coffee beside him.

I cannot see what words his green bag contains, but I see the cigarette.

I sit at the far end of the bench and take out my own pack.

I light the cigarette and feel the relief, we nod but do not speak.

I watch people walk by, trying to not look into their eyes. I know what I will see. One woman, in a wheel chair, pulls up her shirt, covers her mouth. I see her frown at me and I look away.

No one else is smoking, just the old man and me.

Joyce W.

A share from Chris...

I never thought I'd seriously consider quitting cigarettes, let alone actually do it. The idea was so scary, I'd put the thought out of my mind as soon as it came. But there I was, age thirty-seven, twenty (plus) years of smoking under my belt, actually thinking it was time to quit.

I had worked a recovery program for co-dependency for nearly four years. I'd grown in some real positive ways, but could see that cigarettes were inhibiting more growth. I wasn't yet ready to admit to being an addict, but I'd learned that smoking was numbing my emotions. That, plus the fact that forty was right around the corner, made me take a good, hard look. I didn't want to go into middle age still smoking, and I didn't want to stay stuck in my Recovery. I was hooked on getting healthy - spiritually, emotionally, and physically.

Of course deciding and doing are two different things. It took eight more months of pain and struggle before I could actually put down the cigarettes. I see now that every minute of that struggle, every success, and every failure was so important in getting me where I needed to be to quit and to stay quit. For eight months I went with little or no

success. I'd not smoke for a day, then smoke again for two. I'd not smoke for half a day, then buy a pack by afternoon. On and on it went, back and forth, up and down, wrestling with the demon nicotine. I'd steal one from people at work too, or my mother, or bum one from a stranger. I still thought somehow just one more would help, would make the withdrawal easier. I finally learned that only God would make it easier. No cigarette ever could.

I also saw that I most surely was an addict, for no sane person would steal like that to hide their shame of having to use. Only an addict behaves like that. Only an addict has to use. And that addict was me. My first move, of course, was to try an easier, softer way. I headed straight for the doctor for a nicotine gum prescription. He obliged, warning me that I'd still have to put the cigarettes down and now the gum too. I figured I'd cross that bridge later.

My first "quit morning" arrived and I popped the gum instead of a cigarette. Not bad. I did this for seven days, gum instead of a smoke. (Pretty non-stop chewing, I might add.) Then on the seventh day I got upset about something, reached into my boyfriend's pack and smoked a cigarette. My whole week's effort, down the drain, I could not stop myself. Though racked with remorse and guilt, I didn't give up. I did realize then though that quitting was not going to be easy. Next I contacted Nicotine Anonymous and began to attend meetings. I knew from other Twelve Step experience it was my best bet for quitting.

I kept the gum up for about thirty days, but also smoked intermittently through that time. I knew the gum was a waste of money, so I didn't get more when it ran out. Besides, by then I'd been to enough Nicotine Anonymous meetings to know that for me, program was the only way to go.

All I could do for a long time was go and listen at meetings. I went to hear the truth about cigarettes and about smoking. I went to find the magic that would help me quit. I went to see the smiles and hear the joy from people with actual freedom from the

drug. I needed to know that existed! I needed to see I could feel okay again someday.

It was a humbling eight months. Many a meeting all I could do was cry. I thought the miracle would never come - I was too weak, too underserving. But no one in the meetings ever said that. In fact, all I heard was "keep coming back." That much I could do. Then I started hearing about praying for the willingness to go through the pain. I could do that too. So I did. I also agreed to show up early to make coffee for the meetings. I joined a home group. And I prayed some more. Then on April 20, 1992, I woke up and had no cigarette. I went all day without one, and then the next, and the next. It's still that way. I show up each day with just my Higher Power and me. No nicotine. No smokes. A miracle? Oh yes. It's at least that.

Was it easy? Hardly, especially not at first. But the difficulty has passed. One day at a time, it's gotten easier and easier and having the support of my meetings helped tremendously. Knowing what I was going through was normal and typical of drug withdrawal helped. Also working the steps and prayer most definitely helped. Living life on life's terms instead of drug-medicated has been a challenge to be sure, but so worth it. Better than I'd imagined!

I am an addict, this I've come to know. I am one cigarette away from the insanity. But I also know that I don't have to have that one cigarette. There are many things I can do instead. And my Program shows me that I needn't even get near that insane wanting if I keep clear on God's will for me daily. And that knowledge is there for the asking. Thank you God!
Chris

A hug and kiss goodbye from Susan and a big 'ole welcome to Kim F.

Seven Minutes

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