

# BUTTERFLY BOOK



As I start my recovery, torn and tattered,  
I know that I am transforming myself and my life,

**ONE DAY AT A TIME**



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Nicotine Anonymous World Services

First Edition 2023  
ISBN: 0-XXXXXXX-0-0  
EAN: 000-0-XXXXXXX-0-

Published by Nicotine Anonymous World Services,  
a non-profit tax-exempt corporation.

Nicotine Anonymous website address:  
[www.nicotine-anonymous.org](http://www.nicotine-anonymous.org)

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## **Our Preamble**

Nicotine Anonymous® is a fellowship of people 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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# 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 that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to nicotine users and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

*The Twelve Steps reprinted and adapted with permission of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services Inc. Permission to reprint and adapt the Twelve Steps does not mean that AA is affiliated with this program. AA is a program of recovery from alcoholism—use of the Twelve Steps in connection with programs Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous and activities which are patterned after AA, 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.*
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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.*

## **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. (by Reinhold Niebuhr)

## **Third Step Prayer**

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, kindness 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.

## **Seventh Step Prayer**

My Higher Power, I place myself in your hands and humbly ask that my character defects be lifted from me so that I may help others. Please grant me willingness, courage, and strength so that through my actions I may reflect your love and wisdom. Amen.

**It was a gut-wrenching coming to terms with the fact that we were hooked on a drug.**

*-Nicotine Anonymous: The Book*

Do any of these sound like some of the rationalizations we used to spout off when confronted by others who thought a lecture was in order?

“Sure, I have an addiction. But don’t call me an addict.”

“I know my smoking is not good for me, but I enjoy my smoking.”

“I could get hit by a car today crossing the street.”

“We all have to die of something.”

Instead of denying or rationalizing my smoking with stinking thinking, I ask myself: How many times was I humiliated by my smoking? Do I remember how bad I smelled when I reeked of smoke after I came in from a break? How often did I hide my smoking?

The Nicotine Anonymous (NicA) program teaches me that getting honest about my nicotine use is the only way to go. I won’t protect my addiction anymore. It’s out to kill me.

***Thought for the Day:*** *Stinking thinking happens with nicotine addiction the same way it happens with other addictions.*

## **Where's my willpower?**

*-Nicotine Anonymous member*

“I give up, I give up,” the magic words that released the bondage nicotine had over me. Surrender is the word for what happens when I truly accept the compulsive and obsessive nature of addiction. Enormous mental, physical, and emotional energy goes into the struggle.

Let it go!

When I surrender, I let go of all the chaos. Then I can focus on new strategies and redirect my mental energy toward help. How many of us know people who have died trying to take charge and control their addiction instead of accepting the reality that they could not control their nicotine use?

“Addict” is not such a bad word anymore. It's what we are.

“Addiction” is not such a bad word either. It's the condition we have.

***Thought for the Day:*** *Surrender allows change and gives us back our life.*

## **Anger is as a stone cast into a wasp's nest.**

*-Pope Paul VI*

Strong emotions lie underneath strong urges. How many times, when I got upset at people, bosses, or loved ones, have I removed myself from the situation and smoked? Other times I hid behind the cigarette smoke and seethed, too afraid I'd lose control and say something I'd later regret.

Anger made my heart beat faster. It increased adrenaline and got me ready for fight or flight. What else gets my heart beating faster, and triggers me to smoke? Nicotine!

That's why after I quit, when strong emotions tripped me up, they mimicked the effect nicotine had on my body. My body said, "Oh yeah, smoke. You need to have a smoke now."

I relapsed in the past over strong emotional reactions. Not anymore! Now I am aware that I need to be honest and admit craving to subside.

***Thought for the Day:*** *In the heat of the moment, ask this question, "Do I want to be a quitter with an occasional urge to smoke or a smoker with a constant need to quit?"*

**It is said that the darkest hour of the night comes just before the dawn.**

*-Thomas Fuller*

I stumbled around for years making half-hearted attempts at quitting. I was able to stop using nicotine while waiting for a medical diagnosis or while listening to my children's pleas to stop, but it never lasted.

I was blinded by the full force of this addiction before I saw the light. Sometimes, I saw the light temporarily, but it never stayed for long.

I mistakenly thought I had to quit forever and not just for today. As a result, I secretly believed I could never stay quit.

Then I found NicA. Members just as hooked as me shared how they got free. I began to believe, maybe, there really was hope. I listened and followed in their footsteps, one Step at a time. I kept showing up until freedom came to me as well. I remain guided by the light of Nicotine Anonymous.

*Thought for the Day: I accepted the possibility of hope.*

**Two fleas are conversing amidst the thousands of hairs on a dog's back. One flea said to the other, "You know, sometimes I wonder if there really is a dog."**

*-Gary Larson, Cartoonist*

Sometimes it's the same way with me. I'm looking for a Higher Power but not sure it's there. Coming to believe in a Power greater than myself that can restore me to sanity was a difficult concept to consider. Sometimes, this Power was walking right next to me and I was oblivious. I expected spirituality to be made purely of joy and happiness. Occasionally it happens that way, but for me, spiritual awareness includes hiking through peaks and valleys.

Faith, patience, forgiveness, humility, and hope are muscles of the soul that need to be exercised. No matter where I am in my contact with a Higher Power, I have to flex my soul muscles if I expect conscious contact.

It's been said that the human journey to my source of light is not measured in miles or years but in inches, which is the actual distance between my head and my heart.

***Thought for the Day:** "Human spirituality involves several trips through the dark night of the soul." -- Carl Jung*

## **Trust in God but tie your camel tight.**

*-Arab Proverb*

Some of us in the program express difficulty in asking for help from a Higher Power. Others have a concept of God or a Higher Power that will take care of everything, but as of yet, hasn't come through for them.

Even spiritually minded people sometimes have difficulty communicating with a higher entity.

I struggled to understand the concept of powerlessness while turning my will and my life over to the care of a Higher Power. I wondered, "How does it all work?"

I thought my willpower was enough, but it just didn't work to end my nicotine addiction. It took humility for me to admit I couldn't handle this addiction by myself. Then I learned how to flip a switch and turn to a Higher Power.

However, it took patience and persistence to find my switch. Along with my Higher Power, I took Steps of action and had an increasing faith that I could finally live free of nicotine.

***Thought for the Day:** May I be as patient with myself as my Higher Power is with me.*

**“God can be an inner voice, nature, other people or a rock.”**

*-Nicotine Anonymous: The Book*

“O Great Spirit, whose voice I hear in the winds and whose breath gives life to all the world, hear me!

I am small and weak.

I need your strength and wisdom. Let me walk in beauty and make my eyes ever behold the red and purple sunset. Make my hands respect the things you have made and make my ears sharp to hear your voice. Make me wise that I may understand the things you have taught my people. Let me learn the lessons you have hidden in every leaf and rock.

I seek strength, not to be greater than my friend but to fight my greatest enemy, myself.

Make me always ready to come to you with clean hands and straight eyes so when life fades as the fading sunset, may my spirit come to you without shame.”

*-Red Cloud Indian School—Pine Ridge, South Dakota*

***Thought for the Day:*** *I will invite God to intervene in all my affairs.*

**I can go back to using nicotine if I wish, but once I give in, I have lost control and my choice has been taken from me.**

*-Anonymous*

How many years of active addiction have gone by since we first heard ourselves say, “I can stop using nicotine if I so choose.”

It sometimes takes years to see the tactics used to avoid facing up to the bully that wants to harm us; our lives, our children, our job, our health, our self-respect. Some of us learn the lessons of life easier than others. Some of us bang our head against a brick wall over and over and wonder why it hurts.

For years this addiction has made me feel like a loser and I conceded. It has done damage to my self-esteem and my ability to take care of the only body I’ll ever have.

I ask myself this question, “Can I live with an occasional craving or am I just going to throw in the towel and give in again?” I can’t lie to myself anymore and pretend I don’t know where that same behavior will take me. This is an honest program.

I’ll ask my Higher Power for the serenity to accept the temporary craving while asking for the courage to face the next urge. It’s easier than my fears tell me it is.

***Thought for the Day:*** *I can use nicotine, but I can no longer deny where that will lead me.*

## **“The monkey on your back is back!”**

*-Nicotine Anonymous member*

Relapse has been a reality for me. I had an on-again, off-again relationship with this insidious drug. Nicotine gives a tough battle.

I lost the battle in the past because I was trying to quit for someone else. I thought I was in the fight alone without the support and strength of a network of fellow nicotine users and a Higher Power.

When I joined NicA, my strength increased as I teamed up with those who understood and wanted me to succeed. Connecting with the strength of my fellow members is as near as an email, text, or phone call.

It may take ridding myself of the ugly side of pride. Not the pride I feel when I accomplish a worthy goal, but the selfish pride I feel when I am too proud to ask for help.

Keeping secrets allowed the addiction to fester and grow. Making the decision not to use nicotine truly frightened me. However, once I accepted NicA's help, a feeling grew deep down inside that convinced me I could break free.

***Thought for the Day: Pride can prevent progress.***

## **Do something you fear every day!**

*-Eleanor Roosevelt*

Fear of failure and fear of withdrawal are very common emotional obstacles for a nicotine user. But only if we let fear control us.

Fear of failure is that sickening feeling in the pit of my stomach that whispers, “Don’t try it, you’ll never make it. Forget about that future quit day, the withdrawal will be excruciating.”

The program teaches that fear is all part of the disease of addiction. Dis-ease; being uneasy. Addiction shouts that we’ll never make it and many just stop trying. Like a snakebite, fear paralyzes the victim until completely helpless.

I listened at a NicA meeting and heard how others were still, or had been, fearful too. Fear was a common enemy. I learned we succeed by supporting one another. Through patience, humility, and trust, a small amount of faith in the group, a Higher Power, and myself, I can break through the wall of fear.

Now my journey in recovery moves forward.

*Thought for the Day: “Choose Faith Over Fear.” NicA slogan*

**“The power of the Twelfth Step is that it provides a guide for living the rest of our lives.”**

*-Nicotine Anonymous: The Book*

When I came to my first NicA meeting, I came for one reason: I wanted to quit using a deadly drug that had me under its spell.

I never realized that the journey of working the Steps would land me at Step Twelve, bringing a new-found joy through sharing experience, strength, and hope with one another.

Little by little, gratitude for my new freedom evolved into “carrying the message,” which I do by giving away the gift of freedom I received.

A program of action includes service to the fellowship such as sharing at a meeting, setting up the room, a phone call or text message to a struggling member, a brief hug of support, or sponsorship. I do whatever it takes to keep the meeting going for those new to the program.

I soon realized I had developed compassion for those still suffering and allowed my very life to be an example and a support for others. I learned from experience that by staying I could continue to grow. So, I stayed.

**Thought for the Day:** Active compassion expresses concern and understanding for the suffering of others.

## **I had to learn to tell on myself.**

*-NicA Member*

It took me a long time in the program and many relapses before realizing I could never be secure in my freedom until I knew what I was up against. I was fighting a spiritual, emotional, and physical battle for my life.

Relapse brought me back into the trenches and kept my head down in the dirt. Looking back, I see how this fight was a struggle with my own values. I still remember saying I valued my health and my life but continued to give into my addiction.

I said I valued my Nicotine Anonymous group, but during a relapse I'd stay away from where I knew I'd find help. I was ashamed by my failure and too prideful to come back and admit that I needed the group.

In addition, I knew there was a Higher Power willing to help me carry this burden. However, while in relapse, rather than reach out for help, I started to succumb to the lie that there was no hope or help left for me. If I didn't get honest, I would die of my addiction.

Only through the grace of my Higher Power and not giving up on myself did I come to the point where I could ask for help. And then, I made a decision to turn my will and my life over to the care of God as I understood Him. That has made all the difference.

***Thought for the Day:*** *“Don't give up before the miracle happens.”*

## **You'll never plow a field by turning it over in your mind.**

*-Irish Proverb*

Have I thought of my addiction to nicotine as a disease? The Mayo Clinic identifies tobacco smoking as the main cause of COPD, a progressive chronic disease of the lungs. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), “smoking causes cancer, heart disease, stroke, lung diseases, type 2 diabetes, and other chronic health conditions.” The National Institute of Health describes “nicotine addiction as...akin to addiction to certain hard drugs, such as cocaine and heroin.”

Doctors may recommend various medications or therapies that may help, including social support with the physical withdrawal symptoms caused by nicotine addiction. Suppose a doctor told me this addiction is a chronic disease like diabetes or asthma and could be put into remission by attending regular meetings of support such as Nicotine Anonymous? Would I tell that doctor I'm not interested in their advice? Or, would I go and get the help I need?

My answer became: get the help I need. My actions: join NicA, use the Tools, and do what other members have done. Eventually, I learned there was a physical, emotional, and spiritual solution to my disease.

*\*Disclaimer: NicA is not affiliated with any outside organizations and quoting such organizations does not constitute our endorsement of them.*

***Thought for the Day:*** Denial doesn't prevent or address a disease, taking action does.

**Humility lets us listen for the truth, whereas pride permits us to believe our own excuses and rationalizations.**

*-Nicotine Anonymous: The Book*

Wouldn't it be great if we could trade in our earth suits when they started to wear down? Unfortunately for us, this is not an option.

Sometimes when I'm battling this addiction, I feel as though I have two brains. I call this "the committee." One part of my brain says, "Go ahead, have that one cigarette, you can always stop again tomorrow." And the other side says, "Oh no you don't, you're not going to trick me with that line again."

I've learned at NicA meetings that one cigarette is too many and 1,000 are never enough. At meetings, I hear the truth: I have one precious body to take care of for the next 24 hours. If I do that today, I won't regret it when I lay my head down on my pillow tonight.

**Thought for today:** *Let me listen to NicA's message and protect my precious body.*

## **Our soul develops as does the pearl—through irritation.**

*-Anonymous*

We may look back at our lives and think that if we hadn't gone through some of the worst times, we wouldn't have realized some wonderful things about ourselves, such as how strong we really are.

None of us ever elect to go through a divorce, lose a job, or get a diagnosis that scares the heck out of us. Yet, sometimes the very thing we fear the most is actually our ticket to an entirely new world.

Because most of us are going through recovery for the first time in our lives, we have no idea that this new road can take us to places we've never been before. We don't have to worry about accepting a ride with a non-smoker because we'd be too uncomfortable, or postponing a trip to visit relatives since it would mean sitting in an airplane for hours without a smoke.

Yet the most important gift of recovery is the simple and good feeling I get from knowing I've faced up to something that once had me tied up in knots. I started unwrapping this gift. Now I look forward to all I may discover inside.

***Thought for the Day:*** *Whatever does not break me makes me stronger makes me stronger.*

**“We get soon old and too late smart.”**

*-German Saying*

If only I knew then what I know now how different things would be. The unfolding of my life sometimes involves regrets. If only I never started using nicotine. If only I never started again after my pregnancy. If only I hadn't relapsed after a loved one's funeral. These regrets keep me awake at night.

At the beginning of recovery, the decision to stop using nicotine was an important one which I'll never regret. No matter how difficult or easy recovery turns out to be, in the bottom of my heart, I know that this decision to get free of nicotine is one of the best, most intelligent decisions I've made.

I think of all those excuses I've made about why any particular moment was not a good time to quit. I now have smartened up, made no more excuses, and devoted my time to gaining freedom from nicotine.

***Thought for the Day:*** *Sometimes I only understand decisions I've made in retrospect.*

## **Do you know why the nicotine user crossed the road? Because someone told them they couldn't.**

*-Anonymous*

Stubbornness is a trait many will deny. Underlying most stubbornness is the reluctance to admit a character defect that protects addiction. In recovery, it's time for me to start taking a deep look in the mirror and evaluate my attitudes and behaviors.

When someone urged me to quit, I said, "I'll quit nicotine when I feel like it and not when somebody else tells me I should." And then I resent that person. I had thoughts like, "I'd like to tell that nonsmoker's-rights person what to do with their nonsmoking laws." In a fit of anger, I might say, "I'm mad and I'm going outside to have a smoke." I then gave up on giving it up.

I can turn this negative trait around by realizing I am in a battle against myself. My stubbornness keeps me in an endless self-defeating struggle.

Resentments can lead to relapse. Once relapse occurs, I can review my options: One, I can retreat and give up until another day; Two, I can return to denial and continue to smoke; Three, I can surrender and admit that my stubbornness is the problem.

I win by giving up the struggle, opening myself to hope, and staying on the road to recovery.

***Thought for the Day:*** *I'm not going to let stubbornness sabotage my recovery.*

## **Keep Showing Up.**

*-Nicotine Anonymous slogan*

When I attend a Nicotine Anonymous meeting, over and over I hear this refrain, “Keep Showing Up.” Meetings are where others show me what works for them. There, I can safely step out from behind the smokescreen of my addiction.

If a member has a relapse, sometimes they stay away from the group to avoid any embarrassment.

However, NicA is a gentle program of support.

Meetings are safe spaces where, without criticism, we accept members who simply have a desire to stop using nicotine. Nicotine Anonymous helps members reduce the tendency to live in hiding and darkness, which only drives the addiction deeper, ignites our worst fears, and creates confusion.

When we keep showing up, we begin to understand how this simple program can help us show up for our lives.

***Thought for the Day:*** *Our common welfare depends on each member showing up for recovery.*

## **If God had a refrigerator, your picture would be on it.**

### *Sentence Sermons*

If you're new in your recovery, you may not have realized that someone else has been praying for you. At meetings, we often take a moment of silence for the still suffering addict. For some members, this act represents a Higher Power working through other people. Many have been the recipient of this gift without realizing it.

Someday, you too may find yourself including newcomers in your daily conversation with a Higher Power. If someone told you this before your recovery, you might have scoffed at this idea.

It may take more time to understand the concepts of the Twelve Steps, but like living in a dark unfamiliar place and then walking into a bright room, you need time to allow your eyes to adjust to the light.

Who would have predicted that this addiction could actually become a gift?

***Thought for the Day:*** *As our Third Step Prayer says, "Help me to help those who suffer."*

**Remember—We're not quitting forever, just for today.**

*-NicA Member*

## **One Day At a Time (ODAT)**

***Thought for the Day:*** *All I need to do is finish the day without using nicotine.*

## Seeking a Higher Power?

### **The Journey\***

*Author Unknown*

The man whispered, “God, speak to me” and a meadow-lark sang. But the man did not hear.

So the man yelled, “God, speak to me” and the thunder rolled across the sky. But the man did not listen.

The man looked around and said, “God, let me see you.” And a star shined brightly. But the man did not see.

And then the man shouted, “God, show me a miracle!” And a new life was born. But the man did not notice.

So the man cried out in despair, “Touch me, God, and let me know you are near.” Whereupon, God reached down and touched the man.

But the man brushed the butterfly away and walked on.

\*From *“The Navajo-Hopi Observer  
Newsletter”*

*Thought for the Day: Today I will seek to improve my conscious contact with my Higher Power.*

## **There's a fine line between cannot and will not.**

*-Nicotine Anonymous member*

How many times have we said, “I promise to quit smoking when (fill in the blank) is over.” I went through the motions of quitting. But, always in the back of my mind, I left the door open just wide enough so that my addiction can come bursting through and lay us out flat.

Just for today I can choose to close the door. I only need to commit to today. Let tomorrow take care of itself. If I hear myself say, “I can’t,” I can ask myself if I’m really saying, “I won’t.”

***Thought for the Day:** I can forgive myself for doubting what is possible.*

## **To thine own self be true.**

*-William Shakespeare, from Hamlet*

There's an old story about a man who drove down the street and couldn't find a parking space. Looking up to heaven, he said, "Lord, take pity on me. If you help me find a parking space, I'll go to church every Sunday for the rest of my life and give up cigarettes." Miraculously a space appeared. The man looked up again and said, "Never mind, I found one."

That story rings a bell with me. I smile because it cuts a little too close to home. I've had a health scare that signaled something was wrong and asked a Higher Power for help, promising to quit if it wasn't as serious as I feared. Then when the health scare was over, I immediately forgot my promise and headed to the store.

When I shared about this at a NicA meeting I heard, "Welcome to the club." This started my recovery.

Now I look back on my insincerity and shake my head, realizing the insanity of the promises I've made to avoid facing my addiction and seeking help.

Not anymore. I've got my self-respect back and it feels good.

***Thought for the Day:** I came to believe I could be restored to sanity.*

## **We are only as sick as our secrets.**

*-Alcoholics Anonymous*

Keeping an addiction hidden takes a lot of energy. I covered up my nicotine use because I didn't want anyone to know I was using. I kept my paraphernalia out of view, hiding it for as long as possible.

The addiction went deeper as I cased a location where I could smoke in peace. I avoided social functions, knowing I might expose my addiction. Instead, I just stayed home, alone, missing out on a life of connection with others.

But the moment always came when I was exposed and couldn't keep the secret any longer. I felt ashamed and weak.

I didn't want anyone's pity. All I wanted was to be left alone to use. So, I'd pull out the stress argument and tell them, "Oh, my job is too stressful." Then there's the fate argument, "I could get killed crossing the street so why bother quitting. We all have to die of something."

I learned at NicA meetings that addiction is the opposite of connection. Now, I use the Group Contact List and share at meetings. My shame is lifting.

***Thought for the Day:*** *My addiction wants me to isolate. Recovery is about connection.*

## **I want to live until I have uncovered all my gifts.**

*-NicA member*

Our lives begin with certain talents and gifts that sometimes we only discover in our later years. I've thought about the talented, creative people this addiction has claimed prematurely.

Once I thought I didn't have any talents. My life had no purpose, so why quit? Too often, I wasted time at my own self-pity party by thinking: "Don't even try to stop smoking, you'll never make it." Now, I tell such thoughts where to go. I have a whole new life ahead of me with talents and gifts waiting to be discovered.

In recovery, I find I can do many new things that my addiction prevented me from exploring and enjoying. I realized I like to ride bikes, play tennis, and paint pictures. I want to learn how to play the guitar. Now I can go for it! I may have other creative gifts that are yet to be revealed.

At the next NicA meeting, I will introduce myself and share about my new life in recovery. There's no secret. If I keep showing up at meetings, I will continue to learn how and why this simple program works.

I can be a good example to show it works if you work it.

***Thought for the Day:*** *I will be a gift to others by sharing my experience, strength, and hope.*

## **For peace of mind, we need to resign as general manager of the universe.**

*-Larry Eisenberg*

How many times have I tried to control tobacco chewing and failed? It feels like a thousand times.

Attempting to control an addiction is like trying to lasso a cloud and make it rain. I also tried to control people, places, or things until I accepted how that didn't work either.

I've said, "Quitting chewing is no problem. I could quit anytime I want to. I just need to get everything exactly where it needs to be before I quit. You see, my kids have to stop bugging me. And my job has to be less stressful."

How many years ago was that? Life just doesn't work that way. In fact, gaining my freedom was just the opposite. I let go of control and surrendered the "I-can-quit-anytime-I-want-to-but-now-is-not-the-right-time" attitude. I humbly started to listen, really listen to those in NicA who came before me and quit.

At meetings, I learned that when I'm struggling, I can pick up the phone and call or text someone. I can be humble enough to let them know I'm having a hard time. Now I accept I can't fix everything by myself.

What a relief that has become!

*Thought for the Day: I can't change anyone but myself.*

**Remember, just because you hit bottom doesn't mean you have to stay there.**

*-Robert Downey Jr.*

Stopping nicotine use is serious business. Saving my life is even more serious.

I remember the many times I reached into filthy dirty ashtrays to find a shriveled-up piece of a yellowed stub. It had a filter that showed black streaks of tar on it. I deeply sucked on what was left of that disgusting mess. I recall the times I stood outside my office in below zero weather with my hands shaking so badly from the cold that I almost dropped the cigarette or vape. I tried to appear nonchalant and normal. I haven't forgotten being so desperate when I ran out that I tried to bum a smoke or vape pod only to be told, "Sorry, I don't smoke anymore!" I slithered away embarrassed and angry with myself.

Now as an addict in recovery in NicA, I honestly see myself as I used to be. I never want to relapse and have to live that way again. Instead, in gratitude, I smile and say, "Just for today I don't have to hurt myself with nicotine."

***Thought for the Day:*** "Our Fellowship offers sanity and strength to prepare for, and then to live, the miracle of not having that 'next' one." [*-Slogans pamphlet*]

## **How I see NicA.**

*-NicA Member*

As I struggle at the bottom of the cliff trying to get up to the next ledge, I look up and see someone there holding out their hand, offering me help. But, I won't reach up and grasp it. I'm stubborn, bullheaded, and think I can do this on my own. I can get to that ledge. I'm not weak. I get a few feet up and think I'm doing okay.

Now I'm a few yards up, and it's getting a harder to hold on. I'm not that far up, yet, so if I slip and fall, it won't hurt too much. I look down below and I see other people standing there wanting to climb too, but they're hesitant to start. They're watching me struggle and begin urging me to keep going. I look up and the person above is also urging me on, still holding out their hand for me to grab. I slip and fall back to the bottom. After a moment I get back up, brush myself off and try again.

The same thing happens, over and over. Finally, I reach up and take the hand of the person on the first ledge to get there together. It's hard to see beyond that, but we trust there are people waiting to help us.

We resume our climb, encouraging those behind us and reach out to help them. It feels good to be doing this even though it is so hard. If I slip and fall, the others are there to keep encouraging me. I realize that continuing this journey together makes possible what was impossible climbing alone.

***Thought for the Day: Many hands make light work.***

## **Service is a Tool of recovery.**

*- Nicotine Anonymous*

One of the reasons I continue to come to NicA meetings is to give back all that I have received. I now recognize the gift that came wrapped as an opportunity to help others who are still struggling. It was like a special present handed to me when I least expected it.

I knew I came to quit using nicotine but I didn't understand the transformation that happened to me until I unwrapped the gift. Only in retrospect can I see how many were involved in giving me the gift of support that led me to a new life.

In witnessing the struggle of others, I slowly began to understand that someone else needed help. This had once been my story too.

As I slowly changed and experienced the miracle of recovery, I gratefully serve by sharing this gift with others.

***Thought for the Day:** How can I be of service today?*

**Take time to deliberate, but when the time for action has arrived, stop thinking and go in.**

*-Napoleon Bonaparte*

I think too much. I limit my own potential by being so logical that I can't let my intuitive mind give me any creative answers.

If I surrender, answers will come. When I think I know everything, I get stuck where I am. Fortunately, getting unstuck can occur in an instant. It's just a matter of listening to another addict on this recovery journey.

If I practice humility and am open, I may recognize my Higher Power's presence in the person next to me at a NicA meeting.

Most members are dealing with some inner struggles, but if they are kind enough to extend a hand to me and I accept, I may be helping them as well.

They don't have to be the so-called experts either. I just have to be open and believe that they may have what I need at the moment. If I have faith in my own potential, I may start feeling good about receiving help and get out of my own way.

***Thought for the Day:*** *Today I will be honest, open, and willing.*

**Even when the gates of heaven are shut to prayers,  
they are open to tears.**

*- Talmud*

Have you ever cried yourself to sleep and then woke up the next morning feeling better? I have. There is something about the act of crying and shedding tears that can cleanse my mind and my heart.

Crying can also be a signal to everyone around me that I need their help and support.

Although I feel very much alone when I cry, I still hope someone is listening. NicA's Second Step, coming to believe that a Power greater than ourselves can restore us to sanity, isn't something that necessarily comes to us easily.

I look around at those who have a good program and ask them if they believe a Higher Power is listening. Then I listen to their answers.

***Thought for the Day: I need not apologize for my tears; they reach out further than I think.***

## **Choose Faith Over Fear.**

*-NicA Slogans pamphlet*

Reaching out for help has always been a problem for me. I felt I had to handle everything myself. If I admitted I needed help, people may think I was weak.

It took courage to attend my first NicA meeting in a roomful of strangers. In recovery, I learned the program is about helping and supporting one another. Members are encouraged to “Keep Showing Up,” no matter how uncomfortable you may feel.

At meetings, I came to believe that if other members could do it, perhaps I could too. As I learned to listen to the wisdom of what others had to say, I was reminded to, “Take what you need and leave the rest.” This freed me to come to my own conclusions as I navigated the hills and valleys of recovery.

What didn’t make sense to me at first became clearer with time. Like a jigsaw puzzle the pieces started to fit together, make sense, and help restore me to sanity, one day at a time.

***Thought for the Day: I will step through my fear with faith.***

**We are not bad people with a bad habit; we are good people with a difficult disease.**

*-NicA Member*

Because this is an honest program, I need to ask myself the following questions:

“Why do I give myself permission to use nicotine?”

“Why do I open the door to a relapse when I know what’s waiting on the other side?”

“Is it because I haven’t thought it through?”

“Since when have I been able to control my nicotine use?”

The addiction will tell me I can use nicotine without a problem. Who is lying to whom? I need to face the truth. One is too many and a thousand is not enough.

Whatever the excuse or rationale, until I admit that truth, I will continue to relapse and end up feeling bad and criticizing myself. I’m realizing the disease of addiction has harmed me physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

***Thought for the Day:*** *This addiction is cunning, baffling, and powerful.*

## **The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.**

*- Mahatma Gandhi*

I was miserable and hanging on by a thread when I sought out a NicA meeting. Entering a room full of strangers is not easy, especially when feeling vulnerable and sad due to my addiction. And yet, I wondered how could this NicA group have the answer when nothing else has worked in the past? Do I dare make another attempt at quitting? It probably won't work anyway. Why bother?

How do I find the courage to keep trying to quit and not give up? Members say it's by having the humility to "Keep Showing Up." I'm told NicA is a place where I won't be judged--that it's a place where I'll find people who speak my language, know the pitfalls, and have found a solution.

When I feel alone and unsure, I am encouraged that recovery is possible. Members inspire me by sharing their experience, strength, and hope. They are the heart of the program and recovery in action.

I am grateful for the service of others, so that today I have a program of recovery that gives me the opportunity to serve. Service is a Tool of recovery, and I've learned that I can't keep it if I don't give it away.

***Thought for the Day:*** *We learn at meetings that service is ~~our~~ gratitude in action.*

**"We began to learn to stop living in the pain of yesterday and to start living in the pleasure of today."**

*-Nicotine Anonymous: The Book*

Regrets can be depressing. I think of all the woulda, coulda, shouldas in my life and realize how self-seeking I was. My addiction affected every area of my life.

It's easy for me to get caught up in the "What Ifs." What if I hadn't picked up my first cigarette or started vaping? What if I had put down my last cigarette before all the regrets? What if I had listened to the doctor when he told me I'd better quit? What if I had quit before my health problems got worse?

The problem is I can't change yesterday. It's over. I can only learn from it and change today so that tomorrow I don't have regrets.

I have the Steps and Tools of this fellowship so I can make amends, live nicotine free, and hopefully create a better future.

***Thought for the day** Yesterday is history, tomorrow is a mystery, today is a gift to live, a present.*

## **When you get to the edge of a diving board, you've got to jump.**

*-Anonymous*

I remember how it felt before setting a quit date. I felt like I was perched on the edge of a diving board or standing in front of the ocean's pounding waves--too scared to jump in and get wet and too embarrassed to retreat. Would I be able to swim? Would I drown? Where's the lifeguard and who is going to help me if I start to sink?

Yet the same huge waves that frighten me could become the perfect opportunity.

I could think the big wave of quitting is something to run from. Or I could believe, with support, the big wave is something to ride. I decided that I needed to jump in, ready or not, and ride the wave to freedom with my fellow members.

Now when I get the urge to use nicotine, I can ride that wave to the shore. Knowing if I trust the program, my Higher Power, and my NicA group, I don't have to swim alone. Each wave helps me improve and makes me a stronger swimmer.

***Thought for the Day:*** "We found a surfboard. We found a Higher Power." *-Nicotine Anonymous: The Book, Step Eleven*

**“Sometimes all it takes to let go is the right person to hold on to.”**

*-Steve Hartman, as quoted in “Sponsorship in Nicotine Anonymous”*

I hadn’t considered getting a sponsor in the program before. Perhaps now is the time. I could use the help of someone who’s ahead of me in their recovery, like a sponsor. A sponsor has additional insight and wants me to succeed.

How do I go about asking for a sponsor? I’m told it’s not imposing to simply ask. If someone can’t, they won’t. My group showed me the pamphlet “To the Newcomer and Sponsorship,” the Newcomers Booklet, and the Sponsorship in Nicotine Anonymous booklet.

I’m not going to be afraid to ask someone to be my sponsor because I know how good it feels when someone asks me for help. It works both ways--we help each other in our journey.

***Thought for the Day:*** *Having a sponsor is using one of the five Tools of Nicotine Anonymous.*

**I've suffered a great many catastrophes in my lifetime, but most of them never happened.**

*-Mark Twain*

I worry about many things in life that never happen. As a vaper, I worry what my life will be like once I stop using nicotine, which seems like a big hurdle for me. I can't imagine getting through life without nicotine. So, I look into the future and ask myself these questions:

How will I manage without my constant companion?

How did I get through life before my addiction took hold?

How would it feel to carry around an oxygen tank?

How would I feel if I heard the whispers that I should have quit sooner?

It's taken a little time but I realize that suffering the loss before it happens is quite normal. It's what keeps me from letting go of nicotine and backing away from setting a quit day.

I asked a member who had some time under their belt if all their worries about missing nicotine were justified. I heard, "I wish I'd done this sooner. I don't know what I was afraid of. The freedom is fantastic and I'm finally out of my prison."

***Thought for the Day: Today I can choose to live happy, joyous and free.***

**As we end our relationship with nicotine, there may be feelings of grief or loneliness.**

*- "Tips For Gaining Freedom From Nicotine"*

This addiction once convinced me that it was my friend, lover, and most reliable part of my personal identity. The fear of losing this constant companion was very real and at first brought up issues of loss and grief.

Temporary feelings of sadness accompanied me as I said goodbye to something that had been a huge part of my life.

I asked myself the questions, "Who will I be without nicotine?" and "Who will I turn to in times of stress?"

The Tools of the program (service, meetings, sponsorship, literature, and the group contact list) helped me answer these questions. Using these Tools, I learned to surrender and accept my grief as part of the healing process.

My sponsor also suggested I write a goodbye letter to nicotine, and it really helped.

*Thought for the Day: Surrender allows change.*

**Sticks in a bundle are not easily broken but a stick by itself can be broken by a child.**

*-based on an Aesop fable*

The word Health comes from the Anglican word “Hal,” which means to be whole or holy.

Now that I’m becoming whole and the person I was meant to be through recovery, I’ll never forget where I came from.

As I’m discovering the new me as a non-nicotine user, I remember I’m not alone. Someone loves me unconditionally and is at the helm. I’m ready for future challenges and adventures that are sure to come my way.

If I feel discouraged, I’ll look back on my life at everything I have accomplished so far. I’ll recall those bonuses that were unexpected like the new found self-esteem that came just from quitting. I’ll not forget those who traveled with me and who are still supporting me as I continue meeting all the hills and valleys that lie ahead.

Someday I may be able to thank those who encouraged me, prayed for me, and offered a hand to help me on my way. Now I can return the favor. I’ll remember where I came from and vow never to forget those who are still struggling.

***Thought for the Day: In order for me to keep it, I’ve got to give it away.***

## **If you don't plow the field, the ground will get very hard.** *Sufi Theology*

Sometimes I did things the same way over and over and over, especially when it came to half-hearted attempts at quitting nicotine, again. Then I would sit back, cross my arms, and repeat to myself, "It's not my fault, I tried."

I would arbitrarily pick a quit day, and then only go through the motions of quitting. I told myself, while looking in the mirror, "I guess it just wasn't my time." Then I'd start the routine over on another quit day.

At NicA meetings I listened as others shared about becoming willing to go to any lengths to get free. Deep down, I knew there were more actions I could take to get there. I didn't have to be so hard on myself. I needed to get honest and admit I would get out of the attempt at quitting ~~just~~ what I put into it.

I learned it's no use kidding myself about how many times I've tried to quit in the past and failed. I needed to prepare to do the work necessary to get what I want, and then take actions to do it.

***Thought for the Day:*** *I have three choices: give up, give in, or give it all I got.*

**“Tell on your disease. Get it out from between your ears and say it with your mouth.”**

*-NicA Member*

Having the strength and humility to tell on my addiction can open the door to my purification. One secret can ruin my whole recovery. I need to get all the junk out, first, before I can truly start anew.

NicA's Fourth Step inventory allows me to take a daring look into the mirror and write down what I see in my behaviors and attitudes.

I can no longer hide from my addiction or protect it. Working my Fifth Step, I put the truth out there in the sunlight to clearly see it.

I began my recovery alone, but once I started this journey with my fellow members and a Higher Power, I was in the care of a Power greater than myself.

I am grateful I do not have to recover alone.

***Thought for the Day: I'm only as sick as my secrets.***

**We were getting free of yesterday so we could live today, each day, one day at a time.**

*-Nicotine Anonymous: The Book*

One of the greatest mysteries in life is the gift of time. Everything that happens to me, happens to me in and through time.

As my body ages, I become more aware that there need not be panic or fear associated with losing time since aging also brings a deeper sense of strength, poise, and purpose.

I do sense how incredibly quickly time is moving. So I get on with my recovery, not wasting one more minute worrying about what this addiction is doing to my body or where I can find an opportunity to use again.

I've just come out of that long and lonely journey through darkness and silence that has now put me on the new path to freedom from addiction. I'm finding peace with what I accomplish one day at a time.

***Thought for the Day:*** *I am so privileged to still have time to live life free from fear.*

## **He who conceals his disease cannot be cured.**

*-Ethiopian Proverb*

Asking a coworker or friend for an occasional cigarette puts everyone in a bad situation. I have suffered severe consequences from this act of kindness from strangers and loved ones. I didn't think it all the way through about the consequences of this simple request, "Can I bum a cigarette?"

Not only did I compromise my freedom, but I continually caused a relapse in my journey. I had years of abstinence ruined that put me right back where I didn't want to be by bumming a cigarette.

The same is true of talking myself into buying only one pack of cigarettes, one can of chew, or one vape cartridge that I thought was only going to be temporary. How many times do I have to do that before I relapse when I think I can have "just one?"

There are no loopholes in the law of addiction. Administration of a drug to an addict will cause reestablishment of the dependence on the addictive substance.

The day I tossed away the last of my nicotine products, I vowed to remain vigilant. I realize I have a disease that cannot be cured, but through recovery it can be managed.

***Thought for the day: Don't look to graduate.***

## **Health is a new experience. We are humbly grateful for this gift.**

*-Our Promises*

I believe each of us is here for a special destiny. I'm fortunate to be living now in an age when a human's lifespan has potentially doubled in the last 100 years.

On those silent trips of the mind when I wonder if I am on the right path, maybe I'm not asking the right question. Instead, maybe I can just accept the fact that whatever the reason for my existence, I should be protecting the only body I'm ever going to get--my earth suit. Some call it a sacred temple.

How unfortunate that often I haven't appreciated the mystery of my body until I am ill. My body is constantly trying to heal and give me warnings. After years of breathing in harsh chemicals I thought I could not resist, I can ask my body for forgiveness for all it's had to suffer and endure because of my addiction.

Now that I'm nicotine free, I listen to my body. It's been talking to me for years. It says, "Treat me well and I'll take you places you never expected to go."

***Thought for the Day:*** *Respect for my body is a part of my spiritual awakening.*

**There are only two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle.**

*-Albert Einstein*

I'm in awe of the grace that comes to me in this program in the form of members who were once complete strangers. These new relationships are special connections that create a sense of wonderment. I believe they were sent to me from my Higher Power.

This is a spiritual program of recovery. No matter how I define grace, I recognize those unexpected words of wisdom that come just when I need to hear them.

At first, I didn't believe that help could come from another member. Yet, could this NicA member sitting beside me at a meeting or who texts me for support, also be a spiritual gift?

It doesn't matter where the grace comes from, just that I'm aware that help can come from many directions. I only have to recognize the miracles and be open to them. I do this with humility and gratitude that something bigger than myself is operating in my life.

***Thought for the Day: I am grateful for the miracle of grace.***

## **Honesty, Openness, Willingness**

*-HOW Nicotine Anonymous Works*

The fear of moving ahead in my recovery or standing still is my personal decision. Only real honesty can get me free and keep me there. It's not as easy as it sounds. The decision to move into the unknown can be the scary part. How do I get the momentum going?

I started by being open and admitting I'm in a quandary. At a NicA meeting I heard that half the committee in your head keeps telling you that you can't live without your addiction and the other half warns you that you can't live with it. Only by getting really honest with myself can I begin to hush the negative thoughts when they arrive as I turn up the volume of the wisdom I hear.

I asked, "Do I have to hit rock bottom to quit?" My sponsor suggested not to bother trying to figure out if I'm at rock bottom, just be willing to accept where I am.

My sponsor also suggested I write a list of reasons why I want to recover. This list will eventually become part of my gratitude list. I can refer to my list as a reminder of all the wonderful gifts that await me as I gain freedom from nicotine.

***Thought for the Day:** Today I will be honest, open, and willing.*

**Since all our days are numbered—all our days are a gift from God.**

*-Celtic Prayer*

The oceans move in rhythm; the tide comes in, turns, and recedes. It resembles the rhythm of human breath that comes, fills, and then goes back out again.

For years, I have taken my breathing for granted. That changed when it became a struggle to breathe. Only then did I become concerned. That was the final cue that I needed to quit, which led me to find a NicA group.

A member shared how the word spirit comes from the Latin word spiritus which means breath. So, spirit and respiratory or breath, both derive from the same word.

I no longer take my breathing or spirituality for granted. I take a deep breath and breathe in spirit.

***Thought for the Day:*** *Take deep breaths, wait a few minutes, and most likely the urge will pass.*

## **Ask your addiction to be your teacher.**

*-Basil Brave Heart, Lakota Tribe Teacher & Healer*

Basil Brave Heart was suffering from the horror of his addiction to alcohol. The day he was freed from his addiction, feeling dejected after being jailed 32 times, he watched a sunset and suddenly heard a voice say, “When the sun meets the darkness, you will be free.” That evening in his bedroom, he felt like the ceiling opened and he saw all his dead relatives holding hands in a circle above him saying, “The Great Spirit has freed you.”

Basil Brave Heart acknowledged that destructive energy and asked it to be his teacher. When he faced his enemy’s destructive power, its power dissipated, and the Great Spirit chased it away. So many times, I ran away from the thing that possessed me. I tried to hide from the very thing that ensnared my freedom.

In Native American tradition, there is a ritual of smudging with herbs. It is believed that there is spirit within the herb. As they burn the herb, they say, “The herb reveals the Great Spirit around you.”

The Twelve Steps of Nicotine Anonymous have deep reverence for the power of the spirit to participate in healing from addiction. I refer to this spirit as my Higher Power. I can communicate with this Power by being honest, open, and willing.

***Thought for the Day:*** *I will name my fears, face them, and turn them over to my Higher Power.*

## **Why should I continue going to meetings when nothing there seems to make any sense?**

*-New Member of NicA*

When I was a newcomer, I brought my old thoughts with me to a meeting. Everything I had done to stop using nicotine had been fruitless and I wasn't sure what to do next.

I was discouraged. I needed to wait until I received a clear message to take my next step. I put my quitting aside temporarily, asked for guidance from a power greater than myself, and listened to other members.

I kept listening and watching for signs. Then I received an insight in a dream. I heard a member recommend a passage from the Third Step Prayer, "Free me from fantasy and fear." My old thoughts were all based on my fears and the fantasy that my addiction was not harming me.

Members shared how we could accept what fits and disregard what doesn't. I found members who have more time living free of nicotine who were willing to share how they became encouraged by the program. They come to NicA meetings to support me as much as for themselves.

***Thought for the Day:** I can be encouraged by asking for the courage to change the things I can.*

**Our greatest glory is not in never falling but in rising every time we fall.**

*-Confucius*

When I asked myself, “Am I a nicotine addict?” I’d say, “No way!” I hated that term. Yet, I hated nicotine use more. I heard of addicts who stopped at stores and bought cigarettes, chew, or vapes and then threw them away. Okay, so I’ve done that. But I’m no addict. Yet, I couldn’t stop using nicotine. I kept stopping at the store and promising that tomorrow I would quit again. I needed help.

I searched the web and found Nicotine Anonymous and joined a group. I heard a member say, “Until I admitted that I was powerless over nicotine, I could not move forward and recover.”

Okay...So I *am* acting like an addict. It’s beginning to sink in that I very well may be one. I’m beginning to believe it now. If believing that addicts cannot use the drug nicotine in any form, then I’ll say it, “I am powerless over nicotine.”

Now I know why I couldn’t stop using nicotine. I couldn’t say those words. Now I believe it. It’s the truth and the truth will set me free. I am an addict! May my recovery begin!

***Thought for the Day:*** *It was a gut-wrenching coming to terms with the fact I was hooked on a drug.*

**“I’ve heard that the definition of insanity is to do something over and over again, expecting different results.”**

*-NicA Member*

For years, I continued to kiss those butts with my lips as the toxic smoke burned my lungs and sucked the very life out of me. It was a fatal attraction.

I have worked to gain my freedom and learned a very important lesson: I was uncomfortable at times after I quit, but how I felt in the beginning was not how I felt a few months out.

Occasional urges would come. I had an itch that couldn’t be scratched. If I took a few deep breaths and held them, the urges subsided. Withdrawal was not as unpleasant as I feared. Still, why would I want to go through it ever again?

I finally realized that there is no situation that would be improved by using nicotine. I stopped entertaining a reunion fantasy. It would be disappointing, if not deadly.

I’d better take to heart that I can’t have just one. I’ve proved it.

*Thought for the day: I, now, understand that a craving will pass whether I use nicotine or not.*

**Do not bite at the bait of pleasure till you know there is no hook underneath it.**

*-Thomas Jefferson*

I jeopardized my recovery with excuses such as, “I can’t stay quit now because I’m going to hang out with my smoking friends when I’m on vacation.” Or, “I can’t possibly stay quit if something terrible happens to a loved one.” The list goes on.

My sponsor helped me see I was a master at deceiving myself. I listened to my lame excuses and actually believed them. I needed to stop the foolish chatter in my head and start asking for serenity.

I learned when the old recordings started playing in my head to hit the pause button and recognize them for what they are: drug-induced lies. Now I take that sufficient pause to think through the action of obtaining nicotine. I remind myself to just stay in the moment and that the urge will pass whether I use or not.

I can’t use my excuses anymore. I’ve admitted they are lies and know I’ll be right back to using nicotine full time again. Time to hit the delete button on those old recordings and smile.

***Thought for the Day:*** *I accept I am a puff away from a pack a day.*

**“My second favorite household chore is ironing. My first one is hitting my head over and over on the top bunk bed until I faint.”**

*-Humorist Erma Bombeck*

Sometimes we cripple ourselves with our own behaviors. We may blow smoke at others and hide behind our smokescreen.

If I were on a camping trip, sitting around a campfire and saw a child reach toward the flames, what would I do? My guess is that I would grab their hands and warn them not to do it again. I might say to the child, “If you play with fire, you’ll get burned.” Yet, I continue to play with the fire of addiction and wonder why I am repeatedly hurt.

I now understand it’s not that I am weak or stupid. I have the physical and emotional disease of addiction. Over time, this disease physically affects my brain. Emotionally, I use nicotine to hide from my feelings instead of being present with them and processing their message. In time, with support, I can recover.

Society generally doesn’t tell others with a disease they are bad people. Then why would I say such a thing to myself? It’s time to stop blaming myself so I can heal.

***Thought for the Day: I will be kind and compassionate to myself today – I’ve got a disease.***

**Going to a house of worship doesn't make me a spiritual person any more than standing in me garage makes me a car.**

*-Anonymous*

I've had a problem attempting to lean on an entity that I cannot see. I have free will and can choose between right or wrong.

I've come to believe that addictions can be fatal. Nicotine addiction accounts for why so many people have left this earth prematurely. Some NicA members refer to their addiction as their nicodemon.

Sometimes, as I go about my daily living, I recognize something is happening in my life that's shrouded in mystery. I need quiet time to reflect on the confusion going on inside of me as I struggle to accept what this mystery may be. This could be the time when I come to believe in a Higher Power.

I realize I now have the choice of leaning on a Higher Power or leaning on myself. I'm beginning to trust that the mystery of a Higher Power could solve my problem of addiction.

***Thought for the Day:*** *My Higher Power has done for me what I could not do for myself.*

## **There is no situation that smoking won't make worse.**

*-NicA member*

“I would really like to smoke now.” That’s an honest statement.

But it is likewise honest to recognize that I have the choice in recovery to smoke or not to smoke. It’s a very precious gift I have, this ability to choose.

Next time I want to smoke, I’ll remember, that with the help of my higher power, I can take charge of that urge and turn over that urge to a Higher Power, even though doing without the drug may be uncomfortable at times.

With my Higher Power’s care, I can live for a few minutes being uncomfortable. That’s a choice I can make today.

It’s an epiphany—like an earthquake starts with one small crack, one small change in your thinking can lead to a giant shift. That’s it... I’ve had enough! With the help of my Higher Power I don’t have to hit bottom and am restored to sanity.

*Thought for the Day: I can choose to be happy or miserable the amount of work is the same.*

**When you arise in the morning, think of what a privilege it is to be alive: to breathe, to think, to enjoy, to love.**

*-Marcus Aurelius*

I have mornings when I get up and have every intention of enjoying my day, and then something awful happens. Perhaps my car doesn't start or my child gets the flu. Whatever the reason for being upset, that irrational thought pops into my head, "I really need to smoke now."

But then I recall my sponsor saying, "Smoking is not going to fix anything. You'll still be upset, only now you'll be upset and using nicotine again."

I've learned that smoking is not a need; it's a want, a drug-induced craving. Once the crisis is over, I'll be relieved and grateful that I didn't reach for nicotine and become its prisoner again. I don't know whether or not I have another quit in me. Maybe I do, maybe I don't. I really don't want to risk returning to the prison of addiction.

*Thought for the Day: A morning meditation is good medication that can improve my whole day.*

## **Nicotine in any form is highly addictive.**

- *“Freedom from Vaping Nicotine” pamphlet*

The market continues to be flooded with nicotine products and various delivery systems. These are just more attempts to grab me and not let go. Why would I consider switching to the newest nicotine delivery method that would still destroy my life with addiction to nicotine?

Nicotine is the drug that has kept me hooked, changed my brain chemistry, and commanded me to reach again and again for more nicotine.

I will not be fooled by any nicotine product no matter in what form it is sold. I know better now. I have a program of recovery and I choose freedom from nicotine.

To live with more peace, I work the Steps towards a spiritual awakening of my own understanding.

**Thought for the Day:** *I've gained wisdom. Nicotine in any form is addictive.*

## "The Two Wolves"

*-A Cherokee Legend*

One evening an old Cherokee told his grandson about a battle that goes on inside people.

He said, "My son, you need to know that there's a battle that goes on between two wolves inside of us all."

One is Evil—It is anger, envy, jealousy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority, and ego.

The other is Good—It is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion, and faith.

The grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked his grandfather: "Which wolf wins the battle?"

The old Cherokee simply replied, "The one you feed."

***Thought for the day:*** *Today, I choose not to feed my addiction. Instead, I choose to feed my recovery.*

## **I want to continue my recovery journey to discover my full potential.**

*-NicA member*

I started my life with innate talents and gifts that I only discovered in my recovery. Once, I thought I didn't have any talents. My life had no purpose. Too often I wasted time at my own pity party thinking, "Don't even try to stop smoking, you'll never make it."

Now, I know that such thoughts were not, and are not, true. I have a whole new life ahead of me. My recovery has helped me realize I like riding bikes, playing tennis, painting pictures, and learning to play the guitar.

Being free of nicotine, I can do many new things that my addiction prevented me from enjoying. It's exciting to know I can discover other creative, healthy, and meaningful possibilities.

I keep showing up at meetings to share my new life with others. It's no longer a secret how this simple program works. Nicotine Anonymous has a power that can transform our lives.

***Thought for the Day:*** *I will share my experience, strength, and hope to help others reach their potential.*

## **Time brings every experience from our lives into our hearts.**

*- NicA member*

The hands of time are ticking away; I feel it and know it in my bones. Like many other members, as I entered the autumn of my life, I quit using nicotine.

Recovery is a time of taking an inventory of my strengths and abilities. Characteristics, such as courage and humility, were seeds planted throughout my life. They have had a challenging journey through dark times but are now growing.

This is consoling as I move through the uncomfortable feelings of recovery. But my NicA friends teach me that when the time is right, these feelings will pass. I realize the scary feelings are often ghosts of my past. The harvest days of recovery will be filled with gratitude.

This time in my life is too precious to waste.

***Thought for the Day:*** *At any age, recovery brings wisdom and hope for the future.*

## **I didn't know how much nicotine affected physical intimacy.**

*-NicA Member*

I recently learned that the nicotine one gets from vaping, smoking, and chewing tobacco products can cause sexual dysfunction. I knew hiding my nicotine use from my partner caused issues in our relationship. However, I had no idea that frequent use of nicotine could also cause serious emotional and sexual side effects.

Another barrier to developing relationships is that some dating sites require you to acknowledge whether you use nicotine or not. For many, smoking is no longer a symbol of attractiveness. There are profiles that only seek non-smokers. Several friends who still use nicotine say they would give it up for more passionate relationships.

Something for me to think about.

***Thought for the day: Nicotine use may reduce sexual function.***

**We can reduce our risk of becoming one of the millions of premature nicotine related deaths each year.**

*-Nicotine Anonymous: “Our Promises”*

We all know we’re going to die. That’s a given. But denial prevents us from realizing that our nicotine use is accelerating that destiny. Everyone exits planet earth taking one final breath. It can be a deep, grateful breath for a life well lived or a gasping last breath filled with regret.

If I live my life to the fullest and take the heartaches as well as the joys in life, death doesn’t have to scare me so much. I try to imagine the end of my life as a stepping off point to another vista -- one where there won’t be smoking, chewing or vaping to tempt me to use again.

I think about why I increase the risk of dying by playing Russian roulette with my nicotine use. If it’s true that with age comes wisdom, patience, and insight, then I don’t want to be stuck in this addiction and have that taken from me.

I want my last breath to be one of dignity and relief. My spirit is filled with the breath of God. The condition in which I return that last breath is the measure of my gratitude for this marvelous journey called life.

*Thought for the Day: I plan on living forever—so far, so good.*

## **The difference between a rut and a grave is five feet.**

*-Anonymous*

Many times, I found myself in a rut, afraid I couldn't get out. Sometimes, I created a rut from being paralyzed by life's fears and phobias—fear of the unknown, fear of failure, fear of success. I was afraid to challenge myself or stretch my limits.

After many failed attempts at quitting nicotine, I felt discouraged and then prematurely threw in the towel of defeat.

I was literally digging my own rut with my indecision and inaction. I've learned it's not about playing it safe when so much is at stake. I was disgusted with the excuses, worn out from the indecisiveness, and ready to say, "Enough is enough."

That's when I stepped out of these self-imposed limitations and stopped digging my own grave. Through the support of Nicotine Anonymous, I got the courage to face my fears and embrace a nicotine free life.

***Thought for the day:** If I want anything to change I can make the choice to take a chance.*

**Remember the word WAIT when you get an urge to use nicotine.**

*-NicA member*

## **W.A.I.T.**

*Each letter of the word WAIT has at least two meanings.*

**W – WAIT** a few minutes for the urge to peak. It will pass. While you are waiting, drink **WATER**. It is cleansing, flushing the poisons of our nicotine use.

**A – ASK** your Higher Power for help and then listen. **ASK** family and friends for support.

**I – I** don't want to die prematurely from nicotine use. **I** want to see what my future holds.

**T – TAKE** a deep breath. I will relax and get more oxygen. **TAKE** it one day at a time or one urge at a time.

*Thought for the Day: I can do anything for one day.*

**Anger can be a problem but it has tremendous potential too. It's just figuring out what to do with it.**

*-Sean Penn*

I heard that fits of anger create a surge of adrenaline similar to the effects of nicotine. Anger is also a trigger that makes me want to use more nicotine. I thought I used nicotine to calm down, but really it can have the opposite effect.

In recovery, I learned that anger is energy and can be negative or positive, depending on what I do with it. Next time I get angry, I need to use that anger energy to my advantage instead of taking negative actions like using nicotine.

My anger can motivate me to find other ways to address my feelings such as meetings, call a member, or a sponsor (three of the five Tools of the program).

I can say the Serenity Prayer to help me see my choices. I have the fellowship, my Higher Power and the Steps to redirect that anger energy for good.

***Thought for the day:*** *When it comes to anger, I can work it off instead of working it up.*

## **Wisdom Shares Along the Recovery Road**

If nothing changes...Nothing changes.

Whether or not I think I can or I can't, I'm right.

When I change the way I look at things, the way I look at things changes.

All things are possible for those who believe.

My life is like a coin. I can spend it anyway I want but I can only spend it once.

If I throw my problems in a pile and saw everybody else's, I'd grab mine back.

I'm kind because everyone I meet is fighting some kind of battle.

What I do today is important because I'm exchanging a day of my life for it.

The winds of the Spirit are always blowing but I need to set my sails.

As I pass a house of worship, I'm sure to say a prayer so when at last I'm carried in, God won't say, "Who is it?"

Courage doesn't always roar. Sometimes courage is the quiet voice at the end of the day saying, "I will try again tomorrow."

The Monkey is off your back but the Circus is still in town.

Keep the clay wet; always strive for better, perfect does not exist.

As amends, I pick up cigarettes to make up for all the butts I've thrown down in my lifetime.

Don't Give Up Before the Miracle Happens.

Grace is the Juice of the Universe.

Accept where you are but don't stop there.

We have three choices, give up, give in, or give it all we you got.

Be a boomerang and come back.

Would you rather be a 'Quitter' with an occasional urge to smoke or a 'Smoker' with a constant need to quit?

Fear knocked, faith answered, no one was there.

Pick up the phone, not the pack.

## **Other ways to use this book could include:**

- Morning or evening meditations
- Enclose in greeting cards.
- Place on your refrigerator, mirror, or computer
- Thought starters for groups.
- Hand to someone you know is hurting.
- Place in your prayer space.
- Clip to a journal and add your thoughts.
- Sing one of these out loud as you wait out an urge.
- Email or text to someone who is struggling.
- Write your own meditation at back of book.



## My Contacts

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First name/Phone

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## **Nicotine Anonymous Meetings**

**go to [www.nicotine-anonymous.org](http://www.nicotine-anonymous.org)**

Click on the “Find Meeting” tab

These meetings can be joined by computer, tablet or phone from all over the world. Check website for correct time zone information.

### **Daily Meetings:**

Online Video Conference

Internet

Telephone Face to Face

### **Helpful material is available at:**

**[www.nicotine-anonymous.org](http://www.nicotine-anonymous.org)**

**Click on “Store” tab to find Books,**

**Pamphlets, CDs & MP3s**

**Multiple Languages are Available.**



**Call 1-877-TRY-NICA or 1-877-879-6422**

For support as you begin and remain in recovery.