

TRADITION THREE

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

As a worldwide Fellowship, Nicotine Anonymous wants to reach out and include any nicotine user who seeks to join us in the pursuit of living free from nicotine. This one requirement for membership keeps it simple, and keeps it sane. We have one point to rally around, to establish our equality, and simply welcome all newcomers.

We have been freely given the precious gift of recovery and have had the deadly grip of nicotine addiction lifted from our lives. All that was asked of us was that we have a desire (no matter how small) to stop using nicotine. Therefore, how could we now presume to deny this gift to newcomers?

Any differences in beliefs should not interfere with a newcomer's access to the program or our support. Certainly it is true that there are those among us who discovered for themselves that it was necessary for them to shed old beliefs in order to find a new peace in recovery. Becoming a Nicotine Anonymous member, just as forming one's own belief system, is a personal decision. In this way, Tradition Three also protects us from getting caught up in making injurious judgments of others, especially of those of us still (or relapsed) in the powerful grip of nicotine.

As a spiritual program, acknowledging the desire to stop using nicotine embraces the spirit within and avoids judgments toward the behavior of the disease. Therefore, it is *not* necessary for newcomers to have already stopped using nicotine before they join us. Some newcomers may find it difficult to recognize or acknowledge that desire. For some of us, the desire was so small, we did not even feel we had a desire until day after day, week after week, meeting after meeting, we finally recognized it and eventually got free.

By having this ONE requirement for membership, we also maintain our openness to all who seek recovery. Newcomers don't have to belong to any other group, believe in God, donate money, or work the Steps in a certain way to join. We are not afraid of the emotions expressed when one stops using nicotine. No one is required to be rational or lucid or say all the correct things at meetings. We've been there. We do not exclude anyone

from our program for any reason including race, reputation, creed, sexual orientation, gender, disability, or place of origin. If newcomers are not sure the desire to stop using nicotine is within them, but they are willing to find out, they are welcome here.

Most of us have lived in a dark pit of denial, alienation, and pain caused by nicotine addiction for many years. We would not leave a suffering addict at the bottom of that pit alone -- not when we have the rope of recovery that we can toss down to them. Granted, they have to be willing to take hold of the rope in order to climb out and join us. But, that is all we require.

Some of our members feel they were actually pulled up out of their addiction by the simple act of asking for help. Others find that the gift of recovery from nicotine was more difficult to accept, having to struggle up that rope and slip back down many times before maintaining their abstinence from nicotine. Tradition Three keeps our doors open and our hearts reaching out. Our shared stories reveal both the worst aspect of being caught inside this addiction and the joys of coming out to a new freedom. We are not only aware of the dangers of nicotine addiction, but also very grateful for the spiritual gift of recovery that makes our freedom possible. Therefore, we keep showing up at meetings and tossing down the rope of our truth, which is our experience, strength, and hope, so that others may be lifted to freedom.

Although this program provides us with a spiritual approach to fulfill the desire for freedom, joy, and peace, most nicotine addicts fell into the pit as immature teenagers. We were often driven by a similar desire to feel more freedoms and joys, and then spent many years chasing after them by using nicotine. Coming to see this desire anew is often challenging. At first, we may not have wanted to give up our drug. Perhaps we feared that we could not live without it. Despite attending many meetings or possibly abstaining from nicotine use for periods of time, we felt sure that we had no honest desire to stop.

However, once we discussed this issue with other members, we found others who had not initially felt a tremendous desire to stop either. Some had even repeated in meetings that they did not want to put down nicotine at all. Some of us only wanted to live and were afraid we would die if we continued to use nicotine. Some of us only had a desire to find our Higher Power's will for us. Some of us wanted to improve our health. Many of us only wanted to want to stop using nicotine. We have come to understand that any of these, or even the simple willingness to

show up at meetings, can be defined as a desire to stop using nicotine.

Also, there have been those who had difficulty with the issue of nicotine. While they felt they had a desire to quit smoking or chewing tobacco, they may not have felt ready to give up some other nicotine delivery systems. Each of us decides on a way to begin our own process and that a desire to stop using nicotine in all forms may follow in time.

Once clear of the smoke screen nicotine placed between our true desires and thoughts, our collective experience has shown that we do indeed have a great desire to stay free of this cunning and dangerous drug. In addition, most of us also have a great desire to really live our lives. For many of us, going back to using nicotine would mean giving up wonderful new joys that have been added to our lives. Things such as hiking, aerobics, singing, sharing time with friends, intimacy in our relationships, our new found health, and even the ability to sit still through a movie or a plane ride would be taken from us if we returned to our addiction. Our desire to continue with our new lives now far outweighs any desire we may still have for our drug.

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

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