

## Freedom From Vaping Nicotine

This pamphlet uses the word “vaping” to mean “vaping nicotine.” In accordance with Tradition Ten, NicA has no opinion on the use of any methods, products, devices, or nicotine replacement therapies (NRTs) that may help a member achieve freedom from all use of nicotine. Tradition Three states: “The only requirement for Nicotine Anonymous membership is the desire to stop using nicotine.” Also see the pamphlet “Abstinence: What is it?” for our fellowship’s definition of abstinence.

### **We Thought**

We thought vaping our nicotine was better than or an improvement over smoking, that it was less damaging than smoking--less carcinogens, chemicals, and risk. We told ourselves that it was safe and ignored the fact that we were puffing away between tasks, after snacks, in the restroom, or at our desks.

Some of us had gone to great lengths to build *perfect* vape-mods that required investing hundreds of dollars on devices so that we could exhale impressive clouds of vapor. We spent countless hours sneaking away to vape, wrapping atomizers, collecting juices. Others of us looked for simpler pod-based systems, but the nicotine addiction was still the same. We tried to hide our vaping and risked vaping in areas where it was prohibited. We simply ignored the warnings about health risks.

We knew friends that vaped to quit smoking. They had tapered down on nicotine levels until they could break free and completely stop. Maybe we would too someday, but *for now*, vaping was something we thought we *chose* to enjoy.

Vaping doesn’t stink, except for that slightly noticeable sweet smell that lingers. Sure, we noticed the raw feeling in our throat or that occasional queasy nausea we got when we gave ourselves a nicotine overdose. We didn’t care if we woke up in the middle of the night to vape or reach for our vapes before fully awake.

We imagined we looked cool, or strong, when we vaped. We convinced ourselves that we impressed our friends when, in fact, we just demonstrated a lack of sane behavior. Vaping was new and we figured no one really knew about the consequences. Couldn’t those cancer and reproductive harm warnings on the vapor packaging just be a legal necessity, a buzzkill.

After all, health issues happen to older people and vapers are a younger, smarter generation of nicotine users. We thought those news stories were just hype for people who were too afraid to take a little risk. Besides, we figured, we could get hit by a comet tomorrow, so was vaping really worth worrying about?

Still, at times, we wondered about those vapers who looked hooked, whose complexions had become a bit gray, or whose voices sounded pinched (damaged) from vaping. But, we thought, what are the chances of something bad happening before we quit: 1 in 100? 1 in 10? Haven’t we always been pretty lucky? And, vaping is probably not the worst thing we’ve ever done. Besides, we enjoyed the buzz.

### **We Realized**

No matter what we thought, nicotine in any form is highly addictive. It is also a potent deadly insecticide. The longer we vape, the greater the risks to our health. As we considered the expense and lengths to which we went to keep vaping, the consequences became more and more evident. Social activities with family and colleagues became more difficult. We got antsy and spent time

planning how, when, and where to go to vape or maintain our supply. We went to great lengths to get our fix and bought expensive replacement devices we couldn't afford.

After repeated attempts to completely stop using nicotine, we finally admitted to ourselves that no matter how flavorful or pleasurable the experience, we could no longer ignore the discomfort and shame we felt about allowing ourselves to remain hooked. We didn't know what freedom from nicotine would look like or feel like. Our excuses were driven by fear of the unknown. Yet, we began to realize that if we quit, we'd probably be better off. We wondered: "What would life be like if we didn't have to be controlled by this addiction?" Could we accept the challenge and live a nicotine-free life? Could we stop lying to ourselves? Could we feel good about ourselves?

### **We Learned**

We learned an oral delivery system of vaporized nicotine provides nicotine to the brain *in seconds*, which increases the addictive effect. Nicotine alters brain chemistry, resulting in a perceived sense of pleasure, gratification, and reward. It can be both a stimulant and a depressant.

Over time, nicotine use becomes associated with many of our emotions and daily activities. Its constant presence becomes a comforting companion and increases our bond to it. Some of us report it improves our concentration during tasks, but our main task becomes concentrated on having a constant supply. We find the result was not only a physical dependence but an emotional dependence. This dependence proves more a hindrance than a help.

Some of us find the physical consequences range from chronic mouth irritation to serious health risks including, but not limited to, lung, mouth and throat cancers, reproductive complications, high blood pressure, cell-damage, and premature aging.

There are also social consequences. We may have started vaping with a desire for acceptance among our peers, but much like smoking, vaping became socially unacceptable.

### **We Discovered**

Quitting nicotine is a personal challenge that is made easier by collaborating with others. There is hope. There is Nicotine Anonymous (NicA). By attending NicA meetings and sharing our desire to get free of nicotine with others, we find support that empowers us to live nicotine free and improve our lives.

In addition to meetings, NicA has four other Tools: literature, member contact lists, service, and sponsorship. We gain insights and solace reading NicA pamphlets such as "Introducing Nicotine Anonymous," "How Nicotine Anonymous Works," "To the Newcomer and Sponsorship in Nicotine Anonymous," "The Serenity Prayer for Nicotine Users," and "Tips for Gaining Freedom from Nicotine."

We can have a healthier form of personal acceptance as we learn to be honest and share with our sponsor and other NicA members. With the support of this fellowship and connecting with a Higher Power of our own understanding, we have found a path of hope that has helped us recover from vaping and nicotine addiction--one day at a time!

There are few things in life as gratifying as the joy we feel as we become free from an addiction. All that is required for NicA membership is a desire to live free of nicotine. Our journey begins

with a decision to show up at a NicA meeting. We are told at meetings, “we can take what we want and leave the rest.” We have a suggested program of recovery that works if you work it. However, we also hear “we need to become willing to go to any length to get free of nicotine.” A sponsor can help guide us through the Twelve Steps. By using the Twelve Steps instead of nicotine, we found a path that leads us to holistic wellness that benefits not just our bodies, but our minds, spirits, and environments as well.

The spiritual principles of the program are profound and powerful. They do not even require us to understand them all in order for them to change our lives for the better. Simply put, when we do the work, we get the results. Our experience is that the results benefit every single area of our lives and far exceed the false benefits from nicotine. “Our Promises” become our reality; they do come true!

### **Our Invitation to You**

We know what it feels like to fail when trying to quit on our own. Together, we found a gentler way to gain freedom from nicotine addiction. If you are interested in stopping the use of nicotine in any form, NicA is here for you with its transformative 12-Step program, five Tools, three prayers, and ongoing support. This wisdom was handed down to us, and in turn, we give it back to others. If you are new, whether you are still using nicotine or not, know that you are the most important member at our meetings. We hope you will make use of what this fellowship has to offer. *Welcome to Nicotine Anonymous!*