



SEVENMINUTES

The Nicotine Anonymous Quarterly

A Forum for Nicotine Users Who Don't Use

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A FRIEND?

Anonymous

You have been my friend. I was twelve when I first met you. My friends and I would hang out in the empty lot next to the park and secretly play with you, scared of being caught by our parents. As I grew older, you became more important to me. At sixteen, along with my drivers license, you became permanent in my life. I wanted to feel special. You helped me belong to my group of friends. You made me feel so good. I liked the way you made me relax. I liked the way you made me feel grown-up. And you were something my parents could not control. You helped me rebel and, in a way, be myself when someone was trying to take that away from me.

You also took away pain. When my best friend died, you helped me feel numb. If my feelings overwhelmed me, you made everything calm again. I used to drive aimlessly in the dark listening to the radio just so I could be with you. You were always there for me, always my friend, the way friends should be. You helped ease the pain.

As I grew older and life got more complicated I became your slave. I had to have you wherever I went. But instead of making me closer to my friends, you helped drive them away. I began to get sick from you, both physically and mentally. You were slowly killing my body and soul. But in spite of all this, I still loved you. You took away the pain.

Finally, a year ago today, I knew I could not be your slave anymore. So I said goodbye. It was difficult. I cried for weeks beforehand, knowing that life would be empty without you. And it was, for a while. There was a lot of pain. Feelings like anger and sadness that had never really been felt before poured out of me. Many times I almost invited you back into my life again. You were constantly in my

mind. At times I thought I would go crazy without you. Life hurt for a long time. But I made it even though there was pain.

Slowly the intensity of the pain diminished. I started running and climbing mountains and riding my bike in the woods. Things I had not done in a long, long time. I felt free. But somewhere in me I still felt the pain.



You are the worst kind of friend. I had made it without you. I tried so hard and so many times to have you out of my life, out of my soul. I finally had succeeded - for a while. Slowly you crept back into my life. At first, I was cautious around you. But soon I only remembered the good things you did for me. I lost twenty pounds. I stopped feeling. And the pain went away.

I am screaming inside. I want my soul back. I want to run again and climb mountains and ride my bike through the woods. I am tired of hiding you and being ashamed of you. And I am tired of hating myself. I want to feel again even if it hurts.

So I have to choose - my soul or my cigarettes. And starting today, I am choosing my soul. *Bravo!!*

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Our Preamble

Nicotine Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women helping each other to quit smoking and 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. 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

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 of Alcoholics Anonymous

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

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

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR



A somewhat brief recap of the last officers meeting and other exciting updates: We took the first step toward spreading Teleservice around the country. Eventually, we hope to have a schedule where, for instance, Chicago picks up messages on Monday, New York on Tuesday, Boston on Wednesday, Los Angeles on Thursday, Dallas on Friday, San Francisco on Saturday, and Seattle on Sunday, or whatever combination works. By doing this, we can give all our intergroups a wonderful tool for staying smober. I believe it would be prudent, recovery wise, to share these opportunities to serve. We agreed to start by filling the next open spot in Teleservice with someone outside of San Francisco.

It was agreed that we would post the remainder of our pamphlets on our Internet web site. By the time you read this, over seven thousand people will have visited our web site to find information on our fellowship. We are receiving about one thousand hits per month on the Nicotine Anonymous web site. Many people leave messages. We have received E-mail from people around the world. **Steve** was able recently to update our Australia meetings by connecting with someone there who had e-mailed us from the web site. We receive a steady stream of E-mail inquiries regarding smokeless tobacco. Most are surprised to hear that we address the issue. Until now, we had not posted information concerning smokeless tobacco. Our Internet address is <<http://rampages.onramp.net/~nica>>. You can print out a Conference registration form as well as a literature order form complete with a *SevenMinutes* subscription form from the web site.

Steve M. accepted responsibility for all Worldwide Meeting List related functions, including getting it posted on the web in a timely fashion. **Steve** did a great job last year in updating our meeting list. **Steve** and **Bill H.** have also completed a reposting of the Worldwide Meeting List on the web. Now, when someone visits our web site and selects "Worldwide Meeting Directory," they are linked to **Bill H.**'s web space where the list is posted. They can find out immediately if there is a meeting in their area. They can also find local intergroup telephone numbers.

One question has arisen several times since I last reported to the fellowship in *SevenMinutes*. "Why do we have a \$500 per month deficit?" Answer: Because every dollar earned from literature sales is spent filling those orders (San Francisco office expenses) meaning all expenses of running the fellowship for the long term (board expenses, mailings to meetings and intergroups) exceed the amount of income. Our treasurer, **Lynn R.** helped me with that succinct explanation. We have had many discussions as to the direction Nicotine Anonymous will take for the future. That subject will likely be a lively topic at the upcoming World Service Conference. I hope to see you all there. Intergroups, be sure to elect and send your delegates!

Just before the January officers meeting, **Glenn S.** resigned his position as Alternate Chair. **Camille S.**, Alternate Treasurer has agreed to assume the Chair position, which would leave the Alternate Treasurer position open. **Lynn R.** has graciously agreed to serve another year as Treasurer, thus filling that position. We will discuss these proposed moves at the Conference. For the time being, we will function with eight officers, rather than nine.

Yves L. from Quebec City, Canada translated six Nicotine Anonymous pamphlets into French at no charge to the fellowship. He has plans to do the same with the remainder of the pamphlets and *The Book*. A great big tip of the hat and "Thank You" to **Yves**.

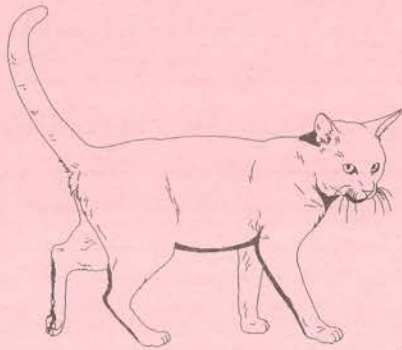
The combined efforts of our many members have helped make this an exciting and fruitful year for me as chair.

Bill

Reflections on Recovery

The following poems were submitted by
Judy S., Ridgecrest, CA

White paper wrapped around tobacco leaf,
which burns when lit,
Unlike eggroll,
unlike sushi.
Grey smoke -
Grey cat watching.
Is she thinking,
“Bad for you, and must you use my catfood tin
for ashes?”
Hmm . . . I don't need the “real thing” anymore.
Cylindrical substitutes: pencils, pens, straws,
cinnamon sticks
Well, what have I got to lose? It can't hurt to try!



What's grey and white and soft and furry?
Kiki, our cat.

What's grey and white, smells piquant and tastes
pungent?
Herring.

What's grey and white, can be dangerous, and is
something “recent quitters” try hard not to be
obsessed with?
A Cigarette

UNHOOKED ON YOU
Zulma H., New Jersey/Philadelphia

Deceptively you stayed by me
whenever I thought I needed you.
You were there
filling me with all you had to offer
but destroying me all the while.
You would give me a rush,
precious moments of bliss.
Such blissful moments,
but always so temporary.
For years you were there
whenever I reached for you,
always making yourself
available to me.
You penetrated me,
took my very breath away,
left me weak for you --
leaving me wanting you
needing you.
Yes . . . you were always there
day in and day out
disguising yourself
as my most intimate friend . . .
so refreshing, so satisfying.
I became addicted to you,
dependent upon you.
You became my worst habit.
And though they warned me
that you only wanted to hurt me,
I never listened . . .
I couldn't listen,
for I loved you oh so much.
But one day at last
I found the strength
and finally let you go
and you didn't even care
so I never want you back -
my former friend,
my former love . . .
my former cigarette.

I KEPT COMING BACK

Anonymous

I smoked what I hope was my last cigarette on July 18, 1993 at 7:00 a.m. I remember it clearly - standing on the porch, tapping ashes into a soda bottle. I didn't try to make it last or savor it - I just had to smoke it and then let it go.

Twenty years earlier I had smoked my first cigarette with a friend in the woods behind her house. We stole it from her parents' stash and later lied about it. I don't remember much how it tasted. I don't think I actually inhaled. My real smoking career began at age sixteen when I asked my mom for a cigarette so I could smoke with the adults. At first she refused, then gave in. I liked it from the start. I thought, "this is what I have been waiting for all my life." I loved the high and smoked off and on for a couple of years until I was a senior and was definitely hooked. I began to suffer physically when I went without for several hours at school. I fell asleep in class every afternoon. Previously a topnotch student, I lost interest in school.

I continued to smoke through college and then married right after graduation. The depression I had suffered for years deepened drastically. I was ill-prepared for coping with life and a rocky relationship and turned to cigarettes more and more. It seems I spent most of my days sitting at the kitchen table smoking. I also had a drinking problem. After coming close to suicide, I got into therapy and AA. I got sober, but I was still miserable. I thought constantly about stopping smoking, but I felt completely hopeless. I tried the nicotine gum and stayed off cigarettes for about two months until I got stressed out. Years passed and I smoked and smoked. I was certain that if I wasn't such a bad person I would quit.

That my life was unmanageable due to nicotine became clearer. My doctor prescribed inhalers for smoking-induced asthma and warned me of the almost certain emphysema that lay ahead if I didn't stop. I smoked in the face of two cancer deaths in my family - my grandfather died of lung cancer and my father died of mouth cancer from pipe smoking (my family is full of nicotine addicts - my grandmother did snuff!) I spent money on cigarettes that I needed for other things. I smoked in my cats' airspace. Worst of all, I suffered a miscarriage after developing a condition frequently related to nicotine or cocaine abuse. Nicotine had separated me from my values. I smoked even though I knew it was bad for my baby. Nicotine had me. My life is proof that nicotine is a drug and I am a drug addict just as surely as any heroin or cocaine addict.

As the unmanageability of my life began to add up, I realized I needed a Twelve Step program. I was not getting much support from AA or therapy when I discussed quitting. I even had a doctor suggest that I was too depressed to stop

smoking. I finally located Nicotine Anonymous and attended on a regular basis. Still I continued to smoke. I tried cutting down to quit, but I don't have the kind of energy it takes to control nicotine. It's too powerful. I smoked and I was totally miserable. I obsessed about smoking and quitting. At one point, I thought I would either have to quit smoking or die because I was in so much pain. Fortunately, I didn't have to die. My Higher Power saved me. One night I was out driving and smoking. I was really upset and yelled aloud, "I'm tired of struggling with this!" Then a "voice" said, "Then why not let it go?" And the urge to smoke was gone - the first time in my smoking career that I was unchained from the compulsion to smoke. I would like to say that I quit then and there, but I was still scared of life without nicotine, so I took the addiction back. At least I knew the way.

I continued to go to Nicotine Anonymous and developed friendships with the members (I attended meetings for over two years before I stopped). I was always welcome despite the fact that I still smoked. I began to realize that I had made smoking my god, my higher power. It was my "solution" to every problem, every emotion in my life. Sad, angry, happy, broke, scared, sick - I smoked. I also realized that I was terrified to quit. I began to trust a little in a power greater than myself. Someone at a meeting said she asked for courage and willingness to stop. I did the same and it worked!

I set a quit date for July 18, but I was dragging my feet, afraid of failure. I prayed for guidance. H.P. gave me a nudge. I had the phone watch for AA on the seventeenth. In the middle of the night, I had to find someone on the 12 step list to call a person back. After about fifteen no answers, I finally reached a man who had lost his larynx and spoke with an amplifier. So there was my guidance from H.P.

I stopped smoking that morning. I used the nicotine patch. It was rough the first three months, but I had the support of the group and H.P. I was depressed and rageful for a time. My worst fear in quitting was that I would lose my job because I would be so emotionally out of control. Well, I did lose my job for a different reason and I found out that I could survive losing my job. The worst had happened and I didn't have to smoke over it! Furthermore, I found that H.P. provided for me every step of the way.

Today, I have almost two years. I go for days, even weeks without thinking of smoking. I can't stand being around smoke. I'm much calmer now, less depressed, more involved with life. I'm learning how to live in a life based on spiritual ideals. I do service work in the program. To me it's vital to stay with Nicotine Anonymous. It saved my life and continues to bless me in so many ways. H.P. gave me, a completely hopeless addict, a miracle - freedom from the compulsion to smoke.

WELCOME TO THE FELLOWSHIP!

The following groups have recently joined the Nicotine Anonymous family:

Fresno, California - Monday, 6:30 p.m., Hope Lutheran Church, Room 32, 364 E. Barstow

Apple Valley, Minnesota - Monday, 5:30 p.m.,

Health Partners Clinic, 15290 Pennock Lane

Brainerd, Minnesota, Friday, 7:00 p.m., St.

Joseph's Medical Center, 523 N. 3rd St.

East Hampton, New York - Sunday, 6:00 p.m.,

Springs Senior Citizens Center, 128 Springs

Fireplace Road (this meeting had previously closed but is now active again)

Montgomery, New York - Monday, 6:30 p.m., St.

Andrews Episcopal Church, Walkill, Avenue

Rawalpindi, Pakistan, Sunday, 7:00 p.m.,

R.S.T.F. Clinic, Sumar Plaza, Chandani Chowk

Montevideo, Uruguay - Wednesday and Friday,

7:30 p.m., J. Barrios Amorin 1310 and San Jose Street

For more information about the above meetings, contact the World Service Office at (415) 750-0328 or <nica@onramp.net>

Cecile's Story

by Cecile L., Richardson, TX

My name is Cecile, and I'm a Nicotine Addict. My age is fifty-seven, and I smoked for forty years before finally realizing that smoking is truly hazardous to my health. Still, I continue to battle thoughts that lead to smoking. In my most recent attachment to a Nicotine Anonymous group, I've now had five quit dates - usually five to six weeks apart, and I've acquired an addiction to Nicorette gum. I have continued to attend this group - whether I'm succeeding in severing my addiction or failing.

I have difficulty convincing myself that I'm not different - that I'm not one of those unfortunates who are "naturally incapable of grasping and developing a manner of living which demands rigorous honesty." I'm a mental patient, but a very

PENPAL CORNER

Pat L., Woodstock, NY



Sharing personal experience, strength and hope with fellow nicotine addicts is a sure fire way to break isolation! There are many people "out there" who have limited or no access to Nicotine Anonymous meetings. Currently there are forty-five people who have (over the past three years) requested to be put on the PENPALS List. Requests have come from as far away as Austria, Spain, India, and Pakistan; as close to home as Queens, New York, and New Jersey; and many places in between. If YOU would like to be a PENPAL, contact me at the address listed below. PENPAL NEWS will be posted in each SEVENMINUTES newsletter. WATCH FOR IT!

Pat L.

Penpal Coordinator

P.O. Box 277

Woodstock, New York

12498

fortunate one, in that after five years on Social Security Disability I have successfully gotten off of Disability and have been working uninterruptedly for the past seven years. There must be a Power greater than myself who has been sustaining my efforts for many years, leading and guiding me anonymously. I don't have a God of my understanding but I'm sure there must be a caring God of love and compassion, beckoning me to search for Him.

Nicotine Anonymous, as a group of concerned people, as a body of twelve instructional steps and as a spiritual movement, makes sense. I believe here I will eventually find release from Nicotine. I'm an awfully grateful apprentice at the Richardson, Texas group.

THAT'S SHOW BIZ!

Jan S. And Bill C.

1996 Valley Forge Conference Co-Chairs

If you were not able to attend the 1996 Valley Forge World Services Conference, you missed the Friday night gratitude meeting and seeing the place all lit up with TV cameras roaming the room. Yes, Dateline NBC was there to do a story on us, coupled with a segment on people going through the Mayo Clinic Nicotine Dependence Unit. The show was supposed to air on Sunday, November 17, just prior to the great American Smoke-out. Then, at the eleventh hour, the Vice President of NBC Network News decided to cut out the Nicotine Anonymous segment. To add insult to injury, the show got bumped anyway due to late-breaking items, and . . .

WE WERE YESTERDAY'S NEWS!

The French have an expression for it: "C'est show beez!" Life on life's terms. Great actors have often quipped that their best performances have ended up on the cutting room floor.

Are the traditions right or WHAT? Let's always remember that the world's best selling cosmetic is Avon, and that one on one is the best advertising of all. We're a God-given program of attraction. Yes, it would be nice to have had a network TV acknowledgment. But with that might have come other problems. At least they thought of us. Does it change what we do? Not one iota. We will continue to pray for the still suffering nicotine addict, go to meetings, start new meetings, celebrate anniversaries, and, one person at a time, one miracle at a time, our fellowship will grow and lives will be saved.

So, instead of looking to Dateline NBC to do our work for us, this really means we've got our work cut out for us, as individual recovering addicts. This has made us truly more dedicated than ever. And we hope it has done the same for you.

LOOK FOR . . .

The March edition of *Good Health News* in your local pharmacy - it contains an article about Nicotine Anonymous!

FROM THE EDITOR



I finally sat down to the arduous task of weeding my flower bed. It was no small thing since it had become overgrown with weeds and grass. You couldn't even see the tiny shoots of ground cover I was attempting to grow there. As I sat there looking at the tremendous job I had undertaken I felt completely overwhelmed. But with the wisdom this program has given me I closed my mind to the entire chore and began taking it one step at a time, one blade of grass at a time. I realized that I would need to do daily maintenance on this flower bed to avoid such an overwhelming job again.

As I went about my work, my mind began to wander. It struck me that not only my garden needed daily upkeep but my life needed it as well. Without daily reading, meditation and prayer my life and my recovery would become overgrown with the weeds of anxiety and the grass of despair. That fatal first puff would be too tempting, too easy.

I finally pulled the last blade of grass and smiled proudly at my days work. One blade at a time, one step at a time, one day at a time - I could do it. And I could keep it going by doing a little bit every day!



CHECK YOUR LABEL

In case you're wondering when your subscription to *SevenMinutes* runs out, check your mailing label. It contains an expiration code that will tell you the date (year and quarter) of your last issue. So, if it says "EXPIRATION CODE - 972" you'd better reorder! That's the code for this issue (1997, second quarter). *SevenMinutes* comes out in **January, April, July, and October.**

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