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Ten Years, One Day at a Time

Martha K., East Quogue, New York

I knew instinctively that this quit would be different from the others. Instead of quitting when I had run out of cigarettes (“... I’ll just finish this carton or this pack, and then I’ll stop . . .”) I found myself at my kitchen sink late on a Sunday night wetting a half a pack of perfectly good cigarettes before tossing them in the garbage. It was a truly surreal, out-of-body experience. Prior to that moment, I would NEVER have wasted one precious cigarette, let alone ten or more! That’s when the hope that this could be done really sank in.

I’d had a glimmer of that hope the moment I set foot in my first NicA meeting some two or three months earlier. It was there that I heard the same insane thoughts and feelings shared (ALOUD!) that I’d secretly thought and felt on my own for the almost 15 years I’d wanted to quit but couldn’t. I attended meetings week after week, torn between wanting desperately to have what these people had (freedom, joy, relief, spiritual connection, good health) but not really believing that it would be possible for me or that I really wanted to live without cigarettes.

I kept going, smoking up to the minute I walked in the door, lighting up almost immediately after the meeting (when I could be reasonably sure that no one would see me.) I took a literature commitment early on which meant I HAD to show up whether I wanted to or not. That was the best thing I could have done. Except when it came to smoking, I was a really good quitter. Had it not been for a sense of respon-

sibility to the group because I had agreed to this service position, I might not have returned.

I hadn’t picked a quit date as was recommended. I frankly just couldn’t picture my life without smoking. But my birthday was coming. It was only a few days away and I was suddenly struck with the idea (which I credit to my Higher Power) that I could try to give myself a birthday gift: 24 hours without smoking. It seemed almost impossible, but there I stood at my kitchen sink that Sunday night and I knew the chance was there for me to take.

My birthday was on a Monday. Not a good day under the best of circumstances. I rose that morning to face my daily cup of coffee without a cigarette. I managed to shower, dress, put on my make-up, drive my car and get to a job that I hated all without smoking. I passed the two traffic lights where I would normally have lit up, because I would have had enough time to smoke them AND chew some gum before getting to work. When my mother phoned me that morning to wish me a “Happy Birthday” and asked what I was doing that day I BURST into uncontrollable tears that came on and off (mostly on) for the first three days. My loss was enormous. Indescribable.

That Wednesday, I was able to raise my hand that I had 24 hours. People applauded. It was such a high to know how much I was supported, especially by people who knew exactly what I had accom-

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<info@nicotine-anonymous.org>

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Your trusted servants,

Donna E., *Publisher*

Catherine C., *Editor*

Ani M., *Assistant Editor*

Joe S., *Subscriptions*

Our Preamble

Nicotine Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women helping each other to live our lives free of nicotine. We share our experience, strength and hope with each other so that we may be free from this powerful addiction. The only requirement for membership is the desire to stop using nicotine. There are no dues or fees for Nicotine Anonymous membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. Nicotine Anonymous is not allied with any sect, denomination, political entity, organization or institution; does not engage in any controversy, neither endorses nor opposes any cause. Our primary purpose is to offer support to those who are trying to gain freedom from nicotine.

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The Twelve Steps of Nicotine Anonymous

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

The Twelve Steps 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.

From the Chair . . .

Jan F., Newport Beach, California

I am Jan F. your new Chairperson. I have served this last year as Chair Elect and this year I will be the active Chair of Nicotine Anonymous World Services.

Each year the new Chairperson has been asked to set his or her goals for the following year. In my case, until very recently, I had not decided what I wanted to focus on. There are so many areas of opportunity that I could not seem to choose. So, I did what I am accustomed to doing when I am having a tough time making a decision: I turned it over to my higher power and let it go.

It wasn't long before the ideal focus for our efforts for the coming year was presented to me. I want to make Public Outreach the focus of my efforts this year and make it a real success story. Let's focus our efforts in the coming year on getting the word out to the nicotine addict who still suffers.

This may be the first time in our history that we have the financial resources to significantly expand our outreach efforts. Every time I hear a newcomer state that he or she had no idea that Nicotine Anonymous even existed until they called the 800 number in our area, I just want to scream.

Several years ago we were forced to close our office in San Francisco due to the financial strain of trying to maintain an actual physical presence there. Through no one's fault we have experienced periodic difficulties ever since. It seems like we have always been struggling to right

our ship. This situation has caused the Fellowship a lot of turmoil. While previous chairpersons were pursuing their goals, the question of our financial security must have always loomed large in the back of their minds. I am sure our finances have caused previous chairpersons to decide that now was not the time to undertake a favorite project that would have cost the fellowship too much money.

When I look at our financial statements I seem to be the beneficiary of their collective frugality over the last several years. Our cash position has stopped hovering around \$20,000 and has grown to over \$50,000. In line with this increase in cash, our total assets have grown to over \$60,000. I believe that \$50,000 in cash provides us with money to cover our monthly expenses for as many as 24 months without any income.

This year, I would like to spend any money we accumulate—after we have paid our expenses—on Public Outreach. The method I want to use is to spend whatever money we accumulate in one quarter in the next quarter. In that manner we will never over-spend and have to dig into our reserves. For example, if we make \$5,000 in

one quarter, we can spend it in the next one. If we only make \$500 in a quarter, then that will be our budget for the following quarter.

Two years ago we created the position of Public Outreach Coordinator. Jeff C. is currently serving as our Public Outreach

Let's focus our efforts in the coming year on getting the word out to the nicotine addict who still suffers.

Coordinator. I would like to spend our excess funds this year providing Jeff and his committee with whatever additional tools they need to get our name out there. I would like to be able to go to my meetings and never again hear someone say: "Why, I didn't even know Nicotine Anonymous existed until today!" Of course, we will make every effort not to violate any of our traditions with these Public Outreach efforts.

I would like every Health Care Provider in the Country to know the name of Nicotine Anony-

continued on page 4

Ten Years

continued from page 1

plished. That first chip was one of the most meaningful gifts I've ever received.

It is hard to believe that ten years have passed . . . sometimes waiting ten minutes to smoke another cigarette felt like an eternity. As I consider the changes that have occurred in this past decade, it's pretty astounding. First, I have a connection to a Higher Power today, something that I had felt as a child but became increasingly elusive as I entered adolescence and then adulthood. I came to learn so much about myself, how my fears and other feelings became the foundation of my judgmental and controlling behaviors. I learned about and began to practice humility, forgiveness and acceptance. I began to choose faith instead of fear, enabling me to buy a house on my own, chair World Services, and most

recently, accept a new job which is completely different from my prior work experience.

I have met so many new friends and expanded my interests. I no longer consider exercise to be getting off the couch and driving to the convenience store for more cigarettes. Instead, I ride my bike to my home group in nice weather and practice yoga. I no longer fantasize about what it's like in other parts of the world or dismiss the idea of traveling as too much money spent on something that won't last. Instead, I've traveled to a variety of places, many completely on my own, not knowing the language. I no longer assume that people don't remember me or that my opinions don't matter. Instead, I express myself and allow myself to be seen and heard. I no longer exaggerate or outright lie. Instead, I am honest and face up to it when I make a mistake. I no longer dwell in what is absent

from my life. Instead, I am continuously in awe of all that I have and consciously appreciate with gratitude all the gifts I've been blessed to enjoy. I no longer externalize the blame for my experiences and inhale thousands of chemicals as a way of coping. Instead, I pray, talk to my sponsor and friends, attend meetings and practice these 12 Steps to the best of my ability.

These are just some of the ways my life has been transformed in these past ten years. Stopping smoking was just the beginning. I had no idea that by coming to Nicotine Anonymous I would not only be granted a daily reprieve from the insanity of smoking: the anxiety, shame, fear, but that I'd be handed a blueprint for living with joy, love, compassion, honesty and faith. Thank you Nicotine Anonymous, for these ten years of a renewed life.

In gratitude,
Martha K.

From the Chair

continued from page 3

mous. I would like every facility that treats addiction to be aware of us. Every Governmental Health Agency should know about us including the various Tribal Authorities for the American Indian. Jeff has accumulated a long list of possible Outreach projects.

We may have to pay for outside services to accomplish some of the tasks. We have such a limited membership that it seems to me we are always on the verge of burning-out our volunteer base. If we have the money and

I think we do, then we should be willing to pay to get the ball rolling.

Every time I hear a newcomer state that he or she had no idea that Nicotine Anonymous even existed until they called the 800 number in our area, I want to scream.

When I look at the services World Services performs, I begin to realize the wonderful work our volunteers are doing. Our Tele-servants, Email servants, Pen Pal coordinator, Webserver, all of our many volunteers in these and other functions are working to help the addict who is still suffering. My goal is to make as many people as possible aware of our program during the coming year.

Please ask *your* higher power to direct our efforts in such a manner that we achieve the task ahead of us. Thank you! I look forward to serving you in the coming year.

Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor:

I have been a subscriber of *Seven Minutes* for the past two years and enjoyed reading the stories of recovery. I see the tools of the program mentioned, meetings and some type of experience in which the urge to smoke was lifted. However, I don't really hear the Higher Power concept used in the sense of turning *our* will over to a power greater than *ourselves* and the Power of Sponsorship.

I was introduced to NicA in 1993, went to a few meetings and went home to smoke. Seven years later a higher power brought me someone in this fellowship from whom I could hear how this program could help me and how sponsorship

could help me. Someone I could identify with. I feel these two concepts of this program have failed to be mentioned with enough importance.

I must believe in a Power greater than me, otherwise I'm using *my* will and if I'm using *my* will I don't need a higher power and then I don't need Step 2. Also, I cannot use my sick head that got me here to get me better, I must have someone I trust and can be open with, a *sponsor* to keep me on track.

In my recovery today I live in Steps 1, 2, and 3 daily. Every situation I come to where smoking is tempting I must: 1) admit complete powerlessness (over people, places and things) 2) believe in a power greater than me (Higher Power), and 3) turn

that situation over to the care of it. I suit up, show up and leave the results up to my Higher Power. My sponsor helps me stay close to these principles.

Two years nicotine free, I continue to go to meetings and take commitments, yet I know a Higher Power and a Sponsor are imperative to recovery and serenity.

Thank you Nicotine Anonymous.

Higher Powered
North Hollywood, California

NAWS Balance Sheet January through December 2001

Annette L., Long Beach, California

STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS

Jan - Dec 2001

OPERATING ACTIVITIES

Net Income	3,879.66
Adjustments to reconcile Net Income to net cash provided by operations:	
1200 · Accounts Receivable	-689.49
1205 · Advances to Conference	-2,000.00
1209 · Advance to Fulfillment	-500.00
1120 · Inventory Asset	-931.61
1350 · Prepaid Expenses	950.00
2000 · Accounts Payable	884.84
2200 · Sales Tax Payable	97.31
Net cash provided by Operating Activities	1,690.71
Cash at beginning of period	49,594.55
Cash at end of period	51,285.26

Bob's Eleventh Step Prayer

God, direct my thinking in this upcoming day. Humble me and guide me. Show me the way.

Keep dishonest and self-seeking motives away, and do not allow self-pity to enter my day.

Keep selfish motives out of all my thoughts, and remind me often of what you have taught.

When I am faced with some indecision today, show me the right course and guide the way.

Give me intuitive thoughts as you inspire me, or give me a decision so my mind can be free.

Teach me how to relax and take it easy too. I know the right answers will come from you.

Don't let me struggle if the going gets rough. Your same right answers will still be enough.

Place my thinking more on an inspired plane. Let me come to rely on it and avoid the pain.

Above all, God, give me freedom from self-will. Guide each step while I'm climbing the hill.

Remind me to ask for right action or thought when I'm agitated, in doubt or even distraught.

Thy will be done. I'm no longer running the show. I love you, God, and I just wanted You to know.

Conference

Brooklyn,

April 19-

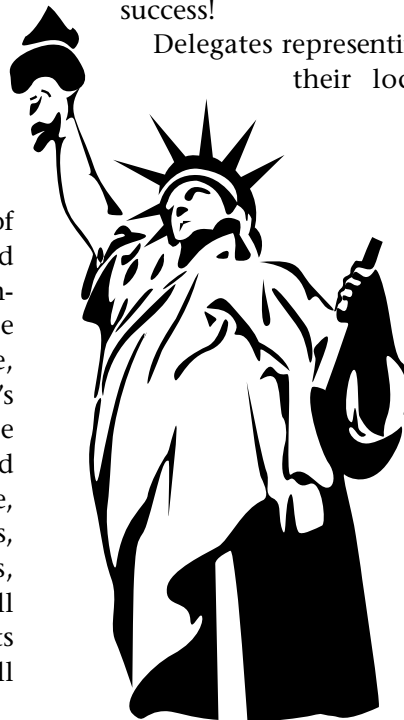
Summary by Kent B.,

Every annual Nicotine Anonymous World Services Conference has had traditional events and common elements that carry over from year to year, giving delegates and attendees a sense a common purpose and unity over time, no matter where or when a conference convenes.

Our 2002 conference was no exception. From the start of Friday evening's Gratitude Meeting, where we listened to Howie G. from New York and so many others share the blessings and gifts their nicotine freedom has brought them, to Saturday evening's banquet with the wonderfully funny and moving speakers Joe. S of Huntington Beach, California and Mike B. of Levittown, New York, to Sunday's Spirituality Brunch, where Marcia G. of Hauppauge, New York shared from her heart, conference attendees heard many exquisite voices of recovery experience, strength and hope. At Sunday's sunrise meeting, through the many marathon meetings, and all around the hospitality suite, the renewing of old friendships, and the starting of new ones, was everywhere. These will all be among the special moments for which this conference will most be remembered.

And the surroundings were grand . . . a first-class hotel centered amid the heritage and cultural diversity of Brooklyn, a few steps from the historic Brooklyn Bridge and a bounty of fine eateries. This weekend of sharing and service might, to some extent, be cherished solely because of its unique setting and its distinctive people. A special note of gratitude goes to Eileen C. and the many planners and other servants from her New York Metropolitan Area Intergroup who organized every detail and helped to make this conference a resounding success!

Delegates representing their local



meetings and intergroups came from Arizona, Chicagoland (Illinois), Georgia, Maryland, New Jersey/Pennsylvania, New Orleans, New York Metropolitan area, Northern California, Rocky Mountain (Denver), Southern California, Texas, and even Bermuda. They came together for the most important purpose of conducting the current business of the Fellowship. The workshop discussions and the proposals arising from them, not unlike previous conferences, raised spirited debate between newcomers and old-timers, between East and West, and especially, between traditionalists and reformists. The diversity of views and healthy deliberation led repeatedly to a heightened call for "what's best for the entire membership of Nicotine Anonymous?"

It was resolved during the Conference to:

- Leave unchanged our Bylaws Articles I and II. The proposed amendment that would have revised three of the Steps and one of the Traditions to become **gender neutral**, failed to achieve the required two-thirds vote of the Delegates present to send it to all the groups for final ratification. The Conference strongly

nce XVII

New York

21, 2002

Emeritus Chairperson

encouraged that there be ongoing discussion into the future about how both gender and spiritual neutrality relate to the membership and the growth of the Fellowship.

- Amend the Bylaws Article VII, Section 2, item c) to permit the officers to designate a place for holding of a meeting of the Delegates, including a **future World Services Conference, outside the United States.**
- Approve publication of a **second edition** of “**Nicotine Anonymous: The Book,**” to replace some references to smoking, smoke-free, and smoke with references to using nicotine, nicotine-free, and nicotine. Included in the new edition will also be a list of our Traditions and numerous grammatical improvements.
- Accept sixty-three submissions for a new **literature work-in-progress, the “Book of Daily Meditations”** addressing nicotine recovery. The Conference clarified the format for the book and affirmed that all submissions would be from the perspective of a recovering nicotine addict rather than someone still using.
- Elect **new officers:** Robin L.

of Georgia as Chair-Elect; Dale K. of Maryland as Secretary-Elect, and Jeff C. of California as Treasurer-Elect. The Conference also extended its appreciation and gratitude to those officers whose terms expired: Scott J. of New York as Chair-Emeritus, Leslie S. of Virginia as Secretary-Emeritus, and Jack R. of California as Treasurer-Emeritus.

- Heard passionate proposals from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and Atlanta, Georgia to host the **2004 World Services Conference.** At their meeting immediately following the Conference, the officers did select Philadelphia as the conference site for April 23–25, 2004.

One of the most traditional highlights of any conference is the countdown of the lengths of abstinence, from the longest to the shortest. Following Saturday’s speakers, as each year is called out, more and more people stood in celebration of their personal victory over nicotine. One of two attendees first to stand with the longest time—over 30 years, presented a copy of “The Book” to the attendee last to stand with the shortest time—one hour. They both had traveled all the way from Bermuda unknowingly to bring everyone at this Conference two surprise gifts . . . an opportunity to bear witness to the power of carrying the message, and a wonderful reminder that *It Works!*

Start planning for the
18th Annual
Nicotine Anonymous Conference
in Santa Monica, California
to be held April 25–26–27, 2003

Outreach Corner

Jeff C., Fountain Valley, California

Brooklyn was a great time (April 2002 NicA conference). If I saw you there, it was great seeing you. If not, I hope to see you at the NicA conference in Santa Monica, California on April 25, 26, and 27, 2003. If you haven't been to a conference put Santa Monica on your schedule now! What a great way to invest your money you've saved on smoking with the insurance of getting more involved in the membership!

Many important items were voted on at the conference, I will leave the details to the Chair Emeritus as I am sure he will cover those items [see pages 6 and 7—ed.]. As time allowed I explored the Empire State Building, Times Square, Central Park, Statue of Liberty, Wall Street, Coney Island, and ground zero to name a few.

New Volunteers

We have two more volunteers for the current outreach project leader positions: Kayla T. will lead "Adopt a Mile" and Jan S. will lead "Media Mania." Thanks to both Kayla and Jan for stepping up to the plate and participating in their recovery. Thanks also to those who volunteered to be committee members on the projects.

The Outreach Projects

The objective of each project is to provide the membership (individuals and groups) a "turn key" system that will

provide a step-by-step "how to" to assist members to implement and maintain a specific outreach concept in their geographical location. Project leaders are responsible for creating their assigned project "how to" and are the first point of contact regarding their respective projects.

1. **"Adopt a Mile"**—The concept of "Adopt a Mile" is to encourage members to systematically distribute pamphlets ("Introduction to Nicotine Anonymous" suggested), flyers (showing local meeting times and locations), and business cards to self-designated geographical locations. The objective is to build a rapport with the local business community and consistently keep Nicotine Anonymous in front of the public. **Project Leader:** Kayla T., phone, 770-739-4084, e-mail, kaylapower@aol.com

2. **"Media Mania"**—"Media Mania" is meant to encourage members to seek sponsors for public message spots on local TV, radio, and press. Instructions on how to contact the media, how to choose which media to contact, sample press releases, and other information will be provided to those individuals and groups seeking information on how to publicize their local meetings. The objective of

this project is to consistently keep Nicotine Anonymous in front of the public. **Project Leader:** Jan S., home, 610-933-9181, e-mail, janice_swarr@vanguard.com

3. **"Mass Mailers"**—The function of "Mass Mailers" is to encourage, inform and support members in regard to mailing Nicotine Anonymous flyers to local charitable organizations, government-sponsored organizations and professionals with the common objectives of helping individuals in nicotine cessation. The objective of this project is to obtain referrals to NicA from these organizations, and professionals. **Project Leader:** Gary M., home, 714-915-3191, e-mail, gbmgary@cox.net

Please contact these project leaders for more information on each of the projects, to volunteer to help with outreach, and especially to share your experiences!

In Recovery, Unity, and Service,
Jeff C., Outreach Coordinator,
JcrandallAxaAdvisors@earthlink.net
714-378-0398



STEP TWELVE: 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.

What are you doing to help spread the word?

The Book of Daily Meditations

edited by Jennifer M., and Kate W.

Following are three of the sixty-four submissions to the Book of Daily Meditations that were recently approved at the April 2002 Nicotine Anonymous World Conference in Brooklyn. You are encouraged to share your experience, strength, and hope with others by writing for this book. Please consider contributing your own personal prayer, meditation, or favorite quote.

What will I do today? It may depend upon which "will" I chose to listen to.

—A RECOVERING NICOTINE ADDICT

Human beings have what we call "free will." This may be true, but the people, places, and things in our surroundings also influence our thinking. We say we have "will power," but even "normal people" find themselves admitting, "I knew I shouldn't have done that, but..."

As addicts our will power has not been sufficient to help us stop using drugs. After all, our will has been conditioned with the determined thinking of: I want nicotine, my drug of choice; I will have nicotine, my drug of choice.

Coming "to believe that a power greater than ourselves can restore us to sanity" (Step Two) can mean becoming open-minded to consider the guidance and wisdom of a counselor and/or a sponsor, the group, the Program, and a belief in a Higher Power of our own understanding.

Today, as I open myself to the possibility of being restored, I do not lose my will; I gain a greater Will to help recover my life.



"We are also beginning to love ourselves."

During the changing seasons it is apparent a Higher Power is at work in the world. I need to realize there is a Higher Power at work in me as well. I am a unique being to be cherished. I didn't come off of some celestial assembly line but was made special and unique.

It is often too easy for me to see myself as unwanted goods. Whether its because I have been hurt growing up or just have a low self image I have been accustomed to think of myself as "less than." That is one reason I smoked—to blot out the feelings of discomfort I felt in my own skin.

The beauty of the Twelve Steps is that they help me come to know myself again—in the way my Higher Power knows and loves me. I have found the best tool is the Fourth Step Inventory. I was tempted to list only the areas I am lacking, but the Fourth Step is truly meant to be a way to take stock of my whole self. I must not list only my liabilities, I must list my assets as well. I was surprised to find there are many! It is essential to know what a precious, unique person I am and to see my place in this wonderful creation.

Thank you, God, for creating me as a unique and essential person. I love me as you love me.



A little discomfort goes with the territory of recovery—accept it.

What works are: The tools, our Higher Power, meditation, staying with the urge and riding it out, accepting discomfort, and the "five D's"—deep breath, distract, delay, do something else, and drink water. Do what works for you and what you are willing to do, not what you think you should or must do. We have found that the biggest reason we relapsed is when we did not use our own coping strategies, including prayer.

Finding the peace that knows no understanding comes with acceptance and love for the self and others. The gains of recovery far outweigh the costs and pain of using nicotine and relapsing. Focus on the fact that—yes, there will be moments of discomfort, but also that there will be more laughter, love, affection, creativity, joy, increased control, greater self-esteem, and other feelings of all kinds. Are these not more desirable than the self-abuse suffered from the choice to use nicotine, and the resulting sense of despair and hopelessness?

Today I will win my sobriety by accepting discomfort and opening myself to a greater goodness.

"Live today as if there were no tomorrow and the present is yours forever."

—JEAN MANTHEI, 1966, AGE 16



Greek Tragedy Scientist

Anonymous

I am a physician. I knew it all. I could help others, but I felt I was doomed to a tragic death from the consequences of smoking. I had seen emphysema patients on breathing machines plug up their permanent tracheotomies with their fingers so they could smoke during the bathroom break time. I had seen my own father die from cigarette-caused emphysema (twelve years after he had stopped smoking!). I told Dad I'd stopped, but I'd light up on the way home from visiting him at his rest home, where he lived with his portable oxygen machine. I had carefully followed the medical and scientific community's research and reports on the consequence of smoking. I had

twice spent a thousand dollars at an *inpatient* stop-smoking program, I had tried hypnosis, I had tried multiple self-stop programs. Always, my emotions got best of me because of some sort of "crucial," (but actually triv-



ial) event. The result was always the same: I blew up, and I smoked at the person, place, or event. This was so I'd not go crazy, or to prevent "resumption of active alcoholism," or some

other excuse.

I was so knowledgeable about the danger of smoking that I could have easily run a fancy, weekend stop-smoking seminar. But the knowledge did *me* no good. In fact, it heightened my sense of "quiet desperation," knowing I was slowly killing myself. I'd become so despondent that I'd smoke more. The only commitment I could make would be to buy only one pack at a time, preserving the slender thread of hope that I might stop sometime and not have to waste the rest of the carton.

Many times I left behind half-empty packs in my attempts to stop. I'd perversely check the location each hour to see if somebody had taken the "gift,"



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as if I were doing somebody a charitable favor.

I didn't begin smoking by stealing from a silver cigarette box. Instead I started in the gutter! Another kid and I had curiously tried all the brands left for us next to the curb. I didn't really start smoking, however, until I got to college. Being an ambitious pre-medical student, with the necessity of obtaining the required high grades, I studied into the long hours of the night for many years. That meant coffee and cigarettes. Later, in my psychiatric training and in private practice, alcohol was added. When I joined AA, I thought, "At least I can get high from coffee and cigarettes." Instead, scientific articles, my experience as a physician, and the demise of my father made me want to quit smoking.

I didn't know it was *nicotine* I wanted. I thought it was some sort of "psychological habit." I have since learned nicotine craving arises every twenty minutes when blood levels drop. Whatever you are doing when the craving calls—answering the phone, typing, finishing dessert, becomes the supposed "reason" for lighting up. Nicotine unfortunately enhances, temporarily, mental performance, and actually quiets emotional turmoil, (I have my share); thus, the reinforcing nature of my addiction. I used the excuse that I didn't want to resume drinking, and I would somehow substitute a "cigarette slip." It eventually dawned on me that I would spend the rest of my life having "cigarette slips" to prevent drinking. This was getting to be ridiculous!

I'm not sure the exact reason for my "bottom" in nicotine addiction. It was not as clear as

with my alcoholism. My nicotine bottom was *emotional*, and had something to do with being mad at myself from being *powerless* over nicotine, even though I knew smoking caused more premature deaths than drinking or drugs!

Finally, I hit the bottom of the barrel and called Nicotine Anonymous. I heard David's story at my first meeting. I was inspired, but I couldn't wait to defiantly smoke after the meeting. At my second meeting, I told the group I was terrified of the withdrawal syndrome and I also stated: "It's going to take something *spiritual* to get me through this, science isn't enough." Later that afternoon, after a lot of emotional turmoil about stopping and not stopping, I suddenly felt: "Screw it! I'm sick and tired of all this



debate. . . . God, you were there for my alcohol problem, please help me with my smoking problem, too."

I threw the cigarettes and lighter out the window. They made a familiar sound as they hit the pavement for the thousandth time! I took a deep breath, went home, and told my wife I could be crazy at about dessert time when we went out to dinner. We went out, and *nothing* struck at dessert time. I told her I'd be nuts at bedtime or during the night. That didn't happen either! I never went

nuts. I learned that the severity of the withdrawal, if you ask God's help, is only as bad as you want it to be. The only withdrawal symptom I've had has been moderate insomnia for several months, but some of that was due to caffeine. Drinking decaf after 5 P.M. has greatly improved that problem. During the fifteen months I've been given the gift of nicotine sobriety by Nicotine Anonymous and God, I have had the urge to smoke on only about six occasions. Usually, it was either some big emotional blow-out (exaggerated by being off cigarettes), or because of being too Hungry, Angry, Lonely, or Tired (especially tired). In all instances, the problem was lifted by simply taking *one deep breath* and saying to myself "God help me." That's all it took! Fool-proof! Try it!

I have been very active in service in Nicotine Anonymous. That seems to reinforce my nicotine sobriety. The only time I may crave a cigarette is during a Nicotine Anonymous meeting, when a newcomer is describing the flavor of my favorite brand, or something like that. The feeling is only temporary. Somehow, that vicarious "slip" guarantees against the real thing! Sort of like a nicotine version of a dry drunk, complete with recovery!

Scientists have found "soothing substances" in brain chemistry and smoothed EEG patterns (as opposed to "resentment substances" and excited EEG potentials) resulting from prayer and meditation. I think someday it will be discovered that "natural" biochemical serenity resulting from spiritual methods will remove the "need" for nicotine. I think that happened to me!

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