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Tobacco Free Florida's Area Health Education Center (AHEC) Tobacco Program at Florida State University College of Medicine

Winter 2014

From Quitter to Coach!

Like a lot of smokers, I was sick; sick of being obsessed with smoking, sick of stinking, sick of wasting money I needed elsewhere, sick of thinking of dying of some awful disease.

With all of that, I would still light up whenever I got the chance. A pack and a half got me through most days. Two packs, if something didn't go right. There was a constant battle going on in my brain but like most smokers, I had figured out ways to ignore the guilt feelings and keep smoking.

My problems with nicotine started when I was 45 years old. Yes, really - 45. I took a once-in-a-lifetime vacation to the U.S. Virgin Islands and my brother asked me to bring back a few fine cigars. Unfortunately, he only got one because I smoked the others. I don't know how to say it any other way than to say that I liked everything about cigars. Once I got home, I would smoke one for a special occasion and then somehow that became a daily indulgence which turned into a flat-out addiction. I know people don't usually associate cigars with women but I am definitely female and even consider myself to be a lady. However, I have also been called an odd duck from

time to time.

As you might imagine, my smoking habits weren't smiled on at my job at Ability 1st, a Center for Independent Living. I was only one of a few in my workplace who would go out back and

"What I had heard in the class was - keep trying, until you make it. I did and I made it!"

take a smoke break. When I heard that a smoking cessation class was going to be offered at my work place, I had mixed feelings but I decided to give it a try. During the Quit Smoking Now classes, I remember being horrified to discover one cigar equaled 10 cigarettes in terms of nicotine and tar. I had somehow believed cigars were safer. Learning there was embalming fluid, also known as formaldehyde, in cigarettes was sickening.



Even though I believe the saying "you only get out of something what you put into it", I still only attended about half of the six classes. I am a slow learner and even all of the information, support and accountability provided in the Quit Smoking Now class didn't help me break my smoking habit at that time. It did provide a base though, tools to work with, some things to think about. I lost count of how many times I seriously tried to quit in the next two years after I took the class. I thought about what I had heard in the class - "Keep trying, until you make it". So I kept trying and I made it! For me, quitting smoking was not an overnight job. It was definitely one of the most difficult things I've ever done in my life but it's one of the things of which I am the most proud!

Coaches Corner

Meet Coach Dees!

One day, my boss asked "Why don't you teach smoking cessation classes?" That's when I began my journey towards becoming a tobacco treatment specialist. I was very quiet sitting through the Tobacco Treatment Specialist course offered by the AHEC Program at the FSU College of Medicine, the only nationally accredited training program in Florida. Although it was intimidating in the beginning, I loved teaching classes at Ability 1st Center for Independent Living and throughout the community over the next three years. It wasn't easy and not everyone in my class was successful on the first try. However, as a coach I stayed motivated because I remembered how it worked for me. I always told my classes - keep trying until you make it!

Best of Life!
Beth Dees

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3 EASY & FREE WAYS TO QUIT



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Ask the Expert



I USED TO THINK THAT I COULD QUIT ANYTIME THAT I WANTED. BUT AFTER TRYING TO QUIT A FEW TIMES I HAVE FOUND THAT IT IS NOT THAT EASY. CAN YOU HELP ME UNDERSTAND WHY IT IS SO HARD TO DROP THIS BAD HABIT?



Congratulations on your desire to quit smoking! I know it can sometimes seem like an impossible thing to do, but remember that even people with strong willpower and motivation have difficulty giving up smoking. Quitting smoking may be one of the hardest things you've ever had to do.

Not just a habit

One of the reasons is that smoking is not just a habit; the nicotine in cigarettes is very addictive. Scientists have found that nicotine is as addictive as heroin, cocaine or amphetamines, and for most people more addictive than alcohol. To help make sense of this, let me explain the addiction process.

How addiction works

It all starts in your brain. The brain has a reward pathway, which is activated by addictive drugs such as heroin, cocaine and the substance found in tobacco called nicotine. When you inhale cigarette smoke, the nicotine reaches your brain within 10 seconds. This activates that reward pathway in the brain and causes your brain to experience a sense of pleasure. It is because this reaction happens so quickly (within seconds) that

scientists feel that nicotine is so highly addictive. Because your brain likes the pleasure sensation, it begins to send signals to your body to let you know that it wants more. We call these signals 'withdrawal symptoms'. As you described, once you try to quit, these withdrawal symptoms are very hard to resist. This is why smoking can have such a strong hold on people.

Help for nicotine addiction

But don't give up yet! There are several things that will help you overcome the addiction to nicotine. One of the best ways to quit is to give the body lower doses of nicotine so that it is eventually weaned off. This can be done through nicotine replacement therapy (NRT). NRT, along with counseling, is one of the most effective ways to quit smoking. For more information on counseling and free NRT, contact

Tobacco Free Florida and begin your road to recovery.

Please call 1-877-U-CAN-NOW (1-877-822-6669), or go online to <http://www.tobaccofreeflorida.com/>

Author's bio:

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Have a question for Ms. Myers? Please email your question to freedomexpresseditor@gmail.com

Bored to death?

Find out why boredom is a trigger and what to do about it



If smoking and boredom seem to go hand in hand for you, you are not alone. Researchers at the University of South Florida* found that 70% of ex-smokers reached for a cigarette when they experienced an 'unpleasant mood'. These unpleasant or negative moods included feeling sad, tense, angry or bored.

So what is boredom and how does it affect your desire to smoke?

The dictionary defines boredom as "having one's patience, interest, or pleasure exhausted."

When we put that definition together with what we know about addiction, the picture becomes clearer. We know that nicotine is addictive and addiction is a response to our brain's desire for the 'pleasure' feelings that come when dopamine is released.

If you are a recent quitter, your reaction to feeling bored might be stronger when you are experiencing nicotine withdrawal symptoms. That's because your brain misses the false sense of 'excitement' and 'pleasure' that you were getting from the nicotine. That is why people who are trying to quit smoking often say that boredom is one of the triggers that has them reaching for a cigarette.

What to do about it

First, remember that triggers and withdrawal symptoms are usually worse within the first week or so of quitting. To help relieve feelings of boredom, you have to change your focus from how bad or bored you are feeling to doing something

positive. Boredom often comes from a feeling that we are not using our time in a way that is fulfilling or meaningful. To cure boredom, try doing things that add meaning to your life.

Try the suggestions below:

Find something useful to do like cleaning, getting rid of clutter, washing dishes or doing your laundry.

Take a walk. It is free and breathing the fresh air may remind you of some of your reasons for deciding to quit tobacco.

Take up a hobby. Try knitting, doodling, or some other activity that will keep your hands busy. Use drawing or writing to express your feelings or desires for a healthier life.

Learn how to meditate and focus on positive thinking. Sometimes changing your way of thinking might be all that you need to help you see that life can be as exciting or as boring as you make it.

*Brandon, T.H. (2000). Forever free: A guide to remaining smoke free. The Tobacco Research and Intervention Program at the H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center & Research Institute at the University of South Florida

Words of Wisdom:

Patch users share their stories



Brad's story -

I started smoking when I was 13. Since then, I've smoked all my life. I decided to make an attempt to quit when I went to the doctor and was told that I was at risk for lung disease and permanent breathing problems.

I had heard that I could get the patch free through a local program, so as part of my quit attempt, I decided to try it. The patch definitely helped control my cravings for cigarettes. The only issue

I had was that I worked outside as a laborer with the city. At first, wearing the patch and keeping it on during those hot, sweaty days was not always easy. I learned that putting it on in a dry area and holding it down for 15-20 seconds, like they tell you on the box, is the best way to make sure that it sticks. I know some people use creams and other stuff or wrap the patch but I didn't need to do any of that. For me, it stayed on fine without that.

The other thing I learned was that I could actually chew nicotine gum if I needed to while I was wearing the patch. This really helped because I would crave nicotine when I was driving home from work every day. The combination of the gum and the patch worked great.

Brad's advice – I'm not a doctor, but I can tell you that the patch has really helped me. The counseling that you get from calling the Tobacco Free Florida quitline can help you to use it correctly. The counselors taught me how to use the patch and the gum together, in order to get the most relief from my nicotine cravings.

Angel's Story -

I was 23 when I started smoking. At the time, I enjoyed smoking and I saw no reason to stop. But everything changed when my son was born with severe asthma. Watching his little body go through so much pain was all the reason I needed. I even started having my own problems with constant bronchitis so I was very motivated. But I soon found out that it wasn't that easy to quit.

I decided to try the patch because a friend told me where I could get the patch and other NRT (like nicotine gum and the lozenges) for free. The patch was simple. I put one on in the morning and I wore it throughout the day. I didn't have any problems with it sticking or itching or anything. I also liked that it was basically hidden under my sleeve when I put it on my upper arm area. I wasn't really trying to hide it,



but it was nice not to have to think about it.

I wore the patch for a little while and then I decided to smoke a cigarette while I had the patch on. Boy did I get sick! I have quit smoking since then, but I really wish I had used the patch the correct way and taken advantage of the counseling that

was offered. I know I would have quit much sooner and would have done a better job if I had actually followed the instructions.

Angel's advice - If you are thinking about trying the patch, I really do believe that it works but you need to get the free counseling. You have to take it seriously, like any other medicine and follow the directions.



6 ways

to remain smoke-free during the holidays

Readers tips for getting through the holidays

Get Plenty of Rest

When you're sleepy and cranky, you will be stressed. If you are stressed, you may be more likely to reach for the smokes. Try for at least 7 hours of sleep and even take a power nap (that's a quick 10 minute nap) when you need one during the day.

- Angel

Eat, drink and be merry.

Drink plenty! Plenty of *water* that is. Try to drink eight glasses a day. To go with that water, eat a balanced diet that contains fruits, vegetables, lean meats and whole grain breads and cereals. Avoid sugar and alcohol as much as possible so that you can remain in control and stress-free.

- Cynthia

Avoid getting overwhelmed

Remember to take things one day at a time. Keep things simple and focus on the big picture. You can do this. Breathe. Relax. Remember the reasons why you quit smoking. Make a list of them and read them whenever you feel tempted. Also, don't hesitate to use nicotine replacement therapy.

-Brad

Plan some exercise

A big trigger for smokers in my family is the end of a meal. To avoid this, we plan something active so we're not just sitting around after meals. My favorite Thanksgiving was spent at my Aunt's house in Georgia. We played volleyball and went for long walks together after every meal. It was the most fun (and least smoking) we ever had during the holidays!

-Vanessa

Fair warning!

During the holidays, you may plan to get together with family and friends. If any of them are smokers, make sure that you address smoking ahead of time and set some rules. We politely ask our guests to avoid smoking altogether or if that's not possible, we ask that they only smoke outside. We have a little saying, "At our house, the only thing smokin' is the turkey!"

-David

Seek Support

We haven't forgotten you! The Tobacco Free Florida program is here to support you during the holidays. If you need us, please call 1-877-U-CAN-NOW (1-877-822-6669), or go online to <http://www.tobaccofreeflorida.com/>

Have a great, smoke-free holiday season!

WE NEED YOUR HELP.

Got a success story? Got tips on how to quit smoking? Any questions for our tobacco treatment specialists? Please share. Together, we can beat this! If you have a success story, or you know of one, please write us or give us a call. We would love to hear from you! Please send us your emails to freedomexpresseditor@gmail.com

INFORMED TO QUIT
INSPIRED TO QUIT
I QUIT WITH AHEC



Tobacco Free Florida and the AHEC Program at FSU College of Medicine are working to expand access to treatment for tobacco dependency, especially for people with mental health and substance abuse disorders. Like other smokers, people with mental illness ARE interested in quitting and are able to quit when supported with evidence-based treatments. If you would like information about helping your clientele quit tobacco, please contact Andrée Aubrey at FSU College of Medicine at 850-645-6439 or andree.aubrey@med.fsu.edu. We have many resources available including scholarships for staff training, technical assistance with incorporating services at your organization and other resources to support a tobacco project.



Thinking about quitting tobacco?

We can show you the road to success



Quitting Cold Turkey

Have you tried to quit on your own?

This is where most tobacco users start when they first decide to quit. Some people call this 'quitting cold turkey' and only 3% of people who try to quit this way are successful. But it is a good way to learn what it will take for you to be successful with quitting.

If you have tried the 'cold turkey' method and are looking for longer term success, consider a support group. Quitting with a group keeps you motivated and inspired. Groups such as Quit Smoking Now provide support from all the group members. You will hear about other people's struggles and successes and you will have the support of the class leader who has been trained to help people quit. Using a support group like Quit Smoking now along with the free NRT medications provided as part of the group, will *double* your chances of success!