

True Quitters' Stories



For Women

Inside:

True Quitters' Stories - Pages 1- 5
The Five Steps of Planning - Page 6
Tobacco Cessation Resources - Page 7



Amy F. Rogers

Welcome your cravings! They're just reminders that you've actually quit smoking.

I was what is called a “secret smoker”.

As part of my quit process I did a reality check and realized I had to go through 29 different steps to smoke one cigarette! I'd wait for just the right time, put on my big, black, smelly jacket and my red beret (with my hair carefully tucked underneath), sneak outside, hide from view – you get the picture. I felt ashamed and isolated.

I had to eventually face that my smoking was damaging my integrity, health and connection with others.

Fact

Women who quit smoking relapse for different reasons than men. Stress, weight control, and negative emotions lead to relapse among women. *U.S Department of Health and Human Services. 'Women and Smoking: A Report of the Surgeon General', 2001.*

Karen Balsamico

Maybe you can quit before you have a heart attack.

I'd tried to quit smoking several times. When I had my heart attack, it was the final wake-up call.

I knew smoking was bad for my physical health, but I didn't realize how it affected my mental health until I quit. Now, not only am I much healthier, but I'm much more sociable, too.

As a mental health consumer, I know that taking college classes, working as a peer counselor at a local drop-in center, facilitating a weekly tobacco cessation group, and making new friends have all added to my self-esteem and feeling part of my community. And none of it would have been possible if I hadn't quit smoking.





Irmengard Wessels

It's never, ever too late to quit!

I quit because I wanted to, not because someone else told me to. As my smoking years went by, I was spending more and more time alone at home – didn't go anywhere, didn't have any friends. For me, 80% of the battle was giving up the habit part. Teaching myself how to drive the car, talk on the phone, and other things, without a cigarette in my hand was most important. Pretending to “smoke” lollipops carried me through the first six weeks, and nicotine patches gave me the safety net I needed.

Every day now something is happening. I go swimming regularly; I'm taking Spanish lessons; I eat lunch out with friends; I go to movies; and I've met lots of wonderful non-smoking seniors.

I'm having the time of my life !

Fact

In 1987, lung cancer surpassed breast cancer as the leading cause of cancer deaths among women in the U.S.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. 'Health Consequences of Smoking: A Report of the Surgeon General', 2004

Shanika Harris

I was so scared when I first set my quit date. I was nervous, anxious and just did not know what I was going to do with myself.

However, I kept thinking about my number one reason for quitting: my health. My father died at 36 years old, and I couldn't get that out of my head. My other main reasons were my two handsome boys, who kept bugging me to stop smoking. Now that I have quit, they are very proud of me, and they enjoy the sugar-free cinnamon candies that I use to help me stay tobacco-free.

Whatever your reasons for quitting tobacco, never give up, never give in, and take it one second, one minute at a time every day.

Love,
Shanika





Maria Garcia

I come from a long line of gifted musicians, and I wanted to be a singer, too. But I sabotaged that dream by smoking; and when I was 17, I had radical lung surgery.

Even though I quit during all my pregnancies, I always went back to cigarettes. Until one day I decided I just didn't want to be dependent on anything – not alcohol, drugs or tobacco. I wanted to be healthy and a role model for my children.

Now, at 15 years smoke-free, I look at my beautiful teenage daughter, who is a wonderful singer/songwriter, and I'm concerned about her experimenting with cigarettes like I did.

Fact

Teenage girls often start to smoke to avoid weight gain and to identify themselves as independent and glamorous, which reflects images projected by tobacco ads. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *Women and Smoking: A Report of the Surgeon General*, 2001.

OK, I'm ready to quit.

Now what do I do?

Plan for this quit the same way you would any other important changes in your life. Here are some suggestions adapted from *The Take Control Guide*, published by the California Smokers' Helpline:

THE FIVE STEPS OF PLANNING:

Step 1: Decide --- cold turkey or quitting aid?

Withdrawal symptoms can be uncomfortable, but they are not harmful. Because the symptoms are temporary, many smokers choose to quit cold turkey. If you're concerned about withdrawal undercutting your efforts, you may want to consider using a quitting aid.

Step 2: Choose a quit day.

Look ahead a couple of weeks. Mark your calendar and commit to that day. [Note: Vacations are not always the best time to quit tobacco, because the familiar routine of our "normal" lives can give us helpful structure.]

Step 3: Predict your trigger situations.

Try to predict trigger situations that could come up in the first few days – or weeks – of learning how to live without tobacco, and write them down. They could be familiar moments when you want to smoke, like after dinner; or stressful times when you could have a strong urge to smoke – conflict with a family member, for example. If you are prepared for early challenges, you'll be well on your way to quitting smoking for good.

Step 4: Plan strategies for your trigger situations.

Now think about each trigger. What purpose does a cigarette serve in that situation? Does it fill time? Reduce stress? Help wake you up? Try to think of other things you can do that will serve the same purpose. For each trigger, write two or three realistic alternatives to tobacco.

Step 5: Get support.

Some people like lots of support, while others prefer just one or two others cheering them on. Who in your life can provide the kind of support you want? Ask them to help you out, and be specific about what you need. Remember, you are your own best support. Encourage yourself with rewards for every milestone you pass.

(Excerpts used with permission from *Quit Smoking for Good: The Take Control Guide*, published by the California Smokers' Helpline, 2001. To receive a copy, call 1-800-NO-BUTTS.)

Resources:

Adult Tobacco Cessation Services and Tobacco Free Youth

Bay Area Community Resources

171 Carlos Drive
San Rafael, CA 94903
415.755.2399
www.bacr.org



Information and referral.
Tobacco cessation classes.
Community education and
in-service staff trainings.

KAISER PERMANENTE: Call the Kaiser-San Rafael Health Education Department at 415.444.2173 for more information or to register. Free for Kaiser members. \$90.00 for non-members.

CALIFORNIA SMOKERS' HELPLINE: Telephone counseling provided to all California residents free of charge. Leave your phone number and someone will call you back to schedule your free sessions.

1-800-NO-BUTTS (English & Teen Line)

1-800-844-CHEW (Chewing Tobacco)

1-800-778-8440 (Vietnamese)

1-800-45-NO FUME (Spanish)

1-800-400-0866 (Chinese)

1-800-556-5564 (Korean)

1-800-933-4-TDD (Deaf/Hearing Impaired)

NICOTINE ANONYMOUS: These 12-step support groups hold several weekly meetings in Marin and Sonoma Counties. Phone meetings available. Visit www.nicotine-anonymous.org for more information. No dues or fees.

WEB-BASED PROGRAMS:

www.quitnet.com

www.becomeanex.org

and many others

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