

NICOTINE ANONYMOUS: HOW IT WORKS

Nicotine Anonymous is people helping each other to quit using nicotine. It is people who have an addiction to nicotine, sharing their experience, strength and hope with each other in groups. It is the combined strength of the group that gives more strength to the individual in combating this powerful addiction.

When we came to Nicotine Anonymous, we heard what others have experienced while withdrawing from nicotine. We became more knowledgeable from first hand information and we began to learn how to live free of this powerful drug. We learned that we were not alone. There was no pressure or shame from the group to quit. We've all been there, we understand. If we needed time to come to believe it is possible to live without nicotine or to set a quit date... then we took the time.

We learned more about our addiction by using the tools of the program: Listening, sharing our stories, reading the literature, sponsorship and studying the Steps. It is our experience that those who regularly attend meetings will eventually stop using nicotine. *Experience has shown us that it helps to come to at least six meetings before deciding if this program can work. First come to meetings, then come to understand, then come to believe. Take what you need for now and leave the rest for another time.* At meetings, people exchange phone numbers. Having someone to call in times of need is important and sometimes can make the difference between using nicotine or not.

We found strength far beyond our own by relying on a Power greater than ourselves. The Twelve Steps of recovery, which are used by many other successful programs, suggest a spiritual approach. *By spiritual we don't mean religious. Each person came to their own understanding of a Higher Power. Our reference to God in the Steps was our way of involving a power greater than ourselves in our recovery.* The Steps, together with our personal stories of addiction and recovery, make clear three pertinent ideas:

- A. That we are addicted to smoking and nicotine in any form and our lives are in danger;
- B. That we can not stop using nicotine alone;
- C. That a Power greater than ourselves will help when sought in the fellowship of other nicotine addicts.

Do not be discouraged. Many have come before you with just as much fear and doubt and now live free and clean. No one among us has been able to maintain anything like perfect adherence to this program. We are not saints. The point is we are willing to grow along spiritual lines and to accept a spiritual solution to our problem of nicotine addiction. If we continue to use nicotine even though we say the Serenity Prayer, then we say it again! We keep saying it as we reflect on what it means to us, a nicotine user. We ask for the courage to change the things we can. *The thing we can change is our willingness to live, even for a short time with the craving for the next nicotine fix. We can accept it and we can live with it.* Recovery is a process that we practice each day. Eventually it will work, as it has for thousands of others.

When we decided that we wanted to be free of this powerful addiction and were willing to go to any lengths to get it, we were ready to take certain steps. At some of these we balked. We thought we could find an easier, softer way but we could not. Half measures availed us nothing. We stood at the turning point. We asked for God's protection and care with complete abandon.

[INTRODUCTION TO THE READING OF THE TWELVE STEPS: Here are the Steps we took.]

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was for us. When we discarded our fear of the telephone, we discovered that we could talk instead of use nicotine. As at meetings, we heard how we had common experiences with other members of our group and discovered how practicing Nicotine Anonymous principles furthered our recovery.

As we received and offered support among our fellow members, we began to realize a new confidence based on gratitude. With the principle "attraction, not promotion" in mind, we humbly carried the joyful message of recovery. We experienced the truth- that if we wanted to keep the wonderful gift of recovery we had to give it away. When we keep showing up, we help maintain a group and a fellowship.

Today, we give grateful thanks that a Power greater than ourselves has restored us to sanity and given us the ability to help others to recover from this deadly addiction. We keep showing up to build upon our cornerstones – the program, the tools, our members, and our Higher Power, that we may be happy, joyous, and free.