

Keep SHOWING UP

Nicotine Anonymous has a variety of slogans, suggested as devices "to help us be happy, joyous, and free - living without nicotine" and separating us away from the addiction that claims about 5,000,000 lives worldwide each year.

We have slogans such as: SMOKING IS NOT AN OPTION; PREPARE, PRACTICE, PRAY, PROGRESS; WATCH YOUR STEPS; FAITH OVER FEAR; LOOK FOR LESSONS. Any of these can be valuable in our efforts to end our compulsive use of nicotine in any of its nefarious forms. One slogan considered most vital for our members and fellowship is the one that invites us to "Keep Showing Up".

A member, who recently celebrated a dozen nicotine-free years, said it well when she explained she kept coming to meetings because she wanted to stay stopped. She said, "I've seen too many men and women get off to a great start in Nicotine Anonymous, then decide just one cigarette wouldn't hurt, and be back to a pack a day in a week or less. Some never get back. I don't want that to happen to me." Similarly, another member replied, "I keep coming back so I can hear what happens to people who don't keep coming back."

To some newcomers, continuous attendance may sound a lot like a life sentence in Nicotine Anonymous, but it is really the program's own sweet way of sharing our experience that a full commitment to recovery is better seen as a reprieve from a death sentence.

News articles have made us painfully aware of the dire consequences of what we had once considered - only an untidy habit we could discontinue when and if we pleased. Most of us eventually awoke to the stunning realization that we couldn't stop when we wished. Many sought out some form of medical advice to put the evil genie back in the bottle.

We went to psychiatrists, acupuncturists, and hypnotists. We found that they rarely worked or when they did work it was only for a short time. Even our own doctors didn't help much. They told us to use patches and chewing gum, which contained even more nicotine. Some of us took these suggestions and became addicted to them. Others just suggested we simply stop smoking or chewing on the deadly weed but didn't tell us how.

Then someone or a meeting flyer informed us about the Nicotine Anonymous program and invited us to check it out. At first, this may not have been easy. Some of us found that either there were too few meetings in an area or we had to travel long distances to attend a meeting. However, if we accepted that we were dealing with a life and death matter, those inconveniences would then appear rather small.

Sometimes even saying that we would go to any length to get nicotine-free, it still remained a routine challenge to keep convincing ourselves that regular attendance was an essential element in how other members remained free from nicotine. Also, there were other impositions on our time, our job, our family, our other relationships, and even our friends of long standing (including those who still smoked).

Although a gentle program, working at The Twelve Steps on a daily basis required diligence and vigilance. By surrendering our former battles, we found a new peace. So we sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with a Power greater than ourselves and of each member's own understanding. We involved that Power in all that we said or did each day. Over time, we found that we had a marvelous friend in our efforts to live free of nicotine.

As we offered service to our group, we learned how valuable that tool of the program