

Yes, You Can Quit Smoking



If you're a smoker, you've probably heard it a hundred times – "you could quit if you wanted to." But just wanting to quit isn't often enough. According to Carol Southard, R.N., M.S. and smoking cessation specialist for the [Center for Integrative Medicine & Wellness](#) at Northwestern Memorial Hospital, nicotine addiction is harder to conquer than heroin addiction. That fact may make quitting seem superhuman almost, but don't let it get you down. You **can** learn to quit, and, as Carol tells her clients all the time, you don't even really have to want to. What do you have to do? The first and most important step is that you have to decide to quit.

It Won't Be Easy, but You Can Do It

More than 25 of Carol's clients wrote or called to talk about their quit experience. It was tough for all of them – some more than others, but every one of them agreed wholeheartedly that it was worth it. Not one of them regrets it, and they all say they will never go back to smoking. Some still have cravings sometimes, but smoking for them is a thing of the past.

Here's what some of them had to say.

Quit Stories

Kelly

Kelly, quit, along with her husband since 2003, says two things were key in their quitting. "Carol really encouraged us to attack nicotine addiction using a bunch of things at once, I used three patches at once and took Wellbutrin, which I never would have thought to do before. But Carol said not to worry about what the box said because you can't overdose on nicotine patches. Carol gave all of us tools most people wouldn't think of using."

And the weekly group therapy sessions really helped too. Kelly says "being able to vent in a room full of people who were going through the same things was great, and Carol was always there with perfect responses to our complaints. She retrained our outlook on quitting. And she wouldn't allow us to cheat. She'd say 'there's no cheating – you're done. You have to go cold turkey and you cannot cheat.' That momentum was big."

Carol tells her clients that the benefits of quitting begin right away and last a lifetime. Kelly noticed the benefits almost immediately. "The biggest difference I noticed was that the hangover was not nearly as bad, she says, "When smoking, I didn't have to drink much at all before ending up with a huge hangover, but that doesn't happen anymore. And exercising was easier and going up stairs was a lot easier – even at 29, I noticed a difference. I also noticed that my face and my skin just felt fresher."

She also noticed differences in others in her class. "There was one woman in the class who was probably 60, and she looked like she had been smoking for 30 years, and after a month, she came into the group, and we could see how much

her skin color had changed just from the two weeks of not having a cigarette. She had color in her face, and she looked fresher and better.”

Barbara

Barbara, who’s been “quit” for 18 months now, had been smoking since she was 12 years old – more than 21 years – and everyone in her family smoked, so it was a habit so ingrained she didn’t know how she’d quit.

“I got an email at work that said ‘even if you don’t think you’re ready to quit, go to the seminar anyway.’ My company was contributing to the cost of the class, so I checked it out, and I liked what Carol had to say.”

The company brought Carol in for an eight-week class, so Barbara joined along with six coworkers.

“It was great to have the support to quit with the other people in the group – knowing we were all going through the same thing,” Barbara says. “And learning how to stop the cravings and what to do when I did have cravings was really helpful for me. The social aspect was also important.” She became close with another woman in the class, and they were really able to lean on each other through the rough spots. And there were rough spots.

“All of the stuff you put your spouse and family through is crazy because you’re not feeling that great,” Barbara says, “but talking to people and being able to say ‘I’m feeling this, am I supposed to be feeling this?’ helped me find a way to work through the withdrawal.”

The hardest part for Barbara was a feeling of losing out on the “me” time that she used to have during her cigarette breaks. She has children, and she would never smoke in the house or the car, so she’d have to go outside, which gave her the opportunity to get away from the craziness of life and relax. And she felt like quitting was taking her best friend away, so in addition to struggling with the physical addiction, there was a behavioral component to deal with as well. “Cigarettes were always there for me. And if I ran out, I could always go out and get some more.”

The three “C’s” helped Barbara: The Class, Carol and Chantix. Chantix helped with the cravings, the class offered support, and Carol was always there for them. Barbara says, “Carol still emails her clients even after the class is over. She will email articles, and her clients know she’s there if they need her.”

Gail

Gail recalls what prompted her to quit once and for all. She was at a concert at Ravinia, a non-smoking venue – except for a little fenced-in area that, to her at least, resembled a pig pen. It was as if they were social outcasts, expelled from society in the pen of shame. “That was the last straw. I knew I didn’t want that lifestyle anymore, so I decided then and there that I was going to quit.” It’s been four months and counting since Gail quit. Although it was hard, she says, “I didn’t go back, and I won’t.”

Although she didn’t attend Carol’s class due to scheduling conflicts, she did get the information packets from Carol, and she also got a lot of support from others who have taken Carol’s class and are successfully quit.

“What really helped me was that once I set my quit date, Carol emailed her group and asked them to help me. I got in touch with someone in her group, and that support really helped me get through.”

When Gail was smoking, winters were horrible for her. The smoking was wreaking havoc on her sinuses, and she would have chronic problems that made her feel absolutely miserable. And although she hasn’t been through a winter as a non-smoker in a long time, she knows this winter will be better because she’s already feeling so much healthier.

Since her quit date, she was diagnosed with Non-Hodgkin’s Lymphoma, and she is in the long process of figuring out exactly what type of cancer she has and how it will be best treated. Finding out she has cancer has been one of the most

stressful things she's been through, but to her credit, she hasn't gone back to smoking. Although her cancer is not a lifestyle cancer caused by smoking, it was a wake up call. "If you've got to have cancer, it's the kind of cancer to have – it's very treatable – but the process of diagnosis and treatment is still stressful." And she needs every bit of strength she's got to get through the roller coaster of dealing with cancer. "I'm glad that I've quit so I'll feel better and have more energy to fight the battle ahead of me."

It's Never Too Late (and You're Never Too Old) to Quit

Some of Carol's clients have been smoking for more than fifty years, but even after fifty years, they have learned to quit. One client, Thom, has been quit for more than 210 days, and he's still in that rough patch – but he's smoke free today.

"I blab to myself each and every day about the smoking ritual," Thom says. "I've been smoke free for 210 plus days. One could say 'that's great,' but dealing with the addiction now becomes the challenge. So much of my life – 50 years of smoking – was wound around, interlaced, directed, challenged and rewarded by smoking that it's going to take the rest of my life to sort it all out. Imagine that, I'm not smoking, but I will be dealing with the issue of wanting a cigarette forever. I get so very tired of the residuals of this habit and the havoc it wreaks with my life." But he goes on to say, "I tell Carol she is a saint for teaching our class that 'we may want one cigarette, but we don't need one.'"

And that's the bottom line – no one needs a cigarette or nicotine, and anyone can quit – even if they've been smoking for more than fifty years. It's not going to be easy. In fact, it will be one of the most difficult things you'll ever do. But the good news is that once you get over the hump, you'll be so very happy you did. Your body will thank you, and so will those who love you and want you around, and eventually, you'll be thankful as well. So, what are you waiting for? November 18 is the 35th annual [Great American Smokeout](#) . If you haven't already, make a promise to yourself to decide to quit and pick a date to do it. November 18 is as good a time as any, right? You can do it, and we're here to help.

Carol's Next Smoking Cessation Class

Carol leads both group and individual smoking cessation programs to help smokers to stop smoking. During the eight-week group class, you will receive a step-by-step plan on how to quit, information on nicotine replacement and more. This behavioral approach also provides techniques for staying smoke-free. If you're thinking about quitting, [learn more about joining Carol's next class](#) .

For more information or to schedule an appointment, call **1-877-926-4664** or **312-926-2069**.