

Chapter 1

Calling It Quits

In This Chapter

- ▶ Approaching the idea of quitting in the right frame of mind
 - ▶ Looking forward to life after quitting
 - ▶ Admitting that you are addicted to tobacco
 - ▶ Knowing when you're ready to quit
 - ▶ Tooling up for quitting success
 - ▶ Finding the support you need to make quitting last
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Quitting smoking is a major commitment — and an enormously positive life step. If you're like most smokers, you've tried to quit before. You probably appreciate the difficulty and some of the complexities involved in kicking the habit. This chapter discusses the major issues involved in quitting smoking. It also helps you flesh out your decision to stop smoking by directing you to the tools you need to make this attempt to quit a lasting success.

Making the Call

Ever want to call it quits? Ever feel like you've just had enough (cigarettes, I mean)? If so, welcome to the crowd. Millions of people have been through this experience, and millions of people have succeeded at quitting. Millions of others, through education and the media, have gotten the message never to pick up.

If you're like most smokers who are thinking about quitting, it's very likely that you've tried to quit before. Those who do quit often make up to half a dozen attempts before succeeding. This book is your guide through the process. It is a friend, a tool, a source of information, and a weapon.

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Quitting smoking is one of the best and most important things you can do for yourself. As you read this book, you will find that the best way to do it is to do it comprehensively. This book arms and fortifies you not only with the facts, but also with self-knowledge and with commitment on an intellectual, emotional, and perhaps even spiritual level.

Why do you want to quit?

- ✓ Maybe you think you need to, although you would prefer to smoke forever. (If there were a way to make cigarettes harmless, it would have been done. The tobacco companies have spent millions on research, and cigarettes are as deadly today as they've always been.)
- ✓ Maybe you've been asked or told by friends and family that you really should cut it loose. There's that nagging cough, that telltale odor on your clothes, in your house, and in your car. Your kids, if you have kids, can't be happy about your habit unless they smoke, too. People around you want you to succeed. They want you to live and be well.
- ✓ Or maybe it's the idea of being addicted to anything. Ever got caught in the course of a day or evening without a smoke — when you just had to have one? Ever had the experience of running out of the house in the middle of the night to find a convenience store that could service your need?

When you think about it, smoking is a gruesome process. The ingredients of tobacco smoke (or chew, or dip) are no better than what comes pouring out the chimneys of factories or out of a car's exhaust pipe. Along with nicotine, the fumes contain carbon monoxide, tar, and literally thousands of other chemicals, dozens of which are known to harm the body.

Part of what I do in this book is to present information. I also ask you to contribute to the book by responding to questions that draw on your life and experience. Learning involves repetition, so as you go along, you'll find that certain areas and items come up more than once.

Visualizing the New, Healthy You

Who is the person staring back at you in the mirror each day? Do you like that person? Do you respect that person? Or does the person in the glass look tired, hassled, and burned out?

Whomever you see, you see that person through a haze of smoke. Like all *psychoactive drugs* (drugs that have an effect on the psyche), nicotine

changes the way you feel momentarily and then puts you in a state of withdrawal until the next smoke. When you look in the mirror, you see a person who is getting doused in nicotine many times a day. The smoke percolates through your lungs into your bloodstream and from there to every part of your body. Even if everything else in your life is on an even keel, why surrender any personal options to tobacco? Feeling helpless and even hopeless is not fun!

You bought this book because you're ready to clear the air — you're seriously interested in quitting smoking for good (or someone who really cares about you wants you to quit). You're probably feeling frustrated and angry about the difficulties involved in quitting. If you're like most quitters, you've tried before and failed.



The most important step is to make the decision to quit.

Once you decide that you want to quit, you take it from there. Imagine how you will look and feel, and how things will taste and smell, once the haze has lifted. The ripple effects of quitting are tremendous, almost beyond imagination. The moment you stop, your body's cells and airways begin healing, cleaning themselves out. Yes, the first few days may be rough going, but even during that time you start to experience a physical, mental, and even spiritual renewal.



What I'm telling you may sound too good to be true. Or it may sound like hogwash. It isn't. Take it from someone who's been through the mill. I smoked a pack a day for more than ten years. Like many other smokers, I had a love affair with cigarettes. At times they were my constant companion, my solace, my sustenance. The act of lighting up was filled with meaning for me. Lighting up meant doing something; it made me feel young, sexy, and alive; and it gave me something to do with my hands and mouth.

And then there was the downside. I had sore throats, congested lungs, and a persistent cough. The rank and acrid taste of tobacco that lingered in my mouth the morning after a smoking binge made me gag. Along with all that unpleasantness, there were the decades of health warnings and the deaths of many others from lung cancer that I tried to store away in a faraway corner of my mind.

You get to a point where you've had enough. Just because the damage is internal doesn't mean that it's invisible. You *know* that you're harming yourself. After a while, I realized that I wanted something better for myself. I wanted to be able to jog around the reservoir without looking forward to the reward of a smoke. I wanted clean, kissable breath and an unburdened conscience. As the saying goes, the parts are related to the whole. If I insisted on using

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my lungs as a garbage dump for tar and nicotine, then that choice would somehow show up in my appearance: a cough, smoker's breath, stained fingertips. Clearing the body is clearing the conscience. When you feel better, you look better, too.

As an ex-smoker, how will you look? Visualize your renewed, healthy self, and describe what you see in Table 1-1. Be as specific as possible. For example, under "Exercise habits," document what kind of exercise you can do now and what kind you would like to be able to do after reaching Quit Day 1.

Table 1-1 Life After Quitting: My New, Healthy Self	
Category	What I Want for Myself
Overall appearance	
Weight	
Food preferences	
Exercise habits	
Fitness level	
Clothing	
Other	



Visualization is an incredibly powerful tool. The more you see yourself this way, the closer you'll come to achieving your goals.

Getting a Fresh Start

Rebirth is one of humanity's major spiritual themes. One of the reasons rebirth is a central belief in many of the world's major religions is that the cycle of death and renewal occurs constantly throughout nature. For example, autumn transforms the color of foliage; winter whisks the brown, shriveled leaves away; and then everything turns green again when spring rolls around.

The concept of renewal is a terrific metaphor for starting fresh. Whether you struggle with your appearance, your self-esteem, or a habit that you want to cut loose, each and every moment of each and every day presents you with a new opportunity to say, "I'm going to do it differently this time. This time, I'm

taking the high road.”

The first step in your “rebirth” is to decide what shape your phoenix will take as it rises from the ashes. (Speaking of ashes: Get rid of your ashtrays, to start!) Now is a great time to take a detailed, point-by-point inventory of what you want your life to be like after you quit smoking. Flesh out the particulars in Table 1-2.

Table 1-2	Life after Quitting: Who I Want to Be
<i>Category</i>	<i>What I Want for Myself</i>
Career goals	
Educational goals	
Non-work/school-related activities	
Financial goals	
Emotional goals	
Spiritual goals	
Other goals	
Goals for the coming month	
Goals for the coming year	
Goals for the long-term	

Feel like you’re biting off more than you can chew? *You aren’t*. Does thinking about the future in this way seem way too ambitious? *It isn’t*. If you can quit smoking (and you can!), you can set goals and achieve more, using the same tools, energy, and commitment that will work for you in your effort to quit.

After you fill out Table 1-2, go through your personal goals again in Table 1-3, this time identifying exactly what steps you will need to take to accomplish them.

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Table 1-3 Who I Will Be After Quitting: Action Plan	
<i>Category</i>	<i>Steps I Need to Take to Achieve My Goals</i>
Career goals	
Educational goals	
Non-work/school-related activities	
Financial goals	
Emotional goals	
Spiritual goals	
Other goals	
Goals for the coming month	
Goals for the coming year	
Goals for the long-term	

Having put your goals in writing, you may have a much stronger reason to believe that there is life after cigarettes. And the life you have after cigarettes, just like the life you've had while smoking, is in large part shaped by the decisions you make.

Some people may argue that I'm making too much of this process — that the point is “simply” to stop smoking. But, as I hope this book demonstrates, quitting is not a simple act. Because smoking has played so many pivotal roles in your life, quitting is a highly complex process. When you give up such an important part of your life, you need to replace it with something as compelling and powerful. Being a healthier (or smarter, or more energetic, or more loving, or more effective — you decide) person is the real payoff for quitting.

Coming to Terms with Your Addiction

You may feel that you can handle smoking. You may feel that smoking is not a problem for you. How do you know when you need to quit?

Why did you buy this book? You may know people who have been harmed by smoking and have become ill, either acutely or chronically. Friends or relatives may have suggested or hinted that it might be a good idea for you to cut back on cigarettes or to quit altogether. Do these hints anger you? Do you worry about the effects of smoking on your health, your appearance, and your wallet? Do you ever feel like smoking is cramping your style — you resent always having to make allowances, find excuses, and look for opportunities to get outside to find a private spot to light up?

Ask yourself whether smoking is making problems for you. And answer as honestly as you can. Once you have a crystal clear understanding of the actual and potential damage that smoking causes, you will feel less doubtful and more committed than ever to quitting smoking.

Tobacco toxicity comes in many forms. Tobacco and the chemicals and additives it contains are physically harmful, have powerful effects on behavior and the nervous system, and have widespread negative impact on public health as well.

Your decision to quit smoking is based on personal motivations. You may want a healthier body, you may want greater stamina, or you may be sick and tired of feeling sick and tired. Smoking has been shown to cause breathing and other kinds of problems in both smokers and in people who inhale secondhand smoke (smoke exhaled by others or given off by lit cigars, pipes, and cigarettes).

Whatever your reason to quit, bulk it up by understanding as much as possible about the intermediate and long-term consequences of smoking. You'll get to a point where justifying more smoking is no longer possible. (Chapters 5 and 6 give you a clear picture of smoking's many negative consequences.)

The most direct approach to coming to terms with smoking is to ask yourself whether smoking is a problem for you. Remember that problems can be in the future as well as the present. (For example, if your favorite food is peanut butter sandwiches and you know that you will run out of peanut butter next week, you will have a problem.) Burying your head in the sand and denying what the future is likely to bring can be a problem, too.

You need to come to terms with your level of tobacco use in order to become ready to quit. You may have a problem with the word *addiction*. You might so dislike the entire concept that you either completely abandon the pursuit of quitting . . . or you might quit.

If you think that smoking isn't a problem for you, you're unlikely to dedicate yourself heart and soul to quitting. On the other hand, if you take an honest

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self-inventory of your commitment to smoking, you may want to quit . . . yesterday!

One sure sign that you're really hooked, and that you may want to cut tobacco loose, is the presence of nicotine withdrawal symptoms. These highly unpleasant sensations arise within one or two hours of your last cigarette and include

- ✓ Irritability
- ✓ Fatigue
- ✓ Mood swings
- ✓ Insomnia (inability to sleep) or hypersomnia (too much sleep)
- ✓ Trouble concentrating
- ✓ Headaches
- ✓ Increased appetite
- ✓ Anxiety
- ✓ Depression
- ✓ Shifting energy levels



These withdrawal symptoms naturally lead to cravings for tobacco.

As you think about quitting, consider how powerful a hold nicotine has on you. Anything that can cause withdrawal symptoms like these is powerful and ultimately toxic. Do you really want to be a slave to something so terrible for you?

As you come to understand the impact that smoking has had on your life — particularly if you've had some health problems as a result — you may feel slightly or even more than slightly overwhelmed. How can you have done this to yourself? Fortunately, you get lots of chances in life, including the chance to quit smoking and recapture part or all of your physical health.

Many people have made bad decisions, such as starting to smoke. The challenge is to see where you've been *and to make a conscious decision about exactly where you want to go from here*. If you've been in the habit of saving or investing money, for example, you know that the amount you have continues to grow. The same applies to forward-looking acts of goodwill and kindness toward yourself — including quitting smoking. The self-denial that you practice now will pay off enormous dividends in just a short time. One clean, smoke-free breath leads to another . . . and successive ones feel better and better.

Knowing When You're Ready to Stop

You're ready to stop smoking when

- ✔ You've decided that quitting smoking is the most important goal in your life.
- ✔ You accept the fact that in order to get ahead and get more of the things you want, such as health, well-being, and self-respect, you have to make sacrifices.
- ✔ You know in your heart that the future is real, and that the ribbon of time continues to unfurl regardless of how you try to escape it.
- ✔ You feel a sense of responsibility not only toward yourself but toward your family, your friends, and even your pets. A great, mysterious web of life hovers around you. Your decision to quit smoking is a choice to remain a living, breathing participant in this incredible dance.

You can look at this move in many ways. I hope that you see your decision to quit as positive, life-affirming, and absolutely necessary. It's regrettable that some of the pleasures in life are as harmful as they are. It's also regrettable that you have to give up certain pleasures for your own good. Growth is like that. Imagine what life would be like if you'd never learned how to walk or dress yourself. Quitting smoking feels like deprivation, like a wicked, deep loss. There's no getting around it: It *is* a loss. But it's a loss that brings you a great deal of gain at the same time.

Finding Quitting Aids to Help You

A dedicated quitter — you! — must be prepared to face both the physical and psychological manifestations of nicotine withdrawal. When you smoke, chew, or inhale snuff, your blood level of nicotine jumps. The nicotine in the blood passes through every part of the body. In the brain, nicotine triggers different receptors, and the receptors get used to your customary blood nicotine level. When that level drops — for example, after a night's sleep — your brain wants more nicotine, *now*.

Quitting smoking is war. The more weapons you have to fight with, the better your chances of quitting for good. That's why a combination of strategies works best for many people. A *nicotine replacement therapy*, such as the patch or nicotine gum, plus a smoking cessation program that involves behavioral changes can significantly increase the likelihood of success.

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Nicotine replacement therapies (NRTs) are a reasonable way to substitute plain old nicotine for smoking, which comes with a host of other poisons that your body doesn't need. The idea is to wean you off tobacco at the same time that withdrawal symptoms are prevented from developing. Figure 1-1 depicts some common NRTs.

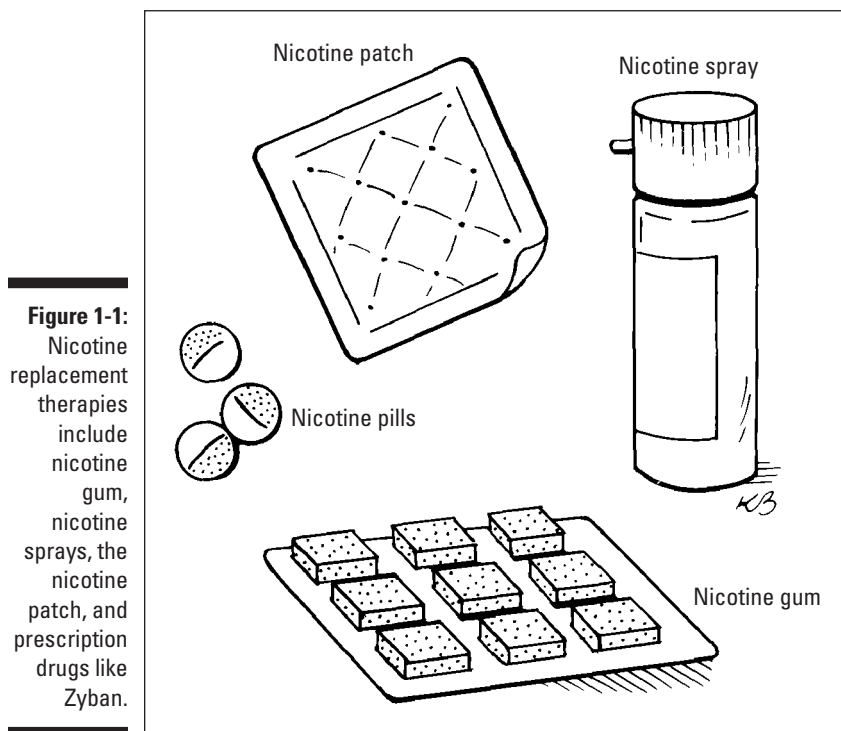


Figure 1-1: Nicotine replacement therapies include nicotine gum, nicotine sprays, the nicotine patch, and prescription drugs like Zyban.

Smoking cessation programs take many forms. Areas that contain one or more medical centers or healthcare practices offer a choice of programs. You need to be a smart shopper when it comes to picking a smoking cessation program — but not too smart. You don't want to think yourself into a state of inaction.

At our medical center, patients visit with respiratory therapists, smoking cessation counselors, and pulmonologists. The approach is multidisciplinary and aims to give patients as much information and support as is currently available. Dr. Stephen Winter, chief of pulmonary medicine at Norwalk Hospital in Connecticut, advocates this intensive approach to quitting smoking. He is also impressed with the effectiveness of Zyban, the antitobacco medication,

in some patients. (See Chapter 13 for information about support groups and smoking cessation programs.)



Sixty to seventy percent of would-be quitters fail on their first attempt. Most of these people would readily acknowledge that they relapsed because of severe, persistent cravings and withdrawal symptoms. Use the tools that are available to fight back!

Prescription and over-the-counter nicotine replacement therapies (NRTs)

Most nicotine replacement therapies, with the exception of the nasal inhaler, are available over the counter. How will you choose your weapon? What will work best for you? Your doctor can help you find the optimal therapy for your personal situation.

Chewing gum may be the answer if you need some kind of substitute oral gratification. Or maybe the convenience of the patch makes it the optimal NRT for you. Are you looking for rapidity of action? Then nicotine nasal spray may be the solution that works for you. Do you miss the feel of the cigarette in your hand? Consider using a nicotine inhaler. Following is some basic information about the NRTs that are available — see Chapter 9 for details about these quitting aids.

- ✔ **The nicotine patch:** The patch, available in both over-the-counter and by prescription, delivers nicotine to your system through your skin. You use patches of decreasing strength until your body no longer craves nicotine.
- ✔ **Nicotine gum:** This NRT, an over-the-counter product, works similarly to the patch. The gum delivers nicotine to your body, and you wean yourself off by chewing less and less.
- ✔ **Nicotine nasal spray:** With this NRT, available by prescription only, a spray that you inhale through your nose delivers nicotine to your system quickly. It provides almost instantaneous relief of cravings and other nicotine withdrawal symptoms.
- ✔ **Nicotine inhalers:** Nicotine inhalers became available in recent years and are available only by prescription. The device is a typical inhaler that delivers a fine mist containing nicotine to the lining of the mouth. This method gives the user more of an oral feel, which many smokers miss when they try to quit.
- ✔ **Nicotine lozenges:** Nicotine lozenges are like throat lozenges, except that instead of soothing a sore throat, they reduce nicotine cravings by

supplying the body with nicotine. Like the other NRTs, you taper the number and strength of the lozenges you use as you break your nicotine habit.

- ✓ **Zyban:** Zyban (chemical name bupropion, also known as Wellbutrin) is an antidepressant that's been found to be useful in reducing nicotine cravings and other withdrawal symptoms. It can be used alone or in combination with one of the other NRTs. Only a doctor can prescribe it.

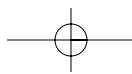


According to a handful of studies published in medical journals, about 25 to 35 percent of those who use Zyban or a nicotine replacement therapy remain smoke-free for at least six months. Combining Zyban and an NRT may be even more effective than either approach by itself. By way of comparison, about one person in ten is able to quit for at least six months without the support of any medication.

Alternative quitting methods

NRTs and/or Zyban alone may not be enough support for you — or you may prefer not to continue to take in nicotine, even without the accompanying smoke. A wide variety of alternative quitting methods are available:

- ✓ **Quitlines:** Telephone counselors are available in most states to help you design a customized quit strategy and support your adherence to it. Data show that people who use quitlines succeed at twice the rate of those who don't. You can find your local quitline by calling the American Cancer Society at 800-ACS-2345.
- ✓ **Support groups:** Evidence shows that having a network of friends and family to provide emotional support as you quit smoking increases your likelihood of staying quit. Other people, particularly those who have quit themselves, can offer empathy, boost your morale, and keep you moving in the right direction even when you're feeling shaky. *Network therapy* is the name that's been given to this approach in the treatment of substance addiction. Having a caring person on the other end of the phone line, or in a group meeting, is sometimes all you need to steer clear of that next cigarette.
- ✓ **Quit-smoking programs:** These programs include Nicotine Anonymous and locally based programs from the American Lung Association and the American Cancer Society. Many quit-smoking programs feature classes or workshops that charge a fee. If the program has helped others, it may help you — and the long-term benefit will almost surely outweigh the present cost.
- ✓ **Acupuncture:** Acupuncture is an ancient Chinese technique that involves the placement of small needles at strategic points on the body. Although

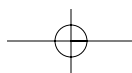
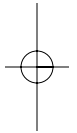
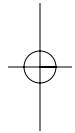


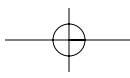
its capability to make quitting smoking easier has not been scientifically proven, some people swear by acupuncture (for help with quitting smoking as well as with a host of other problems).

These methods can be used to complement rather than substitute for nicotine replacement therapies. Chapter 10 goes into much more detail on alternative quitting methods.



The more strategies and tactics you use, the more likely you are to succeed at quitting. Do whatever it takes to quit and stay quit!





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