

The Nicotine Anonymous Quarterly

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Minutes

A Forum for Nicotine Users Who Don't Use

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NAWS Chairman's report . . .

Meeting makers make it. People who don't go to meetings don't know what happens to people who don't go to meetings. Both these slogans keep me coming to meetings.

I live on Long Island. I got nicotine-free at the Thursday night Roslyn meeting. But for the last year, attendance at Roslyn has been way down from the halcyon days when I first got started in NicA. My de facto home group these days is Manhasset, five miles down the road, which meets on Mondays. The Roslyn meeting is almost 20 years old, but it may die. The Manhasset meeting is almost newly arrived, in comparison, at 6 years or so. But it's a vibrant group, because there's a handful of us who keep it alive, like Jimmy F, Mike B3 ("3" because there's a plethora of Mike B's on Long Island), and Dave L; Al C, Ginny S, and Randy S; Jeff R and Ximena (ok, R ..).

I'm always amazed at how much we accomplish at our Manhasset meetings. I'm used to bigger meetings of 25 or 50 in another fellowship that I'm in, and I often feel that we'll be pressed in our NicA meeting to even fill the one hour time available to us. Instead, like the meeting tonight, I'm continually blown away by the depth of feeling and the quality of sharing we get with a meeting of 5 to 10 members. I leave refreshed – enlivened – uplifted – and rededicated to the task of spreading the word of the magic that happens in the rooms of NicA. Without which today I would be in my 46th year – were I still alive – of fouling myself and my environment with smoke.

Instead, I'm now 8 years free – joyously and sweetly free – of nicotine and smoke. THANKS to Nicotine Anonymous!

- Ladd J from Long Island, Active Chairman

The Twelve Steps of Nicotine Anonymous

1. We admitted we were powerless over nicotine—that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God, as we understood Him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory, and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry it out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to other nicotine users and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions reprinted and adapted here with the permission of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. Permission to reprint and adapt the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions does not mean that A.A. is affiliated with this program. A.A. is a program of recovery from alcoholism—use of the Twelve Steps in connection with programs and activities which are patterned after A.A., but which address other problems, does not imply otherwise.

The Twelve Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous

1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol—that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God, as we understood Him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory, and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry it out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to other alcoholics and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

The Twelve Traditions of Nicotine Anonymous

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon Nicotine Anonymous unity.
2. For our group purpose there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for Nicotine Anonymous membership is a desire to stop using nicotine.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or Nicotine Anonymous as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the nicotine addict who still suffers.
6. A Nicotine Anonymous group ought never endorse, finance, or lend the Nicotine Anonymous name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property, and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
7. Every Nicotine Anonymous group ought to be fully self-supporting, declining outside contributions.
8. Nicotine Anonymous should remain forever non-professional, but our service centers may employ special workers.
9. Nicotine Anonymous, as such, ought never be organized; but we may create service boards or committees directly responsible to those they serve.
10. Nicotine Anonymous has no opinion on outside issues; hence the Nicotine Anonymous name ought never be drawn into public controversy.
11. Our public relations policy is based on attraction rather than promotion; we need always maintain personal anonymity at the level of press, radio, TV, and films.

12. Anonymity is the spiritual foundation of all our traditions, ever reminding us to place principles before personalities.

The Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous

1. Our common welfare should come first; personal recovery depends upon A.A. unity.
2. For our group purpose, there is but one ultimate authority—a loving God as He may express Himself in our group conscience. Our leaders are but trusted servants; they do not govern.
3. The only requirement for A.A. membership is a desire to stop drinking.
4. Each group should be autonomous except in matters affecting other groups or A.A. as a whole.
5. Each group has but one primary purpose—to carry its message to the alcoholic who still suffers.
6. An A.A. group ought never endorse, finance or lend the A.A. name to any related facility or outside enterprise, lest problems of money, property and prestige divert us from our primary purpose.
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Our Preamble...

Nicotine Anonymous is a fellowship of men and women helping each other to live our lives free of nicotine. We share our experience, strength and hope with each other so that we may be free from this powerful addiction. The only requirement for membership is the desire to stop using nicotine. There are no dues or fees for Nicotine Anonymous membership; we are self-supporting through our own contributions. Nicotine Anonymous is not allied with any sect, denomination, political entity, organization or institution; does not engage in any controversy, neither endorses nor opposes any cause. Our primary purpose is to offer support to those who are trying to gain freedom from nicotine.

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From Ingrained Bondage to Increased Freedom: My First Six Months in Nicotine Recovery . . .

WHAT IT WAS LIKE

About nine months ago, my boyfriend woke up and pulled me to him saying, "Come here, my cigarette poo." I had just come back to bed from smoking outside and had undoubtedly woken him first by getting up for that cigarette. I was in the habit then of waking up every two or three hours. It's hard to say whether it was cravings for nicotine that woke me up or whether I woke up and immediately "needed" a cigarette. Whichever it was, it was very disruptive for my boyfriend and me.

That particular day, when he wandered out into the living room, he told me that the lingering presence of nicotine on me had made him sick. I was so upset about this that by the time I got home that afternoon, I was determined to put an end to giving in to my tobacco addiction.

"I have smoked my last cigarette for the rest of my life," I wrote. "I know that if I smoke another, I will continue to smoke, and I don't want to be addicted or inflict the smell of the tobacco smoke on [my boyfriend] again."

Oh, would that that was actually my last cigarette!

Despite using the highest dose nicotine patch, and thinking I had the determination to quit, I was smoking again three hours later when a gross misunderstanding erupted between my boyfriend and me. Not "because," mind you: what "caused" me to smoke was my addiction, not any other problem. And it certainly wasn't my boyfriend's fault that I smoked: "I" was the one who put that cigarette in my mouth. Forget about having reached serenity: I hadn't even really done Step One and acknowledged that not only did I have no control over nicotine,

but that my life was unmanageable. I had tried to get a quit going with nothing but sheer willpower, in response to someone else's need for me to stop smoking, and that hadn't been enough.

No surprise there!

I talked to my boyfriend about it a couple of days later. He's a recovering alcoholic with 18 years sober (knock on wood), so he knows something about the ins and outs of recovering from an addiction. "You can't quit because of someone else," he told me. "You have to quit because you realize what it's doing to your health". I was soon driven to quit not only because of how I was affecting my boyfriend's health, but also because of very poor breathing tests I had that showed how bad my COPD had gotten. My daughters were very eager for me to stop smoking, and, most of all, I was getting more and more aggravated by the fact that I was an addict.

I found it intolerable to be dependent on some drug to get me through the day. I couldn't stand "needing" to get a fix, whether it was every 20 minutes or once an hour. That was my biggest personal motivator, but not wanting to badly affect my boyfriend's health was just as important.

WHAT HAPPENED: Coming to Grips with Step One

I wrote what to me is an all-important list of reasons why I didn't want to smoke. I was somewhat inspired to see that since the last time I had worked on it, when I was smoking cigars, I had rid myself of some of the things I had hoped I would get out of my life simply by switching to cigarettes. It was progress and obviously not perfection. Between the time that I stopped smoking cigars and the time I was ready to quit smoking, I cut my nicotine use in half. How much less tar I was pouring into my lungs is beyond me, since I used to inhale the cigars.

I put together a plan for a serious quit that would use the

Twelve Steps and a sponsor. My boyfriend agreed to stay with me 24/7 until I got through the physical withdrawals, and my family agreed to check in with me by phone during that time and be open to me calling them *whenever* I needed to if that's what it took for me not to smoke. I went to a smoking cessation counselor, and she told me that the best way to quit was cold turkey. My respiratory doctor had already ruled out Nicotine Replacement Therapies (NRTs) because of possible interactions with other prescriptions. I knew from past experience that the NRTs weren't very helpful for me.

I came to realize that if I was in a nicotine detox and recovery in-patient program – which I very much wish there was for nicotine – I would have to just quit and be done with it. I also figured that if cold turkey was the supposed "best" way to quit, why not give myself the best start I could? It would be painful regardless, so why not up my chances of success?

One of the last major hurdles for me in coming to a complete stop in my nicotine use was a continued desire to be able to have an occasional cigar – say, once a month – after I stopped smoking cigarettes. When I got honest with myself, which was as I really began to wrestle with Step One, I realized that I was just setting myself up for failure. A few days before my quit date, my boyfriend casually asked me, "Did I give you a can for your cigarette butts?"

"Yes," I answered. He had, but since I was smoking filterless cigarettes and it had been snowing for weeks, I'd just been flicking the small, burning butts into the backyard. He then "asked" me if I could pick up the butts, which were exposed at the time because of a thaw, and put them in the can. When I went to take care of the problem, I was appalled by how many little white spots of pollution there were in an arc all around the back door of his

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house's breezeway. I was stunned that I had caused this toxic mess. I fell so far down off my high horse of thinking myself to be environmentally sensitive that each moment of the amends was sheer hell. When my boyfriend came out to see how I was doing, I said, unable to look him in the eye, "I thought they would disintegrate." I was utterly embarrassed by what my denial had caused.

For many years, I had thought that the fact that I always threw the filter in the garbage meant that I was causing virtually no littering. This was one of the ways I "justified" my tobacco use. Most of the time, I dispersed the end of the cigarette when I was done with it, but once Winter had set in, I had gotten lazy when I was freezing on my smoke break at my boyfriend's house. "Tobacco is just an herb," I figured, "and the paper is biodegradable. What could be wrong with just flicking it away?"

When I realized how wrong I was, I apologized repeatedly to my boyfriend, and was very relieved when the ordeal was over.

At that point in my preparations to quit, I was trying to pray to my Higher Power every time I had a cigarette. I asked for the ability to just put the nicotine down, to want in every fiber of my being to quit, and to be able to do that by the Grace of my Higher Power. At ten of five on January 14, the quit date I had set, I slunk out of bed and had my last cigarette. I didn't think I could deal with cravings all on my own, and I wanted to enjoy one last smoke before giving it up.

AFTER THE QUIT: Steps Two through Six

As I had hoped, I was able to get by after my final farewell to nicotine until my boyfriend woke up. I wanted another cigarette by then, but his presence kept me from giving in. I had been told by many sources, including the

smoking cessation counselor, that physical nicotine withdrawal symptoms last three days. (I have since heard and read that some people have strong physical reactions for longer).

I hunkered down and just kept distracting myself from the desire to smoke. I tried very hard not to think about those desires as cravings, because I had always given in to cravings. I tried to think about them instead as very intense wanting based on a lie I had come to believe, that somehow I *needed* nicotine. I told myself repeatedly that I did not NEED to smoke; that, in fact, I NEEDED NOT to smoke if I was going to do the healthy thing, the thing that I knew my Higher Power wanted for me.

And I repeated over and over to myself, "I don't want to be an addict."



I went to an AA meeting with my boyfriend and did my best to deal with the smokers before and afterwards. It was helpful to be in a roomful of other addicts, and when my boyfriend gave me a welcome chip, I clung to it in my pocket almost continually for the rest of the day and much of the following two days. The most intense withdrawal symptom I can remember – other than my veins and lungs feeling like they were on fire with the desire for smoke and nicotine – was a bizarre sense that things were moving away from me even as I was actually moving toward them. I couldn't drive because of this, but it was more important to me to keep the quit so I just put up with it and everything

else involved in the withdrawals.

I used my phone tree a great deal, and I leaned very heavily on my boyfriend and my sponsor for the first weeks. When there was no one to support me, I relied on sucking and licking vigorously on lollipops and got a lot of relief and satisfaction out of CRUNCHING down on them when they got small enough J.

I did Step Two and came to believe that a Power greater than myself could relieve me of the insanity of my addiction. I had never before brought spirituality to bear on a quit. I was afraid that if I used my religious practices to quit and failed, I would lose my religion. I had never before brought the force of my Higher Power to bear on a quit. I had always had some sort of incredibly strange idea that if I relied on my Higher Power to quit smoking and I failed, I would lose faith in my Higher Power. I hadn't been able to muster the Perfect Trust I had been taught to aspire to, or tap into that Perfect Love I thought I knew existed all around and in me.

My sponsor had told me quite emphatically that I needed to believe that the program worked for him. I went on faith that since his Higher Power had brought him many years into his recovery, one day at a time every day since he put down his addiction, my Higher Power could do the same miraculous thing for me. With that belief growing in my heart, mind, and spirit, I did Step Three, making a decision to turn my will and my life over to my Higher Power. I felt that trusting that my Higher Power could get me through the horrors of early recovery from addiction could only truly and fully be expressed by letting go and letting God as much as I was able to do whenever I had a nicotine crisis.

Importantly, I learned, that meant that once I gave something over to my Higher Power I had to keep it in Their safekeeping and trust that They

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had my best interests at heart. As with all of my Step work, I am still learning this lesson, but doing Step Three the first time began to ingrain that process into my being for my addiction. My own willpower, after all, had failed to get me to quit nicotine so many times that I couldn't begin to count them. I had given over every other aspect of my life to my Higher Power as I became aware that I had withheld anything, so it was time to give over my willpower in the matter of the addiction, too.

On my one-month anniversary in mid-February, I wrote out my Step Four, took my "fearless moral inventory". I didn't think to ask my sponsor about how to do it, and I didn't have *Nicotine Anonymous: The Book* yet, so all I had to go on was my understanding of what the AA Big Book had to say about it. I listed every "sin" I could think of that I'd committed since I started using nicotine regardless of whether I could see any kind of connection between the drug and the behavior. That day I also made the mistake of smoking another herb that causes me to want to smoke tobacco. Instead, I smoked yet another herb, rolling it up into cigarettes for the rest of the day and smoking them more and more furiously as each drag made me want tobacco even worse.

After an absolutely horrible night, I came online and searched online for a 12-step program. At the next Voices of Nicotine Recovery meeting, I was here, and I kept coming back to every meeting I was awake and home for. I found that while I was in meetings, I had no desire to smoke, and that the same held true when I was in a non-smoking lounge between meetings. I didn't want to "bother" anyone by sending them an IM; I have since found that when I get an IM from a newcomer asking for help, the support I give them helps me in my own quit and I welcome the opportunity.

A week after my anniver-

sary, I was profoundly anxious. I identified several causes, and found that having written out my Step Four but not having shared it yet with my sponsor as part of Step Five seemed to be part of the problem. All of those wrongs of mine that I had identified were weighing heavily on me. I'd had no idea how profound my defects of character were until I did Step Four, and I was filled with a deep sense of guilt. I began to cling to the Third Step Prayer. Every time I heard it, my spirit lifted and I felt confident that by following this program and allowing my Higher Power to take over what I had clearly been unsuccessful in managing, I would be released into freedom and joy.

On my birthday, I wrote a strong reminder to myself: "Don't fool yourself into thinking that [your cravings are not manageable]. Give your life and your will to God, having faith that of course, in God's infinite power, there is more than enough ability to overcome this otherwise uncontrollable addiction". It dawned on me very abruptly one day that what I kept thinking was a craving for a cigarette was not only NOT a physical withdrawal, but was instead an anxiety or panic attack. That helped a lot, and was a lot like the relief I had when those first three days were over and I could tell myself that the physical cravings were past.

From then on, if I felt a desire to smoke, I asked myself, "am I anxious?". If I was, I chalked up the desire for nicotine as an attempt to self-medicate and let the thought of a cigarette leave my mind. There was a period of some weeks when I did have to take a prescription for anxiety or panic more often than usual, but I no longer interpreted the incidents as nicotine crises and so I didn't start obsessing about smoking.

At the beginning of March, my sponsor was able to finish my Step Five with me. I found that although I really wanted to do it, it was pretty scary to get started. I cried a bit before I could say any-

thing at all coherent, but my sponsor was soothing and assured me that there was nothing to be afraid of. He told me that we weren't doing confession, and he was not there to give me absolution. I found that funny and comforting at the same time, wiped my nose, and began to read my list of wrongdoings. By the time it was over, I wasn't sure what I'd made such a fuss about. So I'd made mistakes. So what? Everybody does!

After we emerged from burning up the list in the bathroom and flushing it down the toilet, we came back into the living room. My sponsor picked up a copy of the Twelve Steps and asked me, "Are you entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character?"

"Sure," I reflexively answered.

"Well, then," he said, "you've done Step Six. Now you have to do Step Seven and humbly ask God to remove all of your shortcomings. Since you're a writer, I'd like you to write up a prayer for that".

I had no problem with his directions for Step Seven, but I stood there stunned. It felt like I had a huge stone in my belly and my breath was nearly taken away: I suddenly realized that there was one thing on my inventory that I was not, in fact, ready for my Higher Power to remove. I brought my experiences to this group, and sat on the situation for some time. Periodically, I did other shares about how I was feeling, including making the point that I was taught not to ask for forgiveness of something unless I was actually prepared not to do that thing again. Forget about the fact that I would undoubtedly take back the problem if I managed to give it over, I couldn't let go of that weakness in the first place.

When I stumbled into this Step meeting for the first time one Wednesday night, we happened to be working on Step Six. As we did the reading from the NicA book, I

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was struck by two things. The first was that our program referred to "ineffective character traits" instead of "defects of character". I really liked that. I knew that if in Step Four I had looked for "ineffective character traits," it would have been more like a therapy session. Rather than trying to find things to blame myself for, I would have been looking at the ways I was having trouble coping. Coming at it from that angle, I knew that I would be gentle with myself and be on the lookout for the opportunities for growth my weaknesses highlighted.

The other thing that jumped out at me from the Step Six reading was the comment that "we acknowledged our own positive attributes and built on them". Well, this fit in perfectly! Looking for positive attributes would help build my self-esteem instead of making me feel awful about myself. I have found that shame is not a healthy or effective way for me to make change in my life. When I get bound up in guilt and shame, I get wound up in knots. I want to hide from the world and not try anything new for fear of screwing things up again. I immediately decided that I would go back and redo Step Four using these new insights. That was the only way I could find to get myself over the block I was having with Step Six.

I wrote and shared a lot about it, and had long talks about it with my sponsor. He listened and asked a lot of questions, but ultimately told me that he felt that I'd done the best I could at the time when I first did the Step, there is no perfect way to do any Step, and that I needed to just get on with the program. But I couldn't let it go. I meditated on my newfound approach to taking an inventory for some time. I struggled with myself to find positive, effective character traits to add to the inventory, and to look for TRAITS that weren't working for me, not SINS I had committed.

When I finally wrote up

my new list, a great spiritual and psychological oppression lifted. I could see right away that I could ask to be relieved of the character trait I believed caused the behavior I didn't believe I could stop doing. The behavior is something I'm addicted to, and the trait is something I don't want in my life. Oddly, it seemed easier to let go of the cause than the symptom. Or perhaps that's not so odd: I had to give up many negative traits and behaviors in order to get my quit going at all, not the least of which was denial. My therapist read my new inventory and told me that it was a good description of me. I gave a copy to my sponsor and waited for the day when we would redo my Step Five.

He kept offering me ongoing support, but we weren't sitting down for a formal meeting. After awhile, I had a pressing need for some quality sponsor time, and he set aside a chunk of time for us to talk. He was very helpful in walking me through the problem with the program I was having, but refused to redo Step Five with me. The Steps, he insisted, are in a particular order for a reason. I haven't gone through them once yet, and he was adamant that I not "jump around" them.

I let it go. I thought two things at once:

I had already really redone Step Five with my therapist, and I had nowhere near enough experience in a Twelve-Step program to argue with my sponsor about the way the Steps should be worked. It is *he* who is an old-timer in recovery, not me.

Besides, I realized, I was joyfully ready to have my Higher Power relieve me of the problems I'd found in my personal make-up. It was unnecessary to share my new inventory with my sponsor, because Step Six had spontaneously taken care of itself once I redid Step Four.

WHAT IT'S LIKE NOW: Embracing Freedom and Joy

When I thought about quitting smoking, it never occurred to me that by doing that I could bring about deep psychological and spiritual change. Even when I knew I was going to follow the Twelve Steps – which I'd been aware of since I was in Al-Ateen in the 1970s – I had no idea about the level of personal development possible with that. "It works if you work it," we are fond of saying. Well, there's a reason for that: it's a gentle reminder that although this program is simple, it is not easy.

I am saving my life by quitting smoking. I am saving my heart, mind, and spirit by pursuing the recovery that my Higher Power has in store for me, if only I give my will over fully. This program has been dramatically helpful in my daily transformation. These things take a focused, determined effort. I must put all of what and who I am into the work, moment by moment, Step by Step. I must have faith in what my Higher Power can do for me, and I must believe that I am worth the miracle of my own recovery.

By Dian F.

~ ~ ~



Dear God, remove my shortcomings....

As a grateful recovering nicotine addict, Step 7 suggests that we humbly ask God to remove our shortcomings. As one who played the victim the greater part of my life, I was long on excuses and short on solutions. Somehow, I have fond memories of carefree days swinging in the rope swing with the wooden seat (watch out for splinters) singing a tune at the top of my lungs. But, as I got older and reached my late teens, those days seemed to disappear and found themselves replaced with anger, frustration, insecurity and loneliness. This is about the time I started my career as a nicotine robot, living and working to feed that addiction.

Yes there has been lots of turmoil and strife in my life, even abuse as a young girl, but the simple innocence and resilience of childhood allowed me to repress a lot of those memories, except for in my nightmares. But, as we get older and supposedly more stable as young adults, our need to let go of childhood days leads us to start looking a little deeper inside ourselves then just for the moment. I am guessing that is when my own denial of unmentionable abuse also allowed me to deny the fact that cigarettes would lead to my demise, not today and probably not tomorrow, but slowly, gradually, quietly whispering in your ear, "Oh, just another pack; we'll not get any tomorrow and it will be ok".

THERE IT IS! Well, right there and then I had a friend I could carry in my pocket always, and in my time, it was cool. If I had a bad dream in the night I could wake up and give that little stick some fire and it would glow to light the room and ease my fear. As I woke in the morning, there it was, waiting on me to pick it up and say good morning. I could pick that up and distract myself from the things that were not my fault. It's not my fault that I get sick lots and can't breathe; it's not my fault that my parents neglected me and allowed me to be hurt. So on and so forth, no responsibility for anything. That was ok with my ciga-

rette; it accepted me for who I was. All I had to give it was fire and it would give me time to think of an excuse to give the police men why I was speeding. It gave me time to control the tears and find my way to anger – IT'S NOT MY FAULT you want to mistreat me!

For 25+ years I continued to think that way. Of course, just another pack became just another carton. THEN I WILL QUIT. I can do it – I just don't want to. At this stage, I was in complete denial. I had suffered many times with pneumonia and had been in and out of hospitals all my life. But I was a true friend; I would take all that abuse so my friend the cigarette and I could be together once again.

In all that time, what did I really get in return? Well, I took a test online a few weeks back, called "Your Real Age". I am now 44, but my true age is 58. I have taken 14 years if not more off my life just by smoking. What else did I get? As the years passed, I developed a hacking cough, constant sinus problems, shortness of breath, and a distinct smell that could knock you over. What did I get? I got to work for 25+ years spending around \$35,000 on my "friend"!

Hummmm???

Now, I know that I have always been a little slow to get things, but I began to wonder??? Maybe I was getting taken here by this so-called friend? One day, not too long ago, I stepped into an on-line meeting and I no longer had to wonder. This was definitely a one-sided relationship, and I was getting the short end of the stick!

It was all so simple; here were many people with stories just like mine, feelings just like mine, the only difference is that they had turned their will and their lives over to a Higher Power. They had humbly asked God to remove their shortcomings. They were living in those carefree days of childhood – they had faced their demons with God's help and survived! Surely I could have that?

By staying in the herd, coming to meetings and reaching out, I found freedom and more friends and

fellowship than one could by going a lifetime and smelling like a tar pit all the time!

So, Thank You, Voices of Nicotine Recovery, Thank You, Nicotine Anonymous, and Thank You, God, for giving me my life, one day at a time, nicotine free. I am no longer a victim.

YFIR

Cindy

~~~

## *Service is Gratitude in Action An Interview with Ed T., Emeryville, CA*

*By MJ M, Akron, OH*

There is a simple reason that Ed T. has served NicA for nearly 20 years. "On a daily basis, I wake up just so utterly grateful to be a non-smoker," he says. "I don't think I'd be alive today if I hadn't quit smoking. I have been given a gift, and I want that gift to be passed on. It is THE thing I am most passionate about in my life."

Ed began his NicA journey in 1989, when the fellowship was only seven years old and still known as 'Smokers Anonymous.' His first home group was in San Francisco, where at that time you could find seven meetings a week. He was looking for help to quit his 2 ½ to 4 pack a day habit. "I was 39, but felt like I was dying," he recalls. "It felt like I had a 50 pound weight on my chest, I had a sore throat every day, and I had a nicotine 'hangover' headache every afternoon. My father had already died from nicotine and alcohol related causes, and I could see that happening to me too."

Ed attended three meetings a week in those early days, one of which was a large meeting of 25-30 people. He remembers that there were two people in those meetings with over a year quit. "That astounded me," he said, "not only that someone could actually be free of smoking for that length of time, but

*(Continued on page 8)*

also that they kept coming back to support the rest of us." Ed's first day free of nicotine was April 3, 1989. "I got cut loose from my ball and chain! I got the 'get of jail free card!'" he still says with joy.

NicA service came quickly. After a short time, a member of his home group said "Ed, you need a reason to keep coming back. Here. You are in charge of literature." Since he had to pick up literature at the Smokers Anonymous headquarters office, a Twelve Step Club in San Francisco, he met people serving with the Northern California Intergroup and soon volunteered there as well.

Among them was the then Active World Services chair, who asked him to do telephone service. That involved returning calls to people who called Smokers Anonymous looking for information or meetings in their local areas. "I did that for years," he recalls. "Hearing the despair and desperation in those voices made me realize how lucky I was to live in an area with this incredible support group...who wanted nothing from me but that I could live life smoke free, one day at a time, and have what they had."

In 1990 Ed attended his first World Services Conference. Held in Phoenix, AZ, it was the Fifth Annual Smokers Anonymous World Services Conference, but the first to be held outside of California. Most notably, however, Phoenix was where, as Ed describes, "our fellowship went to our annual conference with one name and left with another. It was where, after much struggle and debate, our collective Higher Power guided us to let go of the name "Smokers Anonymous," and embrace the more inclusive concept of a fellowship where our focus was the drug as the problem, not the delivery system. So we left behind the name Smokers Anonymous, and the name Nicotine Anonymous was born." (You can read more about this historic meeting in the booklet *The Twelve Traditions of Nicotine Anonymous*, Tradition Two, pp. 10-12.)

Ed vividly recalls his first exposure there to the compelling dynamic that we call 'group conscience guided by a higher power.' He watched as "the nearly unanimous collective position shifted 180 de-

grees from a combative determination to keep the name 'Smokers' to acceptance of the term 'Nicotine,'" (p.12). "I actually saw the process of how we work with the Traditions and each other in that amazing way," he said.

The experience cemented Ed's commitment to serving NicA. Being elected the World Services Chair (91-93) was the first of three stints on the World Services board, where he remains an essential voice and currently serves as Officer-at-Large. The 2009 Conference in Akron will be Ed's 19<sup>th</sup> consecutive World Conference! His service has touched all aspects of NicA, from organizational matters to literature verbiage, for 19 of NicA's 26 years in existence. His contribution to NicA (and most of our recoveries) is immeasurable. He also serves at the Intergroup and home group levels in a variety of capacities, sometimes holding multiple service jobs at the same time among the three levels.

Ed has attended NicA meetings in many areas of the US, and considers attending meetings as an old timer to be a particularly important expression of service and gratitude. "For some, I may have the longest recovery time of anyone they've ever met. I can share my experience, strength and hope, and who knows, I might say something that can be of service to someone," he said. "My hope is that others, especially those long in 'nicoverly' (as John O. is fond of calling it), will demonstrate their gratitude too by being there; by their presence, by their service at their meeting and in the larger fellowship."

"People kept the doors open when I needed it," he explained, "and when you needed it too. We have a duty and a responsibility to be there for the next guy coming up. To show up, to bear witness, to keep the doors open, to help support form and structure in the fellowship by serving at the local group, Intergroup and World Services levels. Old timers, especially, say a lot just by showing up. Their presence says that NicA isn't just about quitting; it's also about living life, nicotine free, one day at a time."

Asked what benefits he reaps from his service, Ed first said, "Well,

for one thing, I'm not smoking!" He thought for a moment and then said quietly, "One develops esteem by doing estimable acts. Sure, I get a warm and fuzzy feeling knowing that I might be helping someone. But most of all, we in Nicotine Anonymous save lives. Whether we show up at our meeting, make coffee, serve at Intergroup or take on World Services challenges, we are participating in an organization that saves lives! What could be more important or valuable than that?"

~ ~ ~

## *Defenceless . . .*

Oh amazing grace that you are in my life!

Yesterday, I was cocooning in the bed waiting for my energy to rise enough for me to be able to take care of stuff but my energy didn't rise. I was also quite low on mental and emotional energy so my defences were also at an all-time low. That scared me because I thought I must be vigilant at all times.

I had actually feared such a situation in my sobriety but it proved that there was nothing to fear. Yes, it is true that I was defenceless, physically, emotionally and mentally. In particular, I had feared being mentally defenceless, since that constant stream of thoughts we call the obsession is a mental phenomenon and you would think that, if I was defenceless, the obsession to smoke would come into play, and indeed it did!

But the miracle of your presence in my life unfolded right in front of me because what actually happened was that all the things you people (*in NicA - Ed.*) had taught me over these two years during which I have been a member of this family kicked in. The thought came: I feel lonely and lost and that would go away if I smoked: immediately my new thought given to me by you kicked in:-

If you smoke one, you will have two problems instead of one. My nicotine addiction came to my aid in giving yet another reason: "Yes, but you need only smoke one. You can just look at it as a slip and nobody



(Continued from page 8)

needs to know and then you will be relieved of your loneliness and emptiness". Immediately the wisdom of this fellowship kicked in: "Your loneliness and emptiness will pass but if you smoke now you will have a huge problem getting back on track in nicotine recovery long after the loneliness and the emptiness have passed"

Another obsessive thought came: "Yes, but I don't care. I just want this loneliness and emptiness to go away right now". Another thought counterbalanced that one: "Distract! You use nicotine to distract yourself from the loneliness and the emptiness. So just take your focus away from the emptiness and the loneliness by distracting yourself healthily. You can choose to focus on your breathing, the TV or anything else you find interesting".

And so I distracted myself by just becoming thoughtless, staring out of the window, giving myself permission to be low on energy and just do nothing at all. Like this, any idea about picking up was counterbalanced and now I saw the grand hoax that I had built up together with other smokers: "Smoking helps this that and the other".

What nonsense!

I haven't given up anything at all.

I have gained a new concept of a higher power, a closer connection with my higher power, a better social life, a new wonderful fellowship where I am accepted using or not as long as I have a desire to stop using, better concentration, more serenity, clearer thinking as the denial of what nicotine actually does has been removed by you people, clearer emotions because I don't distract myself with smoking when my emotions are uncomfortable but either distract myself in healthy ways like deep breathing or work my program and thus achieve emotional growth on an issue where I before would have poisoned myself to get rid of the emotion, not to mention the raisin in the sausage end (a Danish expression for the best, he he):- The physical comfort and well being that

has come to my lot.

Thanks a lot, you're all angels in disguise!

Love and hugs from

Solvejg, Bangalore, India

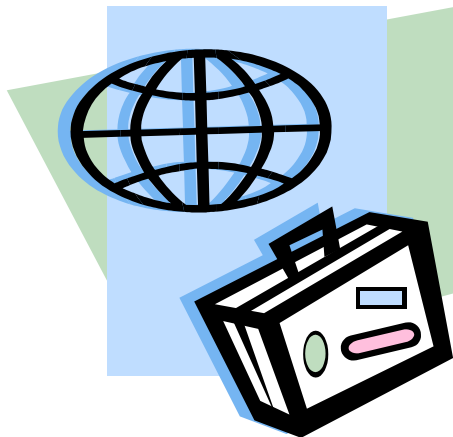
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My view of The Serenity Prayer . . .

The serenity prayer has been the foundation of my sobriety. It has provided me with a lifeline through some MAJOR cravings where I felt like I was going out of my skin and completely out of control. It has even gotten me through some major stressors that in previous quits would have put me over the edge and I would go for that cancer stick - for instant relief, feeling convinced I would only have that one (NOT!)

a. I accept that I cannot change the physical and emotional cravings (or in my mind NEED a cig) that hit hard or not quite as hard (haven't had a 'soft' craving lol!) I truly accept and know this now.

b. I accept that I cannot



change that life is constantly changing whether I like it or not. Events that hurt, are disappointing or are stressful happen to me and everyone. MY 'Addictive-JUNKIE' thinking will tell me I can have just one to relieve stress - or worse that I just cannot quit, it is not worth it and I am going to my grave with this habit. I accept my defects of character which is a really hard one.

c. I CAN change how I have been reacting to CRAVINGS!!! -- I CAN change how I react to unexpected CHANGE or STRESS or DISAPPOINTMENT! I CAN and it takes COURAGE which I ask from my higher power and

his angels everywhere, when I just can't do it alone.

I REALLY do not HAVE to smoke at these times- they happen with or without a cigarette. I do not need pile on guilt and disgust and disappointment in myself (which is what happens) on top of all this negativity by smoking my feelings away-getting that temporary relief -- which drags me down further and chips away at my self-esteem.

COURAGE (not judgment of will power) COURAGE, please grant me the COURAGE to get through this moment, to allow myself to feel these feelings without reaching for a smoke or listening to my nicotine addict. If alone in the car I have YELLED out GRANT ME THE COURAGE (no, I am not a nut case- well maybe I am LOL). Someone gave me a cross with the serenity prayer on it--I have worn it around my neck every day and rub it between my thumb and first finger for courage. COURAGE to just let myself feel, to allow myself to take a break and go easy when I need to (something I do not allow myself to do but going for a smoke break did allow me).

d. The WISDOM to know the difference - I can smoke and go through the cycle again - and it won't take away life's changes/stressors and it will add to the length of time the physical cravings are going to hit - and I will not learn how to live SMOBER. The WISDOM to recognize which is the nicotine addict and which is me - who with all my heart wants/is staying SMOBER. The wisdom to know I cannot 'fix' all of life's problems quickly - the wisdom to know feelings can hurt or cause anxiety or loneliness (and, hey, it is not just negative feelings that I react to by smoking -- happy celebrating feelings, boredom I associate as well) The WISDOM to recognize I am not a slave to the defects in my character - I am not a victim of them.

Every bump or pot-hole or DITCH I have made it through (or have accepted to being there) in the last 4 weeks that I have been SMOBER has reaffirmed my commitment.

It has boosted my self esteem that I have made it (one day at a time - not projecting into the future) through a breakup of a 4yr relationship 2 weeks ago in which we were

(Continued on page 10)

engaged to be married SMOBER - it hurts.

Also I felt like that relationship gave my boys a father they so deserved being brought up without one-just me mom. I made it through this week's layoffs at work- they are cutting 30% of the work force - close friends have lost their jobs and it could have been or could be me in the near future (I remind myself I'll need every penny if that happens so spending \$\$ on smoking is ridiculous). My son's teacher called and is ready to kick him out of an advance science research class (the field he has always wanted to pursue in college and career) because he is disorganized, immature - am I? Have I been a good enough mom? His grades are not good - this could affect his whole future.....I made it thru October 19th, my wedding anniversary- which is in the list of the happiest days of my life -but we divorce because of addiction- he never hit his alcohol and drug addiction bottom - well he did by dying tragically. Mixed emotionally memories haunt me that day.

One Day at a Time - and I say that Serenity prayer once or as many times I need to every day.... and I am SMOBER.

Judi

~~~

## *Anatomy of Emotion . . .*

So hard to tell sometimes...  
Between  
the real and unreal.  
With so many points of reference embedded in my brain.  
Stockpiles of images and information.  
Each tagged with pre-assigned meaning.  
Often  
Conflicting with the present moment.

Without  
My  
Permission.  
A look  
A smell  
A touch  
Gives rise to a myriad of emotion  
Before awareness of thought.  
Leading me to believe  
I can never be entirely sure  
Of my  
Motives.

With so many variables  
Within my own history  
And biology  
I find it hard to tell sometimes...  
the difference  
between the real and unreal.

Inga

~~~

Choices. Yes, I can choose !!!

Was doing some introspective thinking today, not really been doing much of that lately and it was a welcome change. I was thinking of this program and all the ways I have changed since becoming involved with NicA and VONR (Editor's Note: VONR = Voices of Nicotine Recovery - an online NicA group). It kept coming back to making Choices. That seems to describe how this program enabled me to quit smoking and have a chance to change my life for the better.

I seemed to reach a point in my life where my actions on a regular basis were mere reactions to the circumstances I found myself in. My emotions and raw instinctive feelings drove most of my actions. If I had a hint of a nicotine craving I just smoked. If someone was hurtful to me then I was hurt and reacted by feeling sorry for myself or lashing out in anger. If someone was nice to me then I was nice to them and I felt good. All these things were not a conscious decision on my part they just happened and I felt as though my response was correct

whatever it was, no thought required.

I can see now many times my reactions were hurtful to me and others and most of the time completely unnecessary. I even felt good for the wrong reasons sometimes. I think when I was younger I made more conscious choices, I mean when I was young I had less experience so many things were or seemed new, so contemplating and making a decision was common. As I aged I think things got routine and I formed reactive habits: this happens, I act this way; that happens, I act another way. I think most of the time I was just going through the motions.

Of course Smoking was one of, if not the worse, motions I was going through. Smoking had absolutely no benefit, in fact it was killing me and isolating me from others. I just felt a crave and I light up. I was a nicotine zombie. Then I joined this group. I heard others share how they made a decision to not pick up one day at a time. I read the Serenity Prayer for Nicotine Users. That Prayer says soooo much. To me the concept of Choice is embedded in that prayer. To accept the craving while making a Choice not to feed it is it in a nut shell. It also applies to other decisions in life, No matter what circumstance I find myself in, I will always have a choice as to how I react. How should I react? Here is a great place to start: "God, grant me serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference."

Yfir ... Jadie M.

NAWSO
Income Statement
Period to 30 September 2008

Jan - Sep 08

Ordinary Income/Expense

Income

4000 · Donations	5,228
4100 · Literature Sales	29,354
4290 · Shipping & Handling	3,742
4299 · Conference Profit (Loss)	4,438
	42,762
Total Income	42,762

Cost of Goods Sold

5000 · COGS	16,414
	16,414
Total COGS	16,414

Gross Profit

Gross Profit % to Income	62%
--------------------------	-----

Expense

6000 · Office Expenses	17,499
6600 · WSO Expenses	8,983
	26,483
Total Expense	26,483

Net Ordinary Income

-135

Other Income/Expense

Other Income	
8000 · Interest Income	875
	875
Total Other Income	875
Other Expense	
8030 · Interest Expense	12
	12
Total Other Expense	12
Net Other Income	862

Net Income

728



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_____ Yes, I am an ELECTED delegate representing the following group or Intergroup:*
_____ I would like a roommate** _____ Male _____ Female

*Delegates must be registered with World Services no later than March 25, 2009 NAW5 Secretary, 419 Main St., PMB #370, Huntington Beach, CA 92658; e-mail secretary@nicotine-anonymous.org. Include name, address, phone, e-mail and group representing. PLEASE SEE REVERSE SIDE FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE DELEGATE PROCESS.

**Every effort will be made to help you find a roommate. However, you will be responsible for contacting each other and making arrangements for your stay at the hotel.

Registration: (Cash or check only for registration, literature and merchandises at the conference.)
\$25 Early Registration OR \$35 Late Registration (after 4/17/09): \$20 Two days only; \$10 One day only
Non-Nica spouses and partners no charge # of registrants: _____ TOTAL \$ _____

Meals:
Saturday Dinner buffet \$35.00 # of adults _____ Children's \$19.95 # of children _____
Sunday Brunch buffet \$26.00 # of adults _____ Children's \$16.25 # of children _____
TOTAL MEALS \$ _____

T-Shirts: Adult Sizes:	Quantity	
4-Color Logo Design \$15.00 each S-XL	S _____ M _____ L _____ XL _____ XXL _____	
\$17.00 each XXXL-XXXXL	XXXL _____ XXXXL _____	TOTAL T-SHIRTS \$ _____
Final Pre-Order Date: 3-1-09		

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Optional Donation to NAW5 2009 Conference \$ _____ TOTAL ENCLOSED: \$ _____

Make checks payable to Nicotine Anonymous Conference XXIV.
Questions??? Please contact Conference Chair, Jules C. at Jastalme@neo.rr.com or 330-678-3753

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Intergroup/Grp Name:(If applicable) _____ Grp #: _____

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Billing address _____

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BK	NICOTINE ANONYMOUS: The Book	Bk 1-10 = \$7.50, 11-49 = \$7.00; 50+ = \$6.50			
BK2	Our Path to Freedom 12 Stories of Recovery	BK2 1-10 = \$4.95, 11-49 = \$4.60; 50+ = \$4.25			
BK3	90 Days, 90 Ways	BK3 1-10 = \$4.95, 11-49 = \$4.60; 50+ = \$4.25			
BK4	Nicotine Anonymous 12 Traditions	BK4 1-10 = \$2.50, 11-49 = \$2.00; 50+ = \$1.50			
BK6	A Year of Miracles (A meditation for every day.)	BK5 1-10=\$14.00, 11-49 = \$13.10; 50+=\$12.20			
Tape	The Book & Our Path to Freedom on tape.	Boxed Set of 4 Tapes = \$20.00		20.00	

Braille: THE BOOK & Pamphlets are also available from the Braille Institute 800-272-4663 - Ask for supervisor or Order Desk.

Please Note The Increase In Shipping Charges !!

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P-1	Introducing Nicotine Anonymous	under 100 pcs. No Discount	.20 ea.		
P-2	The Serenity Prayer for Nicotine Users	100-499 pcs. Any Combination	.18 ea.		
P-2B	The Serenity Prayer for Smokers(Spanish)	500-999 pcs. Any Combination	.16 ea.		
P-3	A Nicotine User's View of the Twelve Steps	over 1000 pcs. Any Combination	.14 ea.		
P-4	Tips for Gaining Freedom from Nicotine				
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P-6	To the Medical Profession				
P-7	Facing the Fatal Attraction				
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P-8	Our Promises	If order subtotal is: Then postage is:			
P-9	To the Dipper & Chewer	under \$2.01	1.00		
P-10	Slogans	\$2.01 to \$4.99	1.50		
P-11	What do NAWS and Intergroup Services do for me	\$6.00 to \$28.99	8.00		
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P-13	Are You Concerned about Someone Who Smokes or Chew				
P-14	How Nicotine Anonymous Works				
B-L	The By-Laws of Nicotine Anonymous			1.00	
Cds	Nicotine Anonymous Business Cards		100	5.00	
Dir	Worldwide Meeting Directory			1.00	
Pea	Public Service Announcement as an MP3 file	Via email only		FREE	
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Web: www.nicotine-anonymous.co.uk

United Kingdom meetings...

This message was posted on the online message board about meetings in the United Kingdom. To check out the NicA UK homepage go to this link.

<http://www.nicotine-anonymous.co.uk/>

If you want to start a meeting in UK, call 020 7976 0076 for a starter pack.

Service is the Key...

Only you can tell your story.

What was your life like as an active addict? What happened to get you in the door? What were your breakthroughs?

Personal stories, articles, poems, art, jokes or adds pertaining to nicotine, nicotine recovery and Nicotine Anonymous can be sent to

SevenMinutesEditor@nicotine-anonymous.org or by snail mail to

Seven Minutes c/o NAWSO
419 Main St., PMB #370
Huntington Beach, CA 92648

NICOTINE ANONYMOUS

Nicotine Anonymous Offers Help to All Nicotine Addicts; Support Available to Those Who Wish to Stop Smoking 365 Days a Year

Nicotine Anonymous is a non-profit, 12-step fellowship of men and women helping each other to live nicotine-free lives. Nicotine Anonymous welcomes all those seeking freedom from nicotine addiction, including those using cessation programs and nicotine withdrawal aids. The primary purpose of Nicotine Anonymous is to help all those who would like to cease using tobacco and nicotine products. The fellowship offers group support and recovery using the 12-Steps adapted from Alcoholics Anonymous.

For the millions of people who will try to quit smoking this year, Nicotine Anonymous offers ongoing support to all those who desire it for an unlimited time. Their sole focus is helping the still suffering nicotine addict 365 days a year. There are no dues or fees for Nicotine Anonymous membership as the organization is self-supporting through member contributions. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using nicotine.

Founded in 1983, Nicotine Anonymous has over 600 meetings throughout the United States and 35 other countries. A full list of meetings and other information is available on the Internet at <http://www.nicotine-anonymous.org>. Or write: Nicotine Anonymous, 419 Main St., PMB #370, Huntington Beach, CA 92648. Or email: info@nicotine-anonymous.org

Their toll free phone number is 877-879-6422. Books, pamphlets and other literature can be ordered at a nominal cost.

BIRTHDAY CONGRATULATIONS!

BILL C., NJ	12-29-1983
VAL ABF., HI	05-26-2000
KIM F., ENGLAND	11-09-2004
GARY M., CA	11-21-1998

Birthday Announcements

N A M E _____

The above-named member of Nicotine Anonymous stopped using nicotine

on _____ and has _____ years of freedom!

Mail to: Nicotine Anonymous World Services
419 Main St., PMB#370
Huntington Beach, Ca. 92648 USA.

OR

Email to: sevenminuteseditor@nicotine-anonymous.org

Give Back!

You Can't Keep it Unless You Give It Away

Nicotine Anonymous World Services is seeking servants for a variety of positions within the fellowship. Please see the contact information below if you would like to learn more about these service opportunities. Please share this flyer with your group. Remember, you have to give it away to keep it.

E-Mail Volunteers-Share your experience, strength and hope with people around the world who email us. Help them find meetings and answer questions about NicA.

Provide about thirty minutes a week from your home or office computer.
Telephone Servants-Respond to telephone calls from people taking their first step on the journey. One day of service per week from the comfort of your own home.

Email/Penpal Coordinator-Responsible for receiving email requests for pen pals; adding names to the email pen pal list; and sending out the list.

For further information about any of these service positions, please

contact: E-mail~: info@nicotine-anonymous.org

Write: Nicotine Anonymous World Services

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Seven Minutes

NAWSO

**419 Main St., PMB # 370
Huntington Beach, Ca 92648**

Publication dates and Deadlines for Submissions For 2009

Publication date	Deadline Date for Submissions
March 20	February 1
June 20	May 1
September 20	August 1
December 20	November 1

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