

A rebel without a cigarette

I am 6 months smoke-free now. I really believe this time it will be for good. I could not have made it this far without the help I got from my family, coworkers, and the people on the quit smoking website. I was able to get valuable information and support from others going through the same thing as me.

Quitting smoking isn't easy, but it is easier when you don't have to do it alone. The important lessons I learned that I can now share with others are:

1. Tell people that you're trying to quit. Don't hide it because you're afraid that people will see you fail. Most people know how hard it is to quit smoking. Many of us have to try several times before quitting for good.
2. It helps to get advice and understanding from others who are going through the same thing.
3. Support can come from lots of people. Your family and friends can help you stop smoking. You can also find help from others, like coworkers, a telephone quitline, or people on quit-smoking websites.
4. Support comes in many forms. It can be encouraging words, helpful tips, reminders to stay on track, or someone close quitting smoking with you.



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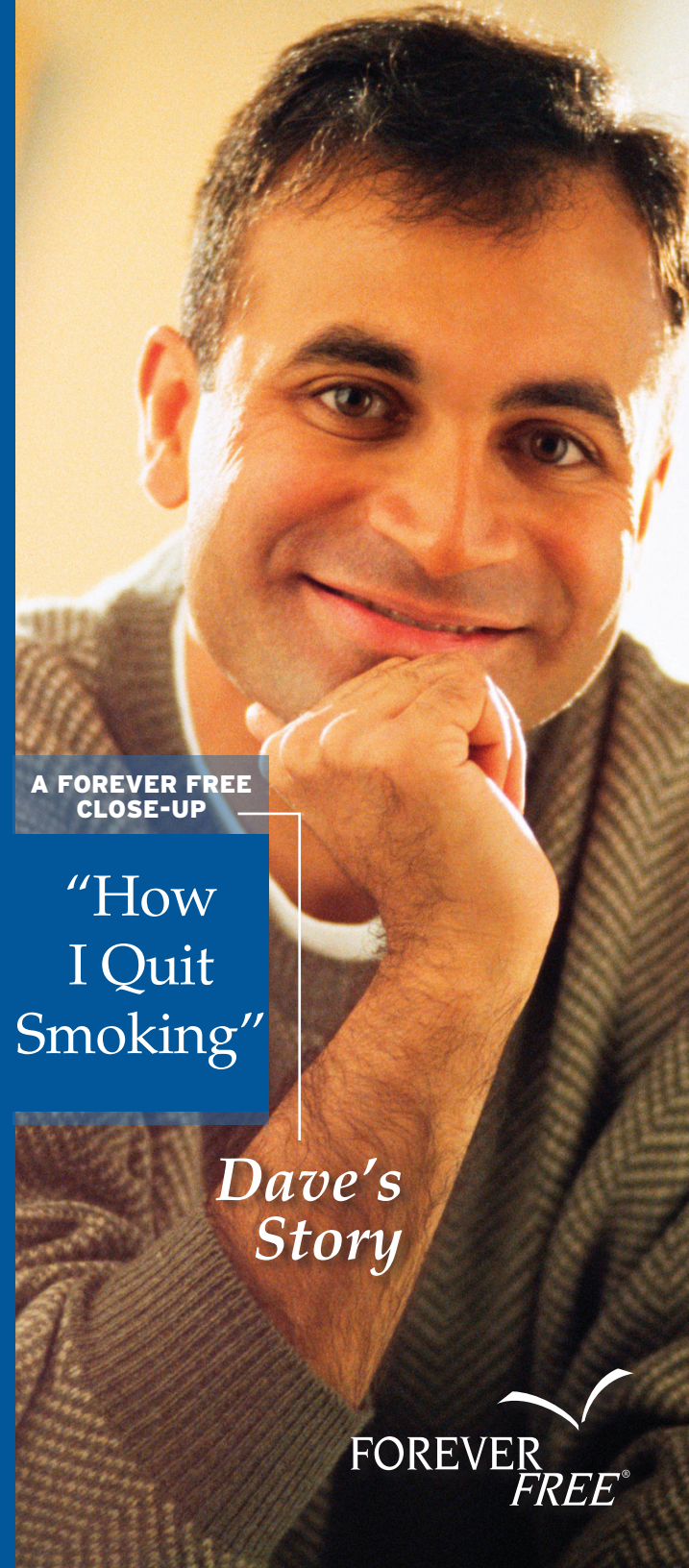
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The people depicted in this series were inspired by real individuals,
but the particulars were changed to protect their privacy.



**A FOREVER FREE
CLOSE-UP**

**“How
I Quit
Smoking”**

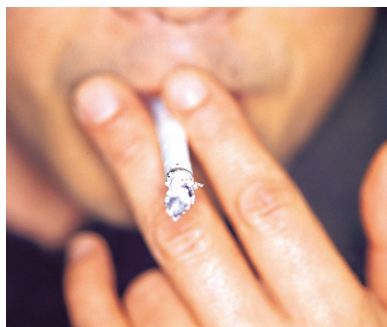
*Dave's
Story*

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A rebellious smoker

Hello, my name is Dave, and I was a smoker for 18 years. Looking back, I always thought I was a rebel. Not wanting to follow the crowd, I refused to smoke when many of my friends were smoking in high school. At the time, I was proud to be the only non-smoker among my close friends. I picked up my first cigarette when I was in my early twenties. By then, many of the people I knew were quitting. Once again, I was the rebel.

Since my girlfriend was a smoker, I began smoking with her from time to time. Within a few months, I was smoking anywhere between a pack to two packs a day. I really enjoyed smoking and I did not have any good reasons to quit for a long time. When my parents nagged me about possible health problems from smoking, I ignored them. I thought that those types of problems did not apply to me. I was still young, and I believed that I could quit smoking when it became a problem for me.



How I rebelled against cigarettes

In my mid 30's, I began to realize that the health problems I had as a result of smoking were very subtle. The first sign I can remember was getting winded while playing soccer. This was unusual for me because I was always a very good soccer player. I could usually last a long time on the field. I also started getting colds all the time. Even when I felt better, I had an annoying cough that would not go away.



But what finally made me decide that I needed to quit was when I started dating again. Most of the women I met said that they would not date a smoker. I made my first quit attempt after coming home from one of those dates. The next morning I woke up as a nonsmoker and was amazed by how easy it was to quit. The first couple of days were a breeze. I had very few cravings to smoke. I was convinced that once I set my mind on something, I could make it happen.

Well, that lasted about 3 days and then the cravings really kicked in. I was shocked by how strong they were. I had one cigarette, then another, trying to limit my smoking to just a couple of cigarettes a day. It didn't take long for me to go back to over a pack a day. More than anything, I was annoyed by the control cigarettes had over me.

So I tried a few more times to quit. But each time, after only a few days, I was back to square one. I even bought some nicotine lozenges and used them for a week. But after a few days my urges were too strong. I stopped telling my family and friends that I was quitting because it was embarrassing. Instead, I told everyone that I decided I didn't need to quit after all.

Secretly, I was getting more and more frustrated with myself for not being able to kick my addiction.

After a year of many quit attempts I met the woman who eventually became my wife. With her support, I broke down and called a smoking quitline that I had seen advertised.

The quitline counselor explained how important it is to get help when quitting smoking. She stressed that rather than keeping my quit attempts secret, sharing my quit plans with others could actually help me stay smoke-free. The quitline gave me more nicotine lozenges and I told my parents and co-workers that I was going to quit smoking for good. Telling others gave me the additional incentive to stay smoke-free. The thought of my family and friends seeing me not sticking to my guns was just too embarrassing. But what really helped me was the quit-smoking website that I found on the internet.

At first I started by reading posts on the message board written by ex-smokers. I was surprised to find a lot of helpful advice from other people's experiences. Then, one day, I began chatting with others on the website. Soon I was using it almost every day. I was amazed by the power of going



through the quit experience with others. I was also surprised by how supportive my boss and coworkers

were of me quitting smoking. The first few weeks they cheered me on every day. They also gave me a break when I was in a grumpy mood.