IN THIS CHAPTER

- Winning the war on tobacco
- Knowing the enemy: addiction
- Accepting yourself
- Going for the long game

Chapter 1
A Matter of Life

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Imagine taking up a truly enjoyable hobby. It's a little costly, but it feels good. Unfortunately, there's a downside: About half of the people who practice this hobby regularly end up dead due to the riskiness of the hobby.

Now, we're not talking about climbing Mt. Everest or *BASE jumping* (jumping off cliffs and using a parachute at the last minute). No, those hobbies are relatively "safe" by comparison to what we're talking about. The hobby of smoking kills about half of long-term enthusiasts.

That fact probably accounts for why most smokers actually want to quit smoking: They know what's in store for them down the road. Yet, giving up jumping off cliffs as a hobby is easier than giving up smoking. Wanting to quit is a start, but not enough by itself.

However, progress is happening. Today, the combined effects of regulated advertising, greater restrictions on locations that allow smoking, and changes in societal norms have culminated in substantial reductions in overall tobacco use. In 2000, no state in the United States banned smoking in bars, restaurants, or the workplace. By 2018, 38 states had passed at least partial bans on public smoking.

These changes have contributed to a dramatic reduction in overall smoking rates from a high of almost half of all adults to a rate of just under 14 percent today. Some experts have even declared that the war on tobacco has almost been won.

But just before victory could be declared, another formidable threat appeared on the horizon: vaping. Many experts have expressed the opinion that vaping may pose many of the same risks as smoking combustible cigarettes. Surprisingly, other leading authorities contend that vaping nicotine may be a useful tool in finally winning the war on tobacco. The jury is still out on this issue, but we give you the latest analysis in this book.

We contend that smoking, vaping, or chewing tobacco are all basically unhealthy pursuits. So, in this book, we offer you the best, evidence-based methods for quitting smoking, vaping, or using smokeless tobacco. Essentially the same change techniques can be applied to all these related addictions.

REMEMBER

It won't be a cake walk, and you may stumble. But we give you ways to pick yourself up and go at it again. Keep trying and you're likely to kick the habit for good.

Accepting the Consequences of Being Human

Becoming addicted to nicotine is not something that people choose to do. When people take a few puffs of a cigarette or a vaping device, they don't intend to become dependent on a drug that costs money and time, while taking a serious toll on their health.

The brain's wiring makes addiction virtually inevitable for most people when certain substances, such as nicotine, are ingested repeatedly. Over time, the brain powerfully associates good feelings with those substances and unpleasant sensations of cravings when denied them.

An addicted brain offers a seductive promise: Keep supplying the drug and you won't ever have to deal fully with pain, suffering, or hardship. Unfortunately, it's a false promise. As addiction takes hold, it enslaves the mind. The addict is almost doomed to a life of finding ways to satisfy never-ending cravings. Luckily, there are ways to beat an addiction, and this book helps you accomplish that goal.

REMEMBER

Addiction is not a moral failure, a character flaw, or a sign of weakness. Addiction happens to people. When you're caught in its grip, fighting off an addiction takes courage, effort, and persistence. Don't worry — we lead you through the process and hold your hand every step of the way.

TIP

If you struggle with smoking, don't become mired in self-loathing, blame, and shame. You did *not* choose to become addicted to nicotine. Blaming yourself makes it tougher to move forward. You need all the resolve you've got to fight this — don't add more baggage to your load.

In addition to being vulnerable to addiction, humans have considerable tenacity and resilience. We help you build on your strengths in order to overcome addiction to nicotine.

Tabulating the Health Costs of Smoking

Almost a half a million people die from smoking-related illnesses each year in the United States alone. Thousands of young people start to smoke or vape every day. Left unchecked, it's assumed that about 5.6 million of today's teenagers will die prematurely from smoking.

Smoking costs more than $300 billion a year in both lost productivity and direct healthcare services. Smokers routinely die of lung cancer, cardiac disease, and strokes, among other smoking-related maladies.

We give you these facts not with the purpose of scaring you. You already know smoking causes life-threatening illnesses and wreaks havoc. Just consider using this information to inspire your efforts and realize you're contributing to a healthier society when you stop smoking. See Chapter 3 for more about tobacco and health.

Summing Up a Financial Spreadsheet

What could possibly be worth spending one million dollars each and every hour of each and every day? Tobacco companies spend that amount of money on promotion and advertising in order to get your business and pump up their profits. What's more important to you is what it's costing you. Above and beyond the "mere" price of cigarettes themselves, smoking costs much more. For example:

- Smokers pay more for health and life insurance.
- Smokers earn about 80 percent of the earnings of nonsmokers.
- Some employers, especially in the healthcare industry, refuse to hire smokers.
- Smokers pay more out of pocket for medical care.

- Smokers use more sick days than nonsmokers.
- Smokers spend more time and money on washing and cleaning their smelly clothes, homes, and cars.

Comparing costs with vaping

Direct comparisons of the cost of vaping with that of smoking regular cigarettes is difficult. That's because different vaping devices have quite variable costs and e-liquids come in an array of types and container sizes with their own unique costs (see Chapter 5 for descriptions of vaping devices and e-liquids). Nonetheless, if consumers shop carefully, they're likely to discover that vaping costs considerably less than smoking combustible cigarettes.

The issue of health and life insurance policy costs is completely up in the air. Given that vaping is a relatively new phenomena and few studies have been conducted on its long-term safety, insurance companies have not clarified their rules and fixed different premium prices for vaping versus smoking policyholders.

TECHNICAL STUFF

Some insurance companies require a physical exam before offering a policy. Many health and life insurance companies charge a higher premium to smokers. The way insurance companies test for whether you smoke or not is to check nicotine levels. Because most vaping e-liquids contain nicotine, vapers will test positively for nicotine. Thus, smokers who turn to vaping for their reputedly lower risk profile will still face higher premiums (see Chapter 6 for more information about the risks of vaping and Chapter 12 for information about vaping and harm reduction).

Calculating the ways you want to spend your windfall

Savings you accrue from not buying endless packs of cigarettes (or other tobacco or nicotine products) mount up rapidly over time — even if you ignore all the considerable funds that aren't spent on insurance, lost work, and other indirect costs. We strongly recommend that you start putting aside what you would've spent on tobacco or nicotine. Watch it grow!

Make a list of spending priorities when it reaches a tidy sum. Post that list in a visible place and look at it often for inspiration. Let's say that an average cost of a pack of cigarettes in your state runs about $7. If you smoke a pack a day, that comes to about $2,555 per year. The ten-year total accumulates $25,550. You

could buy a car with that! There are lots of other things you could do with just one year's savings, like:

- Buy a new computer.
- Buy an amazing TV.
- Buy a bunch of new clothes.
- Pay off a credit card.
- Buy a terrific new appliance.
- Pay for gym dues for a long time.
- Take an amazing weekend getaway or a nice vacation.
- Make a nice donation to the charity of your choice.

The really great thing about these expenditures is that you can almost think of them as free money. It's money you absolutely would not have accumulated without quitting. Stop burning your money! Give it back to yourself. You've earned the right to splurge a bit!

Some people prefer to invest their smoking savings. You can do that in an ultra-safe savings account or go a little wilder and invest in a specific stock or in a mutual fund. It's amazing how much more that money can grow to if you put it in and let your gains compound over time. Consider reading *Personal Finance For Dummies,* 9th Edition, by Eric Tyson (Wiley) for more ideas.

TIP

Investing for the long term will only work if you find it highly rewarding to watch those returns grow slowly over time. If you're someone who prefers more immediate gratification, we recommend that you go ahead and be a bit self-indulgent for the highly worthy goal of quitting smoking or vaping.

Breaking Up Is Hard to Do

Well, not always. If you ever broke up with an abusive partner, then you know that breaking up may feel temporarily tough, but afterward there is a tremendous sense of relief. That's what breaking up with smoking is like. Smoking is a toxic partner. Walking away from it is hard at first, but soon you'll find yourself feeling tremendous relief.

Life is full of hard-to-accomplish goals. Think back; ponder what you've done in your life that took guts, time, and hard work. Those are the things that you feel incredibly proud of when you look back. Quitting smoking will be an accomplishment you can be proud of. But don't get discouraged and defeat yourself before you start by thinking it's *too* hard.

REMEMBER

You've faced and conquered a few (or more) grueling challenges in your life. You can get through this too with a little help from this book, support from friends, and the same grit and determination that you've mustered in the past!

Seeing that a little help goes a long way

Many paths lead to a smoke-free life. We cover them in detail in Parts 3 and 4. Before you quit, you may want to consider reading about the techniques offered throughout those chapters. To get a sense of what's available for your quitting endeavor, here's a list of most of the techniques we have to offer you:

- Nicotine replacement therapy (NRT)
- Medications
- Rethinking your relationship to cravings and urges
- Planning alternative actions to counter urges
- Support from smoking cessation apps
- Quitlines
- Support groups
- Websites for quitting smoking
- Mindfulness
- Rewarding your progress
- Developing a healthy lifestyle
- Managing your weight
- Dealing with lapses and relapses
- Strategies for enhancing long-term success

You can see you have lots of strategies to choose from. Don't let the length of this list scare you. See Chapter 15 for figuring out how to pick what's best for you to

start with. You won't have to use all these techniques. And if what you start with doesn't work, there's more standing by ready to help.

Making a plan and checking it twice

Most people find that developing a detailed quit plan *before* quitting will increase the odds of success. Therefore, we suggest that you don't go cold turkey until you've done some preparation. We detail how to make a plan in Chapter 15 and help you get through the first day in Chapter 16.

Chapters 17 and 18 prepare you for dealing with the first month of quitting and throughout the next five months. We tell you how to deal with sleep problems, cravings, and the crabbiness that often accompanies your quitting journey.

IT'S A SMALL WORLD

When a friend of ours heard that we were writing a book about quitting smoking, she said, "You've got to talk to Frank."

"Frank who?" we asked.

"Frank Etscorn, your neighbor. He got the first patent for a nicotine patch designed to deliver nicotine through the skin."

So, we invited him out for a beer. Frank, a behavioral psychologist, told us that in the 1980s he was carrying out experiments on flavor aversion and nausea. During his experiments, he used nicotine, which is a stimulator of the vomiting center. One day, he accidentally spilled some liquid nicotine on his arm and immediately became dizzy, nauseous, and unable to stand. Frank had a significant case of nicotine poisoning. He replicated his so-called "experiment," by re-exposing himself to liquid nicotine (not a practice we recommend). He quickly realized the implications of his finding. He worked on the development of a skin patch that could deliver nicotine to smokers. His goal was to help smokers give up smoking cigarettes. He obtained a patent in 1986, which earned him and his school, the New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology, millions of dollars.

Remember: If you vape and refill your own vaping device, make sure that you don't get nicotine on your hands. Although most e-liquids are not pure nicotine, exposure can still cause undesirable effects. And you probably won't be able to get a patent that generates millions of dollars.

Life After the Breakup

Many quitters assume that if they've quit for six months or so, their battle has been won. And indeed, they've made great, substantial progress! But some vigilance is still advisable.

Let your guard down and nicotine can crawl back through the door unnoticed. So, we recommend you stay on the lookout for high-risk situations such as the following:

- **Places that you associate with smoking:** These could include a certain area of your own home, your car, or a neighbor's porch.
- **Times when you're easily angered or frustrated:** When you're angry, it's easy to say, "To heck with it," or "I just don't care," but those are simply reactions to your anger. Expect urges at such times and have an alternative to caving in ready to go (see Chapter 17, 18, and 19 for tips on dealing with cravings).
- **Socializing with people you associate with smoking:** This situation is dangerous. Others may tempt you with offers of a cigarette. Have a reply ready such as, "Thanks, but I'm doing the toughest thing I've done in a long time — quitting. And I know that one cigarette will lead to another."
- **Celebrations:** This high-risk situation may surprise you. Celebrations are good, right? Yep. But good times are also often powerfully associated with smoking. Be prepared.

Slipping and tripping insurance

Regular smokers are often jealous of so-called casual smokers, those who claim that they can go for months without a cigarette and only smoke occasionally during parties or other social gatherings. Wouldn't it be nice to be a casual smoker, able to just have one cigarette here and there? Well, for almost all cigarette smokers, there is no casual opportunity. When a smoking habit begins, it quickly escalates into a regular, frequent pattern of smoking.

After quitting, the mind tries to trick former smokers into believing that they can have just one cigarette. But like potato chip advertisers know, one is never enough. A lapse of just one or two cigarettes can quickly morph into a full pack-a-day habit again.

TIP

If you do slip, pay attention. Go on high alert. Review your quit plan and get support. People who take lapses like these seriously can often get right back on track. You need to reach out. Consider calling the national quitline at 800-QUIT NOW (800-784-8669). People who "blow off" the importance of a few cigarettes often relapse completely.

REMEMBER

For most smokers, when they quit, there should be no puffs, not one. It's just not worth the risk.

Lighting the way to a new, nonsmoking lifestyle

We're here to support your efforts for the long run. Our ultimate goal for you at the end of the day is that you find a lifestyle as a nonsmoker that gives you more satisfaction than you had as a smoker. That may sound impossible, but it's not. Assuming that you share the objective of finding a better nonsmoking lifestyle, there are a few things you need to do.

Deserving and seeking healthy pleasures

People report greater life satisfaction when they reward themselves with healthy pleasures. But if you're going to do that, you have to believe you deserve to have more pleasure in your life to begin with.

Let's face it, you quit smoking. That took a lot of work. You deserve a break! And putting pleasure into your life will help keep you smoke free.

Practicing self-compassion

Hey, it's tough being human. You have huge responsibilities — whether that's work or family or friends or pets or some combination of these. Along the way, you're going to make mistakes as everyone does. Start being your own best friend. When you slip up, forgive yourself unconditionally. Be kind to your body and your mind. People who practice self-compassion are happier and have greater life satisfaction. See Chapter 22 for more information about self-compassion.

Reaching for resilience

It takes resilience to make it through today's challenging world. In order to get up after a fall, it's important to have strong social connections. Nurture your friendships and spend time with people you care about. Connections provide a buffer from the unanticipated obstacles that come out of the blue. You can also strengthen your inner resources through practicing mindfulness strategies. See Chapter 21 for more information about mindfulness and meditation.