

Five Years of Freedom

I have many feelings about my five year anniversary as a non-smoker. The best one is that I am finally free of cigarettes after smoking for 40 years. I wake up each morning without any cravings to smoke. I can enjoy a cup of coffee while reading the newspaper without cravings to step outside for a few puffs. The thought of smoking never enters my mind. Five years after quitting, smoking is now just something I used to do and will never do again. This is the final goal of everyone who wants to quit smoking. It's a feeling of freedom that I never thought I would have again. But, with time, commitment, and some fun ways to spend your time, it is possible for any smoker to reach this freedom. Good luck and I know that you can do it too.



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Produced by

The Tobacco Research
and Intervention Program
at Moffitt Cancer Center

Funded by

Grants from the
National Institutes of Health
(R01CA134347; R01DA037961)

1 (877) 954-2548

Projectease@MOFFITT.org

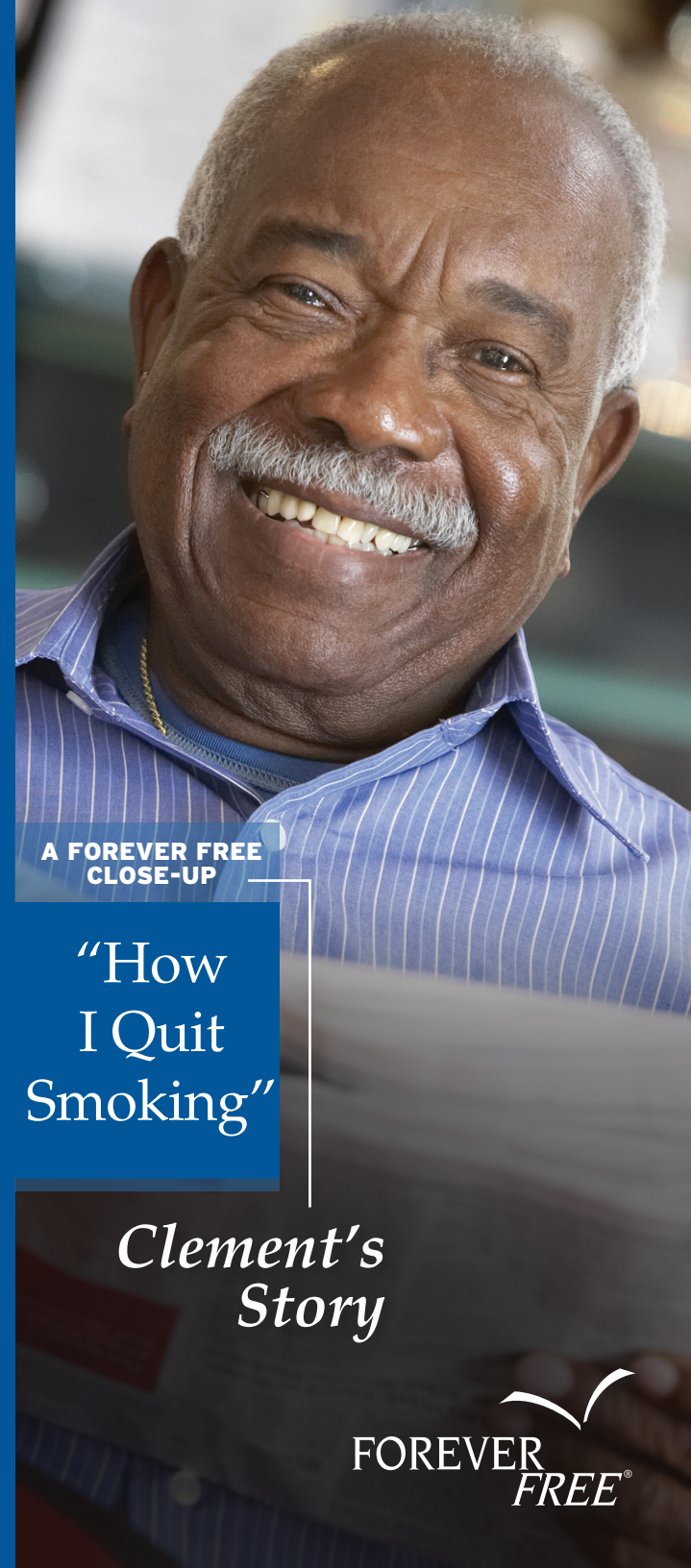
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JK 9/2016

The people depicted in this series were inspired by real individuals,
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A FOREVER FREE
CLOSE-UP

“How
I Quit
Smoking”

*Clement's
Story*

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Clement's Story – Positive Habits

My name is Clement and I am 59 years old. I have been smoke-free for five years. When I first quit smoking, I never thought I would ever reach this point. But I did! For me, the past five years has been a time of enjoying life's pleasures free of cigarettes. I would like to share my story of success.



How I Quit Smoking

For 40 long years, I couldn't quit smoking because I was addicted to tobacco. As I got older, I really believed that I would never be able to quit. Five years ago, I got sick and thought I had pneumonia. It turned out to be a bad case of bronchitis and the early stages of lung disease (emphysema). I kept having trouble breathing and coughed so hard it hurt. I did not look forward to going to bed at night because I would wheeze, cough, and have to sit up to catch my breath. That was a very scary feeling. My wife was very concerned and both of us could not get a good night's sleep. I knew what was making me sick and causing my breathing problems. So, I decided once and for all that it was time to quit smoking.

People sometimes ask me if I quit smoking "cold turkey," or if I used a quit aid. I tell them that my quit aid for the first few weeks was a terrible sickness and not being able to breathe on my own, brought on by 40 years of smoking. The thought of lighting up a cigarette made me sick to my stomach. Although it worked for me, this is not the quit aid that I would recommend to any smoker.

When I started to feel better, the strong cravings to smoke came back. For a while I wondered if I would be able to go even just a few days without thinking about cigarettes every waking hour. Then a friend of mine, who quit a few years before, told me to try and distract myself by getting involved in some fun activities or hobbies.



Turning to Positive Habits

I had the strongest cravings after dinner and on the weekends. It was not easy to find ways to distract myself from cravings at those times. So, I began to take walks with my wife after dinner. At first it was once or twice a week. Not only was it a good way to keep my mind off of cigarettes, but taking walks gave my wife and me a chance to talk about our days. Pretty soon I began to look forward to our walks each day. It turned out to be a good way for both of us to get some exercise.



One weekend, my 8 year old grandson was over and found my old chess board. He asked me to teach him to play. It had been well over 20 years since I played chess, but teaching my grandson the rules of the game reminded me how much I used to enjoy it. Best of all, I hardly thought about smoking while playing chess. This quickly became a weekly activity that both of us looked forward to.

For me, having things to do that I enjoyed helped to distract me from my cravings. It also took the place of my harmful addiction (smoking). I believe finding other pleasant things to do really helped to get me through those first few tough months of quitting smoking.