



My story ends on two happy notes. First, I quit smoking all over again. It took me a couple of tries. And it wasn't easy. I still carry nicotine gum around with me, just in case. But I haven't needed any for almost two years now. Since I quit, I feel better about myself. And I feel better physically.

The second happy news is that I'm able to use my legs again. I won't be running in any races soon, but at least I can walk around the house now. I don't know if quitting smoking helped me to walk again, but my doctors say it couldn't have hurt.

What lessons have I learned from all this?

1. Smoking doesn't really help with stress. It just gives you another problem to worry about.
2. Even if the worst happens, smoking just makes it even worse.
3. Do whatever it takes not to start smoking again. Think about your family—I know I did.
4. But if you do start smoking again, don't give up. Keep on trying to quit.

*Thanks for listening...
And good luck to you.*

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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”

Angie's
Story

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My Old Life as a Smoker

Hi, my name is Angie. I am a middle-aged grade school teacher, am divorced, with two little girls, ages four and nine. I started smoking when I was 15, and I smoked roughly a pack a day. Although I had stopped smoking while I was pregnant with each of the girls, I didn't make a serious effort to quit until my mother died of breast cancer. The whole cancer thing just scared me so much.

So I tried to quit smoking. And I tried again, and again. Each time I would make it a few days or even a few weeks. But something would happen at work or home to stress me out. Then I would feel like I needed a cigarette to make it through the day. And so I'd give in.

I started to think that I just couldn't quit smoking. But I kept on trying every few months.



Quitting Smoking

The time I was finally successful was right after I was watching my older daughter play in a soccer game. I stepped away from the other parents to have a smoke without bothering them. When I got back, I learned that my daughter had scored her first ever goal. And I missed it!!

I decided at that moment that cigarettes were not going to cause me to miss any more of my kids' lives. After the game, I dropped by the drug store and picked up a pack of nicotine patches. The next morning I put on the first patch and threw out every cigarette and ashtray in the house.

It wasn't easy. I was tempted plenty of times. But this time I made it. First a day. Then a week. Then a month. Then three months, four months, six months. By that point, it seemed easy... I was no longer a smoker! I knew that I could do it at last.

An Instant Life Change

I won't give you all the details, but just when life seemed to be going good, I got into a really bad car accident with a pick-up truck. They had to cut me out of the car. Thank goodness the girls weren't with me! But, I lost the use of my legs. The doctors said I'd probably be in a wheelchair for life.

I didn't take this well. I got very depressed. I felt alone, angry, and hopeless. And I called upon my old friend who used to be there for me when I was down—my cigarettes. Smoking just didn't seem that bad anymore, compared to spending my life in a wheelchair. At least not at first. And so I worked my way back up to a pack a day.

The funny thing is, after a year or so, I realized that, despite the wheelchair, I was still the same person. But now I was a smoker again. And I hated that just as much as before.

