

# Smoking Killed My Grandfather, But I Managed to Quit

William Morales

One of my earliest memories is of running in what seemed like a giant living room. The room was full of chairs facing a long wooden box. Everyone was dressed in black. I didn't know what was going on. I just wanted to run and play. My mother was crying. The reason she was sad was because the living room was really a funeral home. Her father was in the long wooden box. He passed due to lung cancer from smoking cigarettes.

I was too young at the time to understand what cancer was, so I didn't pay attention to it. As I got older, I took up the habit of smoking myself. I didn't realize that if I kept it up, my mother would have been in that same room crying because it would be my turn to be in the wooden box.

Up until the past few years, practicing healthy habits was last on my list of things to do. Even though my first experience with death was my grandfather passing away from smoking, I still started smoking when I was about 15.

At first I used to steal my mother's cigarettes. I did that until I learned that if I handed \$10 to an adult and told them to buy me a pack of Newports and they could keep the change, nine out of ten would agree. When I first started, a pack of New-

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ports would last me a few days. By the time I was old enough to buy cigarettes myself, I was smoking two packs a day.

The thought that my grandfather died from smoking was always in the back of my mind,

but it was going to take more than that to make me stop. One day, I noticed my fingers. They had a yellowish tint to them from holding the cigarettes. It was the tar from the smoke. I thought about how that tar was probably in my lungs also. Suddenly smoking seemed disgusting and useless. I was killing myself and wasting money. I wanted to stop right away.

Quitting smoking was not easy. I literally weaned myself off of cigarettes. I craved smoking the most in the morning and after meals. So I made a plan. I didn't light a cigarette as soon as I woke up for about a week. I just smoked after I ate and throughout the day. Then I only smoked after I ate. I was down to three cigarettes a day. I did that for about two weeks. One day, I waited until after dinner to light up. I was now smoking only one cigarette a day. Then I went a whole day without a cigarette, then a week, and then a month. Before I knew it, I didn't crave smoking at all.

Once I quit smoking, I started exercising. After about a month of doing light calisthenics, I noticed a change. Not only was my body stronger, but my mood was better. I seemed happier and I had more energy. I felt good! I have been exercising, watching what I eat, and practicing other healthy habits for two years. I have lost 30 pounds and I feel all around better about myself. I am also proud to say I have been cigarette-free for two years. I know my grandfather is smiling down at me because of who I am today.



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*After getting his GED, William Morales plans to learn how to be a barber. He is in the GED class at SCI Greene in Pennsylvania.*