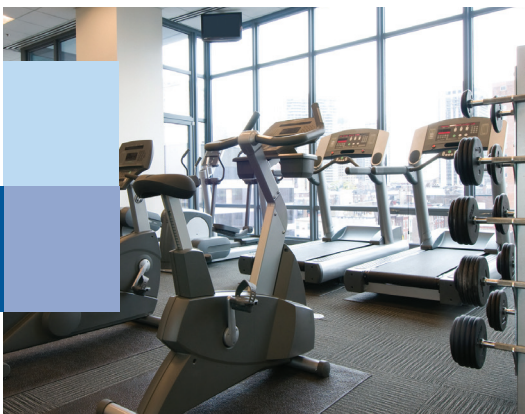


2. Another trigger that I was able to trace my urges back to was boredom. I realized that whenever I was bored I would smoke. At home, in the car, at work, and the list goes on. I learned to redirect my attention when this would happen. For example, when I am in the car, I crank the radio up really loud and sing at the top of my lungs.

3. The most important change I made in my life is how I deal with stress. I had never felt so much stress until this period of my life. I knew that I could not continue to use smoking as a crutch, so I began exercising and eating well. By exercising regularly I discovered just how much it helps relieve my everyday stress.



One point I would like to make is that learning to understand your urges takes time. Be patient with yourself and eventually you too will learn how to handle your urges and not give in to them. It may be hard to believe at first, but in time, the urges will fade away.

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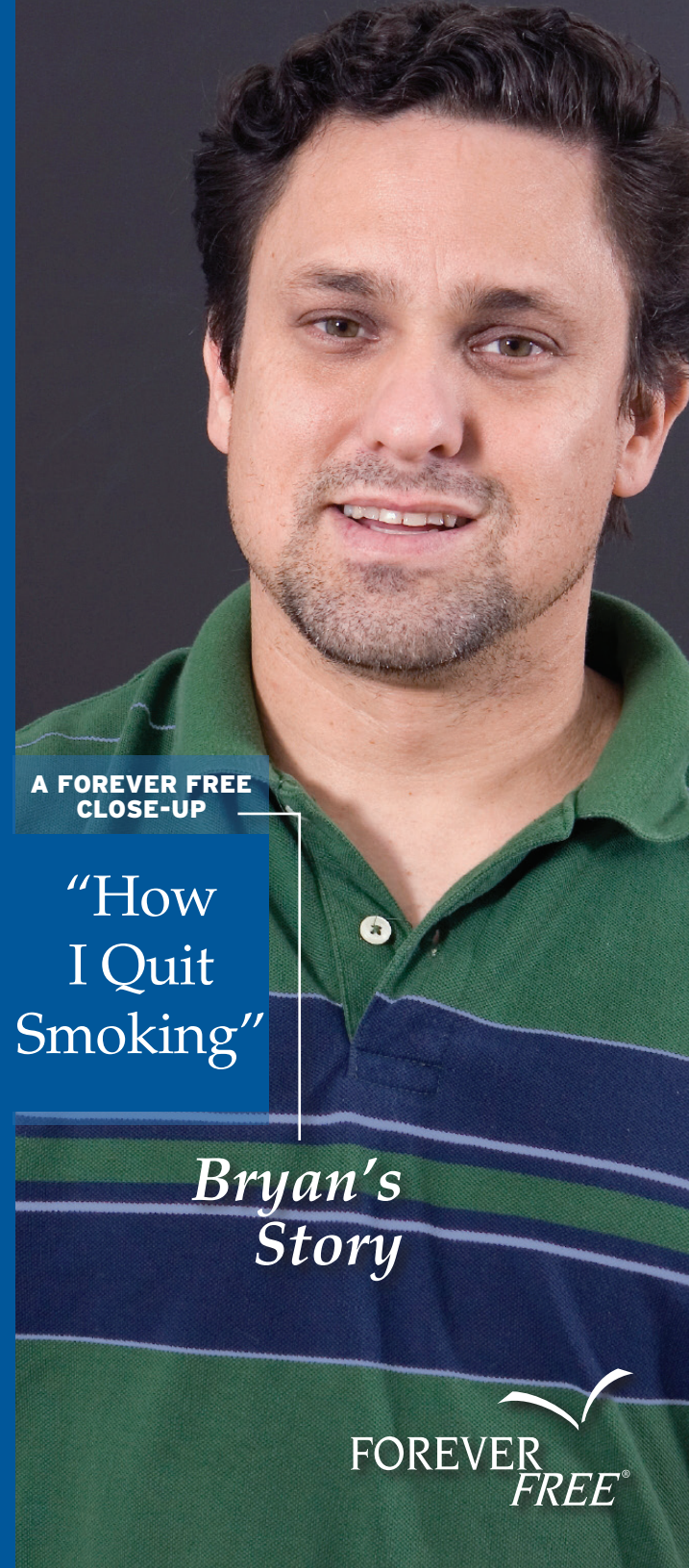
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The people depicted in this series were inspired by real individuals,
but the particulars were changed to protect their privacy.



**A FOREVER FREE
CLOSE-UP**

“How
I Quit
Smoking”

*Bryan's
Story*

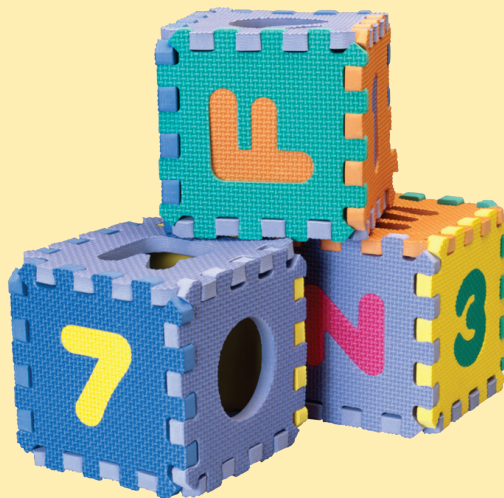
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When I used to smoke...

Let me see. I believe I started smoking when I was 13 years old. My friends introduced me to it and since my dad was a smoker, I had always been curious about it. So I said to myself, "Hey, what's the harm?"

In the beginning I was only smoking when I was out with my friends or at a party. I guess I would have called myself a "social smoker." As the years passed, I found myself smoking more and more. By the time I got to college, I was smoking all the time. I was chained to my cigarettes.

It seemed like smoking over the years had taught me to react to just about everything by smoking a cigarette. If I was angry, I would smoke to calm down. If I was happy, I would smoke to celebrate. I would even smoke to help suppress my appetite if I was hungry and too busy to stop and eat. Not only was I addicted to the nicotine, but most of my daily activities were tied to a cigarette. The urges to smoke were everywhere!



My Reason to Quit

A few years after graduating from college, my fiancé found out she was pregnant. Wow! Talk about a surprise. We were not trying for a family at the time, as I was in-between jobs and she was still in school. When my fiancé told me the news, she also told me that I had to quit smoking. I knew she was right, but I was not really sure how I was going to do it. I knew with all the added stress of a baby on the way, this was not going to be easy. It was that day that my life took a turn for the better. Not only did I have a baby on the way, but I was finally going to free myself of this addiction.

How I Did It

I immediately started using the nicotine patch because some of my friends said it helped them quit. It did seem to help me resist smoking, but I still struggled with all the urges. Where were they coming from and how was I supposed to deal with them? I knew that in order for me to have a successful recovery from this addiction, I had to understand my urges and learn to deal with them better.

I began researching smoking urges online and was able to find lots of reading material about it. Not only did I find information to read, there were also online forums with members who were in the process of quitting smoking. Getting advice on how other people dealt with their urges really helped me learn how to deal with mine.



Just as I was able to learn from others, I would like to share with you a few suggestions that may help you when trying to tackle your urges.

1. Anger and frustration were always big triggers for me, as they are for most of us. Reaching for a cigarette is a quick fix and never solves the problem at hand. I learned that by dealing with my problems head on I am able to put them behind me. I remind myself that "Smoking is not an option!"