

INTRODUCTION (:01)

My name is Geoff. I'm a professor and writer; and I've been a smoker for twenty-two years on and off.

FIRST CIGARETTE (:09)

I started smoking really because I quit playing football. I left practice and thought, "Man, I don't want to do this anymore," and I went to a party and I started smoking. And, you know, a lot of people talk about how they choke on their first cigarette and have to work really hard, I just totally loved it. I think I started really trying to quit the next day, after I had my first cigarette, but it wasn't until I was probably twenty-five so, you know, five, six years later. I was one of those people who said, "I can quit whenever I want," and with cigarettes just absolutely not. So at twenty-five I knew that I really had the monkey on my back.

LISTENING TO YOUR BODY (:50)

I remember going for a long run at twenty-five and really wheezing for the first time probably in one of those, you know, humid mid-west days. Just feeling thickness in my lungs and knowing okay I'm actually harming myself. Since probably twenty-two, twenty-three I've gotten up at five o'clock in the morning, that's when I do write best and, you know, I'm a creative writer and you need to have kind of a clear head. And I'd wake up cloudier and cloudier.

TRIALS AND ERRORS (1:19)

I've tried cold turkey maybe 14,000 times, gum and lozenges, and actually lozenges worked for me. I think it does help to have a hard quit date. I did have a May first quit date and I thought about it for forty days in advance.

TRIGGERS (1:37)

I'm a novelist and I get contracts from the publisher. I had to have a book finished actually it was July first, so not too long ago. That deadline was a real trigger for me. The stress of that thing coming up I wasn't sure that I could do it without smoking because I relate smoking to the activity of writing.

MANAGING TRIGGERS AND SLIP UPS (1:59)

Exercise takes my anxiety level down a notch just generally speaking. And it's not that exercising cancels out my desire to smoke but smoking makes it so difficult for me to actually get out there and do it. Running is real intense; you can't cheat when you're running even if you're going at a slow pace. It helps me breathe, it gives me a clear head, it does everything that actually smoking takes away. I have to eat healthily. If I eat a big, fat burrito there's nothing better than having a cigarette so I just have to be careful and come at it at a multiplicity of ways.

THE FUTURE (2:31)

I have been smoke-free for six weeks and I hope that continues. I have a ten year old daughter and a thirteen year old boy. My children really haven't seen me smoke before and I was spending a lot of time hiding in the garage, and if you're engaged in a behavior that makes you hide out from your children, you know, it's something that harms the relationship and I don't want to engage in behavior that harms my relationship with my kids.

POSITIVE CHANGE (3:00)

When I quit smoking, I could breath. It comes after just a couple of weeks that you improve. I wake up in the morning with sort of an ability to get sharply focused and I lost that with smoking. The other ability that I have that I never had before is that I can hang out after dinner with friends. I don't have to run outside, and that's kind of nice.