

JUNKIE

Joe Havel, a 54-year-old administrator in a Midwestern university, was asked to tell the story of his struggle to give up cigarettes. He has not smoked at all for 2 years, following a 6-week treatment with a nicotine patch that was prescribed by a colleague who runs a smoking cessation research program.

Mr. Havel began smoking when he was age 18, usually smoking one or two packs a day. Beginning in his late 30s, he vowed to stop every morning, but said that by 9:30 A.M., "It was over and I was lighting my first cigarette of the day." When he was age 45, under a lot of pressure from family, friends, and his cardiologist, he asked his colleague to prescribe an antidepressant that has been used to help smokers break the habit. Over 4 days the dosage was gradually increased, and he did not smoke. On the fourth day he began to feel like he "was on an LSD trip." His surroundings seemed unreal, and "people opened and closed their mouths, but no words came out." Frightened about what was happening to him, he stopped the drug abruptly. For the next few weeks he still felt drugged, but did not smoke. Back to normal, he began smoking again and was soon up to a pack or two a day.

Over the next 5 years there was more social pressure for him to stop smoking. Smoking was outlawed in his office building, and his wife and doctor were relentless in their badgering. He also began to notice that he was short of breath when he walked up a few flights of steps. Again he asked his colleague for help, and this time was given a nicotine patch. "I had always thought that I smoked because it was a part of my life, but then I got the patch and didn't need to smoke, and in that moment I realized I was a junkie."

For the 6 weeks that he wore the patch, life was "beautiful." He was happy, productive, and focused, and did not crave cigarettes. He gave up the patch after 6 weeks, as prescribed, and for months thereafter felt "cranky" and without his usual *joie de vivre*. "One day I was reading an ad for an antidepressant, and I had all the symptoms!" In addition, he began to have frequent, mild, viral infections, which he had never experienced before.

Two years later he is still not smoking, and no longer has symptoms of depression yet feels that something is missing: "The period, the comma, and the exclamation point are missing from my life."