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SOS International Newsletter



Jim Christopher

Springtime Specials: SOS Annual Stop-Smoking Extravanza; SOS Belgium Conference; SOS Founder's 29th Sobriety Celebration

by *Jim Christopher, SOS Founder*

Saturday, May 19, marks our 7th Annual Funeral for the Unknown Smoker to be held in the Steve Allen Theatre, Center for Inquiry/West, 4773 Hollywood Blvd., Hollywood, CA, 2-4 p.m. "The Smoker's Body," a grotesque poster (courtesy *COLORS* magazine) will be displayed in a casket on stage and non-smokers will share stories of triumph in recovery from nicotine addiction. Extensive excerpts from my book, "Escape from Nicotine Country: How to Stop Smoking Painlessly" appear in this issue of the SOS newsletter along with an ad for the book at a special rate.

I depart Tuesday, May 9, for Brussels to speak at the 3rd Annual "SOS Nuchterheid" Conference in Ghent, Belgium, Saturday, May 12 (visit www.sos-sobriety.org for particulars). We'll run coverage of the SOS Belgium Conference in our next newsletter.

I celebrated 29 years of freedom from alcohol and other mind-bending drugs at our weekly Hollywood SOS meeting, 8 p.m., Tuesday night, April 24. Since April 24, 1978, I've reveled in my authentic life adventures in continuous sobriety, freed from my heretofore meaningless and painful sick-with-drink existence. I highly recommend it!

What follows are some recent messages to yours truly from SOS well wishers. THANKS!

Messages to Jim

Happy 29 Jim,
And thank you for building this group. You have no idea what you've saved me from . . . on second thought you probably know exactly what you saved me from.
Congratulations, Rob

Hi Jim,
Congrats on staying sober. That is amazing. All the best for you!
Take care, Darlene

Hi Jim,
Duaine M. tells us you are celebrating 29 years' sobriety so I just wanted to join in the congratulations. I have got a lot out of SOS just by using the Yahoo! Group site and from reading about the principles you first espoused.



Jim Christopher (seated) presents his deceased buddy, "The Smoker's Body" courtesy *COLORS* magazine. Jim is preparing for the 7th Annual "Funeral for the Unknown Smoker," an event he launched in May, 2000.

When I left AA because of my strongly-held agnosticism, I felt lost because there didn't seem to be any alternative here in Western Australia. Now I am trying to set up a face-to-face group here in Perth. My details are with the clearinghouse as a local contact and I'll let SOS know if a group gets off the ground. With best wishes and thanks, Tom

Hi Jim,

Just a short note. I want to thank you for having the enthusiasm and motivation (although at the time it was hard for you) to give birth to this wonderful alternative to AA.

I am a newly sober alcoholic (3 months) and have been appointed coordinator/developer of SOS Strathclyde (Scotland). I have such a good feeling about this venture. Already, I have gained a great deal from it and have a very positive feel for its growth.

To be part of something new is motivating in itself; to be one of a kind is awesome (to steal one of your phrases).

Angus in the isle of Lewis is a fantastic man, so enthusiastic, so full of life and so very humble. Together we are going to make this island a better place to live and help those in need. I feel I have to say this. . . . I'm Scottish and we could be in the Olympics for talking this was supposed to be a short note, sorry!

But I hope you can feel from the tone of this note I am so grateful and extremely happy I have SOS to turn to.

PS. I would also like to add I have never been comfortable talking publicly, but within the SOS group I feel

at home. I have found my niche.
Janett, Scotland

Hello,

My name is Shaun and I am a sober alcoholic and drug addict. I have been sober since February 22, 2007, and I know that if I go back to drinking or using it will just be a matter of time before it kills me.

I am writing to express my gratitude for the materials and contact information sent to me by SOS, and to include a donation for the organization. I hope to one day be able to help others who share our disease, but at the moment I feel I only have strength enough to keep myself sober, so I hope this donation will help in the meantime.

Since contacting you initially I have obtained a copy of *How to Stay Sober: Recovery Without Religion*. I read through the book in one night and cannot express to you how helpful it has been. Learning that my addictions are not my fault was one of the most liberating sensations I have ever had, and learning that my sobriety is my responsibility was one of the most empowering. In our current times, and when struggling with addiction, it is easy to forget that there are other free thinkers out there, and that many share our pain.

In any case, I wanted to thank you and let you know that as long as there are those of us who believe in truth and want to have faith in ourselves, you will be needed.

No matter what!

Sincerely, Shaun

Excerpts from *Escape from Nicotine Country: How To Stop Smoking Painlessly*

Publisher: Prometheus Books

Introduction

Dear Smoker,

Forty-six million adults in the U.S. currently smoke cigarettes and the trend among smokers is to *try to quit*; 25 percent of U.S. adults currently smoke, compared to 42.4 percent of the U.S. adult population who smoked in 1965.

Surveys indicate that *most* smokers (70 percent) *want* to stop smoking, although of the 34 percent who attempt to quit each year, only 2.5 percent are successful.

The scientific literature clearly establishes nicotine as a powerful drug of addiction, with neurobiological effects similar to those of most addictive drugs, and nicotine replacement therapy—as smoking-cessation treatment—necessitates a weaning-off process from the nicotine-replacement treatment *after* one stops smoking.

Surveys show that the majority of smokers lack the interest, need, and resources to seek formal cessation treatment, thus *Escape From Nicotine Country* provides a simple, supportive, economical “how to” self-empowerment approach to quit comfortably without tedious “programs” and expensive treatments.

I've striven to make this book as “smoker-friendly” as possible; by that I mean straightforward and immediately useful without a lot of superfluous crap. The prospect of stopping smoking is scary as hell. I know—I've been there. Nicotine addiction is ultimately painful; therefore this book offers a gradual smoking-cessation approach to stop the addiction painlessly without weight gain.

This work is purposely structured to get to the point quickly, because human life is at stake here and there's no time to waste. Chapters 1 through 6 are designed to

give you all the preparatory information you need in order to comfortably carry out Plan A, B, or C, as presented in Chapter 7.

After achieving your first nicotine-free day—and your first ninety days of a nicotine-free life (chapter 8)—the Logbook continues day-by-day through your first year of freedom from nicotine (chapter 9).

Chapter 10 offers tobacco-free musings, and some stuff for the future.

References/Resources

In the back of this book you will find listings of the scientific sources upon which I based these strategies. And you will also find a wealth of supportive resources and referrals for building a new smoke-free life.

1. One Smoker's Story: An Overview

Tobacco is a dirty weed: I like it.
It satisfies no normal need: I like it.
It makes you thin: it makes you lean,
It takes the hair right off your bean;
It's the worst darn stuff I've ever seen:
I like it.

—Graham Hemminger (1896-1949), Tobacco

This sentiment, to my mind, brilliantly sums up addiction at its core: “Who cares about the consequences? I want my drug!” There are various ways to address

addiction; I discovered one by accident twenty-one years ago and haven't wanted an alcoholic beverage since. I later applied this powerful method to my smoking addiction of over thirty years and haven't wanted a cigarette since. I arrested my debilitating addiction to booze at a time (April 24, 1978) when smoking was still "fashionable". I continued to smoke until November 26, 1993. As I smoked in sobriety, along with lots of company in the earlier years, I was, as I had been in the case with my previously active alcoholism, unaware in any real way of my *addiction* to cigarettes or of its negative consequences. I knew how to "do sobriety", but hadn't yet made "the connection" concerning my nicotine addiction.

Making the connection-replacing the "cycle of addiction" with a new "cycle of sobriety"-was what I'd termed "the Sobriety Priority" back in 1988, when my first book about recovery from alcoholism was published. I had founded a new self-help support group movement earlier in 1986, after articles I'd written addressing the need for alternatives in the recovery world had received international attention and positive response. SOS, or Save Our Selves, self-empowerment groups sprang up nationwide and ultimately worldwide. Thousands of addicts have utilized the powerful yet simple SOS method for achieving and maintaining freedom from alcohol and other drugs.

As the years advanced, I didn't, as far as stopping smoking was concerned. My denial mechanism manifested itself in this way: "I smoke only one-half to one pack per day. I see no negative consequences as a result of my smoking. I eat healthful foods and exercise a bit. I have loads of fulfillment-some downs, but who doesn't? I'm a courteous smoker. I have no history of cancer (although ample history of heart trouble, but only on one side of my family). My real addiction is to alcohol and isn't it great to be living sober, etc?"

"I only smoke socially," I quipped to the relatively few folks who approached me concerning my addiction to nicotine. The *real* reason I smoked was that I was hooked and afraid to experience life without my cigarettes. I had a real gut-level (primal) dependency on cigarettes. I needed the feeling I got from smoking for my quality of life—strike that—*for my life*. Yes, I needed this, I felt in my deepest core, below my conscious level of recognition, *in order to survive!*

A controversial addiction-treatment professional had said to me long ago-knowing of my work in the field of alcoholism, and how apparently effective the Sobriety Priority approach had been both in my life and in the lives of thousands of addicted individuals-that addiction is an affliction "of the survival system of the individual." This profound truth-which I had ultimately discovered by accident almost twenty years earlier, had, through trial and error, set me free from active alcoholism.

And, as I developed my "sobriety priority" approach early in my recovery, I felt comfortable and secure in my sobriety *as a separate issue from all else*. It didn't matter what happened in my life or what other people said or did to shake or challenge my personal heartfelt truth. I *knew* passionately both in my gut and *simultaneously* in my mind that I could not ingest alcohol with impunity: I could not drink and *get away with it*. So as others struggled with sobriety, I did not. I had been freed from a knee-jerk reaction to drink.

Smoking? That's something else again, I told myself; after all, it's not really a mind-altering drug. Sure, people probably shouldn't smoke, I suppose, but I'm a light smoker. I suffer no consequences as a result of my smoking, so leave me alone; I don't want to think about that right now. And so it went for years.

Tragically, when it comes to the ingestion of harmful

addictive drugs, the primal survival system that should reject that which is harmful and accepts that which is not, innocently accepts any ingested drug that offers an immediate euphoric rush. Our bodies want more, becoming ultimately off-balance and chemically dependent. Eventually all else takes a backseat to the survival system's primitive perception. The interpretation conveyed and accepted without *question in chemical language*-the language of "feel good" or "feel bad," survive/thrive or cease to exist-by the primal core of the individual human organism is, in the case of harmful drugs, unfortunately a lie. There is typically no negative chemical message immediately following the feel-good chemical "OK." There is only an immediate positive feeling of pleasure.

Typically there is a gap, a space or span of time, no connection-no chemical "aha!" process. There is no chemical mechanism that informs one's primitive survival system of the inherent danger of ingesting addictive substances that feel good immediately upon ingestion.

Survival systems don't compute; they don't deal with concepts or consequences. Unless the experience renders an *immediate* rather than a *delayed* hurtful response (like touching a hot stove, for instance) it is accepted, chemically speaking, as positive and life-affirming; therein lies the reason for the addict's obvious self destructive, irrational, addictive behavior.

Since there is no rationality available in the primitive part of the psyche, the connection that drug = hurt from later consequences is not made. Hangovers for alcohol abusers? No connection. Coughing up blood for nicotine addicts? No connection.

On rare occasions, the individual human organism can experience a head/gut "fusion" of chemical "language" or an awareness that simultaneously floods the brain. This powerful occurrence typically happens accidentally, if at all (as it had in my own alcoholism).

Fortuitously in a flash moment, in a flashing glimpse of my own mortality—I experienced alcohol = *immediate pain* in immediate chemical language: "Alcohol hurts immediately"; the deeper survival-of-the-organism core message being: "Alcohol kills!" Chemical conclusion and rational conscious conclusion: alcohol (for me) = death; sobriety (for me) = life.

Although my powerful "sobriety priority" experience came about accidentally, the good news, I discovered, is that this *can* be a *deliberately induced process!* Although this book is not about alcoholism, I've briefly related my own alcoholism addiction-arrest experience for clarity. I also think it is noteworthy to state that alcohol is considered by most researchers in the field of addiction to be a *selectively* addictive drug; that is, approximately 10 percent of those who ingest alcohol become addicted. Nicotine, however, has been found to hook virtually all those who use it, if they repeat the initial behavior.

"More addictive than heroin," concludes the scientific literature concerning nicotine. I became aware of the facts about nicotine addiction and the consequences related to its habitual use over time, but I didn't really apply the horrors of nicotine addiction to myself until *after* I made a decision to attempt to "get real" about my cigarette smoking. Not being fond of pain and having experienced a comfortable sobriety for a good number of years, I set out to create an approach to stop smoking that wouldn't be painful.

Fantasies of Hollywood's double-cigaretted Paul Henreid and Bette Davis from the film *Now Voyager* (1942). In which Henreid lights two cigarettes simultaneously, then hands one to Davis as their eyes transfix, fed the flames of my log-skewed perspective on smoking.

Developing an Escape Plan

When I decided to quit smoking, I really didn't know if my efforts would succeed. I was hopeful as I informally planned to give it a try. I told no one.

I decided that my typical smoking day for a twenty-four-hour period consisted of about twenty cigarettes. (I had smoked more in earlier years due to the "synergistic" combination of alcohol and cigarettes.) I simply made a note of this in my date book as I planned for "day one" to begin the following morning. I allowed myself a standard pack of filtered king-size cigarettes as my allotment for "day one" (although I have smoked many different brands over the years, both filtered and unfiltered-as with booze earlier in my life, I had consumed countless brands of beer, wine, bourbon, scotch, vodka, etc.).

My plan was to *gradually* cease, to make it easy on myself. I'd heard too many stories of smokers struggling to quit, suffering withdrawal symptoms, stuffing their faces with food as an oral substitute only to return to smoking, sporting additional pounds, demoralized.

I didn't want to suffer needless agony, nor did I want to embrace my refrigerator in order to compensate for my loss. I'd always had hearty appetites: booze (in the past), cigarettes, good food, stimulating relationships and activities. I knew that typically the average person who stops smoking tends to gain approximately five pounds, but this weight gain generally levels off in a short time. A main reason for weight gain is nicotine's role in suppressing hunger and eating. Smokers tend to weigh less than nonsmokers, that is, the weight of smokers is *artificially controlled via nicotine addiction*.

I didn't want to feel deprived.

I didn't want to hurt or get fat.

This was my challenge.

As I stated earlier, I smoked my last cigarette on November 26, 1993. It was a Friday and one cigarette was all that I could comfortably tolerate. Saturday the 27th, in the midst of hectic work-related travel, while staying at the home of a married couple (one of whom consistently smoked cigars), I calmly walked downstairs to join them and a group of outdoors smokers in the couple's backyard, *with no nicotine cravings whatsoever* on my first cigaretteless day.

At that moment I felt liberated. I had arrested a nicotine addiction of over thirty years, painlessly. I experienced no feeling of loss; I felt instead that I'd escaped from a kind of slavery. And I wanted this feeling of freedom to last a lifetime.

"My name is Jim. I'm a sober alcoholic. I keep my nicotine addiction arrested also. I don't drink alcohol or smoke cigarettes, no matter what."

No, this is not a "twelve-step" statement; nor is it a statement regarding my willpower or character. As a *separate issue from all else*, it is a factual life-and-death statement about maintaining the survival of an organism, namely me. It is not only conceptualized in my head as I say it; it is *simultaneously* felt in my gut.

The fortuitous accident that happened to me over twenty-one years ago regarding my addiction to booze, that is, my aforementioned "morality moment" in which, apparently, I experienced what I now call "cognitive/visceral synchronization," was a kind of fusion, if you will, a simultaneous head-and-gut realization; an "organic," "holistic" jolt. This had been a profound, seemingly beyond words, "aha!" experience, in which one sees (meaning conceptualizes and feels at the same time), something along these lines: "This is real! This shit is killing me! I've got to stop this now, *no matter what!*"

This moment of brain/gut clarity was, of course, only my beginning. But it was a hell of a jump-start upon

which I built, *through deliberately induced procedures*, a remarkably comfortable booze-free existence where, previously, I had deteriorated to the point of existing only to drink. I had also previously attempted an almost-successful suicide and had, through alcoholism, almost given up on my life.

Later, after years of "separate-issue sobriety," I discovered that the procedures I'd developed earlier, originating from my "aha!" experience regarding my alcoholism, worked beautifully when *deliberately* applied to my nicotine addiction, with some modifications.

Modifications, options, tools, stuff that you can pick and choose and utilize, as derived from the suggestions in this book, will provide you with a way out of your nicotine addiction. You can apply the simple, straightforward procedures put forth in this book to create your very own personal approach, constructed by you and for you, specifically to empower you to arrest your nicotine addiction comfortably and not gain weight in the process.

So what happened in the twenty days prior to my first cigarette-less day in beautiful Sylmar, California? I've located the notes in my old date book. My personal smoking-cessation plan was deliberately designed not to be oppressive. What do I mean by that? Simply this: I wanted to continue doing whatever I was doing at that particular time in my life without additional burdens, stress, or tedious "programs" to follow.

My plan, as it pertained to smoking cigarettes, was to begin on "Day One" with an allotment of twenty cigarettes-spaced throughout the day-morning, afternoon and evening-as I chose. On "Day Two" I would reduce my allotment of cigarettes to nineteen. "Day Three" to eighteen, and so on until "DAY TWENTY," when I was to smoke my final cigarette.

Knowing that sometimes people eat when they're simply thirsty, possibly dehydrated, rather than genuinely hungry, I planned to drink two liters of liquid a day, generally recommended as a healthful practice. Varieties of delicious sugar-free, fat-free beverages including fresh water were, and are, readily available.

I was already adept at "making calories count," that is, I enjoyed eating heartily without weight gain. I had accomplished this for some years by recreating all the delicious foods that I loved in reduced-fat versions of their original recipes. For instance, it was easy to quickly prepare virtually fat-free versions of cheeseburgers and fries, topped off with pie and ice cream. I kept sugar-free chewing gum (some smoking-cessation professionals specifically recommend spicy cinnamon-flavored sugarless gum) and sugar-free lollipops along with other sugar-free, fat free hard candies readily available. I had cinnamon sticks, toothpicks, carrot sticks, and celery stalks around too. I bought a couple of inexpensive smooth stones from a lapidary shop so that I'd have something to do with my potentially restless heretofore cigarette-clutching hands. I took leisurely walks daily. I began to add little extras, like climbing the stairs rather than taking escalators in shopping malls. Again, none of these procedures was oppressive, obsessive, or tedious. My stamina began to improve, my energy level increased.

After completing twenty days of gradual smoking cessation, I comfortably began DAY ONE of my new smoke-free life. I continued these simple strategies and gradually felt a lessened interest in chewing gum, toothpicks, etc., and an increased interest in fitness activities as my lungs cleared and I began to feel more fit.

Earlier I mentioned the application of *deliberately induced* "cognitive/visceral synchronization" procedures. These were simple "get real/stay real" slogans,

distilled from negative personal experience concerning nicotine addiction.

In my case, I'd never had heavy-duty negatives caused directly by my smoking. I'd not coughed up blood, or suffered from "smoker's cough" for that matter. But upon reflection, I easily found some "get-real" material to use: sometimes after smoking cigarettes, I'd feel fatigued and standing up would make me dizzy. I also recalled some pretty "gawd-awful" tastes in my mouth due to smoking.

One day, after some time in my new cigarette-free life, I had quite a powerful and moving experience related to my freedom from addiction to cigarettes. I was standing in line at a supermarket, something I'd done countless times before, but this time the huge display rack of numerous brands caught my attention. I said to myself, silently, with tears of confrontation welling up in my eyes as I directly addressed that cigarette display rack, "You addicted me for thirty years! Damn you!"

This may seem a bit dramatic, and clearly it isn't everyone's cup of tea. I suppose that's the point. These are very personal issues. Material impacts each of us with varying levels of intensity. In choosing "get real" material, each individual's experiences and sense memories will be unique. Moreover, some deliberately induced "aha!" experiences may develop a depth of meaning gradually, rather than suddenly. Sense memories can be powerful tools for recovery from addiction.

Made famous by Constantin Stanislavski's "method" acting techniques taught over sixty years ago in the Moscow Art Company, sense-memory techniques are utilized by our most esteemed actors today. When we experience a moment in a film or on the stage that "feels real," it, in effect, *is* real. That's because the actor we are watching has superimposed his or her own personal sense memory (that is, the *emotional* memory of an event from the actor's own life) onto the "feelings" of the character being portrayed in the film or play; thus, when the actor cries or expresses other emotions, it seems real because it, indeed, *is* real.

There are many ways to call up real, emotion-laden negative memories concerning one's smoking addiction. A few moments of reflection in your early days of recovery (there's no need to obsess on this procedure) will call up things that you don't like about your smoking. You might generally feel sad about the impact of cigarettes on your life. There's material there. And, in getting real, you need not exaggerate or embellish. Why? Because in our heart of hearts we each know what is true for us individually, and in applying these procedures, you will ultimately only be able to *accept* what is true in regard to arresting your addiction.

Let me be clear: This is *not* a self-deprecating process. No human being ever intended to get chemically hooked. Addiction damages our *precious* human survival systems. Someone who has had an addiction experience is different, altered from those who have not. The addict's natural survival system has sustained damage. We cannot cure our addictions. But we *can* arrest an addiction, and keep it arrested, by comfortably reclaiming our very own survival systems.

2. Square One: Sharing Your Personal Smoking Story

I'll go first. When I was about nineteen years old, and a theatre arts student at the University of Texas at Austin, I reveled in the knowledge that those jerks

majoring in our perceived rival department, namely radio and television broadcasting, thought us weird. I started dressing "theatrically," wearing a beret and toying with an overpriced brand of cigarettes called Vogue. As I recall, these filtered smokes came in a choice of multicolors or black with gold tips. I was enormously cool and the fancy cigarettes played a significant role in my coolness. Soon enough I was smoking for real and didn't look back. I eventually dumped the overpriced smokes and switched to more conventional brands.

So how and when and where did you start smoking? What were the circumstances, as best you can recall, and how did you feel at the time? Pick up your pen and start writing. Use additional sheets of paper, if necessary.

As they say in support groups: "Thank you for sharing." But you're not done yet. In the privacy of your own place, situate yourself in front of a mirror and read your personal story aloud to yourself while glancing into the mirror as often as possible. This helps make your smoking story more impactful to you, thus launching your awareness in the "get real about smoking" process. After completing this procedure, go on to Chapter 3.

3. Let's Get Real: Recalling, Acknowledging, and Accepting Your Very Own "Cigarette Burns"

As I said earlier, cognitive/visceral synchronization is a name I dreamed up to describe an impactful realization that I personally experienced over twenty years ago, which freed me at last from active alcohol addiction. It simply denotes a cognitive "aha!" experience, a lightbulb-over-the-head circumstance, coupled with a *simultaneous* gut feeling; thus a "full body understanding," if you will. Thinking *and* feeling in the same awareness moment: "This is real! This shit is killing me! I've got to stop this now, *no matter what!*" may *not* occur as readily to a smoker as to one addicted to alcohol or any of the other severely mind-bending drugs. Why? Because until relatively recently cigarette smoking was considered "the norm," an "OK," "cool" thing to do. Glamorized. Sanitized. Part of the landscape. At worst, an annoying habit. Tobacco Corporation CEOs stood before members of the U.S. Congress during the 1990s and stated, man for man, with straight faces, that nicotine wasn't an addictive substance.

After all, some of our greatest achievers have been smokers. Smoking generally doesn't cause one to drive a car over an embankment or tear families apart. Dynamic dads and marvelous moms have smoked. Brilliant college students have enjoyed cigarette breaks, unimpaired, graduating with the highest honors. Lovers tenderly stroke and smoke. Although this stuff is true, we now know some new stuff and can take a more informed look:

- Many life-ending maladies have their roots in nicotine addiction
- Countless little Debbies and little Billies have been impacted by and even died from second-hand smoke
- Virtually all smokers would start sweating if someone suddenly took their stash away

Sure, some smokers are courteous, careful, concerned. They only smoke outdoors, not in the home or family car

or the workplace. So what? Smokers are addicted to the drug they smoke and so. . . .

As a fellow nicotine addict with an arrested addiction, I offer you tools and straightforwardly say to you: These tools will aid you in escaping from nicotine country and in reclaiming a smoke-free life painlessly, without unwanted weight gain. Now, let's personally recall some real stuff that dreams aren't made of that directly comes from smoking cigarettes. I'll go first. I never coughed up blood. I passed a doctor's lung test with "flying colors" toward the end of my smoking. I seemed to have stamina even though I smoked. My relationships with others, smokers and nonsmokers alike, seemed fine.

But . . . I began to gradually realize via societal attitudes growing harsher re: smoking, and via the advent of smoking-awareness campaigns, that my smoking was really an oppressive addiction. Eventually, I wanted to want to stop. Different stuff is impactful to different folks; for instance, I'd heard that you get your taste for food back and that your lungs clear up and so forth, but for me the really impactful stuff was my growing resentment at being dependent on a drug that brought me bad stuff along with my nicotine fix. I began to allow these items into my awareness: I looked at my dizziness; my fatigue, which I'd come to accept as a norm for over thirty smoke-filled years; my watery eyes and the toxic tastes in my mouth. I began to explore, rather than continue to deny, the reality of my addiction. Through my research, I learned:

- Nicotine is a stimulant, but the drug suppresses emotional awareness, resulting in depression and low self-esteem
- The addicted brain experiences smoking as beneficial and the loss of cigarettes as a threat

I also learned that health consequences of smoking include, but are not limited to, high blood pressure, heart disease, heart attack, diabetes, allergies, dental problems, asthma, emphysema, pregnancy problems, hoarseness, hyperglycemia, excess sweating, upset stomach, eye irritation, cough, ulcer, stroke, sinusitis, dizziness, heart palpitation, chest pains, nervousness, swelling of limbs, shortness of breath, low energy, poor circulation, sexual malfunctions, dulled sense of smell and taste, acid stomach and indigestion, sleeplessness. I came to see that wrinkling skin, more frequent colds and flu, cigarette burns on clothing and furniture, the high cost of cigarettes, increased insurance rates, cigarettes breath, stained teeth and fingers, growing social unacceptability, decreased stamina, dirty ashtrays, the stale smell of smoke on my clothing and in my home and car were never featured in pro-smoking ads that cost cigarette companies billions of dollars each year.

Pick up your pen and list your very own "cigarette burns," that is, your compelling reasons for quitting that you *feel* as you *think* about them.

My Personal Smoking Reality List:
(Write your list on a separate sheet.)

Now that you've listed at least some of the reasons cigarette smoking makes you feel bad (you can add to the list whenever new stuff occurs to you), position yourself in front of the mirror and say something like this:

"My name is _____ and I acknowledge and accept that my addiction to cigarettes has resulted in _____."

Insert selections from your personal smoking-reality list here while glancing in the mirror as often as possible. Continue your "mirror work" by saying, "I feel

_____." State what you feel now while looking directly at yourself in your mirror and, to add to your growing awareness of smoking consequences, read daily portions of the book I suggested at the end of Chapter 1. Dr. C. Everett Koop, former U.S. Surgeon General, calls it "an authoritative-and chilling-account of what happens when you smoke."

Go on to Chapter 4.

4. When "I Want to Stop Smoking" Becomes Simply, "I Want to Stop Smoking"

I don't know about you, but I'm not fond of pain. Wouldn't it be great if things were reversed, concerning cigarette addiction; that is, what if smoking hurt instantly, like sticking your fingers into a blazing fire would hurt? Or what if the inside of your mouth, nose, sinuses, throat, and lungs hurt instantly, as if they'd all been simultaneously seared by hot branding irons (perhaps imprinting "nicotine country" onto your gums, down your throat, and across your lungs)? That sort of instantaneous reaction, if it were possible, would make cigarette smoking less desirable, even though each "hit" or "drag" off a cigarette offers a nicotine "fix," reaching the brain in seven seconds, twice as fast as a syringe of heroin injected into the vein. In a way, one's chemical addiction is like the proverbial bear-and-honey scenario: The bear doesn't understand that the numerous painful bee-sting attacks are a direct result of its recent theft of the honey and so it will continue to endure this pain, over and over, for life. But—and picture here a big bear *butt-Homo Sapiens* have not only (in common with our bear buddies as well as reptiles, amphibians, and fish) the ever-popular "limbic system": a ring of cerebral cortex, the oldest portion of the cortex, now thought to control various emotional and behavioral patterns . . . we human folk *also* have *highly developed* frontal-lobe potential (unlike our bear buddies' frontal-lobe potential) going for us as well. And, yet another *but*: our "lizard brains" or primitive limbic systems know nothing of "right" or "wrong" or "character" or "resolve"; our primitive survival mechanism of fight-or-flight, accept-or-reject, interprets nicotine (or heroin for that matter) as "good" in chemical/emotional language because it feels good immediately. Consequences be damned when addiction sets in. Here's an interesting question: Would nicotine addicts steal car radios, lie, cheat, and the like, if smokes were illegal, underground?

Now that we're (almost) done with butts, let me state that we human guys and gals have the equipment to escape from nicotine country painlessly, unlike bears, who, lovable as they may be, when it comes to the perils of obtaining honey, just don't "get it" regarding their learned "cycle of need."

We humans, however, can "get it," albeit, we had better respect our very (underscore *very*) *powerful* primitive parts *as much as* we do our newer "reasoning equipment," i.e., our frontal lobes. If we humans could simply react "rationally" to addictive chemicals, specifically nicotine, one could—perhaps while on horseback, trotting through nicotine country—sensibly utter something like this: "Cigarette smoking is not in my best interest" and confidently ride into the sunset, nicotineless. But (again with the but) virtually all ye who puff the cigs for a while, *become hooked*. I did for a fair amount

of time-30 years. Of course, there are exceptions. I knew a woman once who apparently wasn't hooked on cigarettes, smoking only occasionally, when she chose to do so. Naturally, classically, addicts will think (if you can call it thinking), "I could be one of those rare exceptions!" BUT, with cigarettes, even occasional smoking has been found to be hazardous to your health! And if you are one of the so-called lucky ones who can "take it or leave it" you probably wouldn't be reading this book. Let's get on with it!

I have modified the following material from one of my previous alcohol-addiction recovery books, *Unhooked: Staying Sober and Drug-Free* (Prometheus Books, 1989), specifically to address nicotine drug addiction, rather than alcohol drug addiction:

The Cycle of Addiction

The simple procedures offered in this book for achieving and maintaining freedom from nicotine addiction are cognitive/visceral (or "head/gut") synchronization strategies. They can be applied whenever you wish to prevent relapse. This approach respects the power of "nature" (genetic inheritance, progressive addiction processes) and of "nurture" (learned habits, behaviors, and associations) by showing how to achieve the initial arrest of nicotine addiction and to keep your nicotine addiction arrested. The "cycle of addiction" contains three debilitating elements: *chemical need* (at the physiological cellular level), *learned habit* (chronic behaviors and associations), and *denial* of both need and habit.

The cycle of nicotine addiction becomes "second nature," automatically accepted as a way of life.

The Cycle of Recovery

The cycle of addiction can be successfully replaced by another cycle: *the cycle of recovery*. This cycle contains three essential elements: *acknowledgement* of your addiction to nicotine; *acceptance* of your addiction; and *prioritization* of recovery procedures to replace the addiction. The daily cognitive/visceral application of your new recovery procedures arrests the cycle of addiction. It frees you to experience "everything else," by teaching you to associate "everything else" with recovery, not with addiction-driven behaviors. The cycle of recovery remains in place only so long as you choose to continue to acknowledge the existence of your arrested addiction. An addict's addiction is either active or arrested. This is your lifelong reality. When you begin your personal smoking-cessation plan, you could say something like the following every day: "My name is _____. I acknowledge that cigarette smoking is an addiction. I accept that I cannot smoke cigarettes, no matter what I may think, experience, feel. My recovery is my first priority, and it is a separate issue from everything else in my life."

Another affirmation could go like this: "My name is _____. I am a nicotine addict. I cannot and do not smoke cigarettes or use any other tobacco products, no matter what. I can't smoke and get away with it. My recovery is my priority, and an issue separate from all else." Both versions express acknowledgment, acceptance and prioritization.

These personal cognitive/visceral or "head/gut" affirmations have more impact when experienced as "mirror work." Even when a mirror is not available, you can repeat these "get real/stay real" statements of truth to yourself at any time, anywhere you wish, once you begin your smoking-cessation plan.

The recovery priority, applied daily, gradually weakens smoking associations, halting the cycle of addiction

and allowing time for new associations to form as you experience your life free from cigarettes. As you continue to "make peace" with the facts regarding your arrested addiction—that is, as you continue to recognize smoking as a *nonoption*—you will come to *prefer* a cigarette-free lifestyle; you will long to preserve it, to respect your arrested addiction, to protect your new life.

Acknowledgment

Smoking stopped working for me. The price for my pleasure-center fix became too high. I glimpsed my morality in a real blood-and-guts, finite way and my romanticized dream-views fell apart. It was then that I acknowledged I was hooked on cigarettes. I accepted that I could not stop smoking once I started. It occurred to me that if I stopped and "stayed stopped," no matter what came my way, it would probably be better than my then-current life situation. And it was. Through this acknowledgment of my nicotine addiction, I began to desire to protect and maintain my new life. I wanted freedom from the bondage of my cycle of addiction. I take responsibility for my own recovery. I respect my arrested addiction. As I continue to stay free from cigarettes, I think well of myself for my achievement. The very act of staying free from cigarettes gives me self-esteem. Every day I credit myself for my continuing recovery. You must acknowledge addiction to smoking as you're here-and-now reality in order to begin your recovery.

Acceptance

Who among us really wants to accept that he or she has an addiction? Does an injured combat vet gleefully accept that he no longer has legs? But acceptance is necessary to recovery. One has first to acknowledge, then accept, facts that can no longer be denied. Denial can go on for years, and many persons die while in the process. When the combat vet awakens each morning, he experiences the fact that he no longer has legs. Not so with addicts. We must reacknowledge and reaccept our arrested addictions. We have no motorized wheelchair gleaming in a bedroom corner to remind us to acknowledge and accept. Our reminder must be a head/gut thing in order to keep our addiction arrested.

Some of us go through a brief period of mourning. We seem to have lost an old friend in quitting smoking. The phenomenon, as far as I am concerned, is similar to that of a hostage coming to identify with his terrorist captor. Called "the Stockholm Syndrome," it's normal for some—but of course it's completely irrational. Eventually, we come to prefer a life of freedom from cigarettes, and that joyous realization is a pleasure to contemplate.

Prioritization as a Separate Issue

Once you have acknowledged and accepted the reality of your addiction, once you have really stopped denying your addiction, doesn't prioritizing recovery make sense? Simply put, prioritizing your recovery means:

You choose to value that which affords you a life.

Your recovery is an *untouchable* separate issue. Smoking is not an option for you, because you are addicted to smoking, that is, you cannot smoke *and get away with it*.

As long as you continue to restate this commitment to yourself, acknowledging and accepting who you are, you're set free to experience everything else.

"Everything else" means that you can get angry, anx-

(Excerpts from *Nicotine Country*,
Continued on page 14.)



Valerie White, Esq.

Wind Beneath My Wings

by Valerie White, Esq.

South Station is Boston's main train terminal. From here, commuter rail service will take you all over greater Boston. You can also take Amtrak as far as Montreal, Miami, Vancouver, BC, and Los Angeles. (. . . but not Mainethe Downeaster leaves from NORTH station. Don't ask.)

South Station is one of my favorite places to while away an hour or so. It's warm and clean. There is a food court with standbys like pizza and hamburgers and more adventurous choices like Cajun. I love the New Orleans blackened fish and dirty rice with a side of cabbage. You can also get reading material at a Barbara's Bestsellers, chocolates at Rose's, and chai or latte at a Starbucks. There's a bar, but I've never been in it. Then there is the people-watching.

South Station also has live music sometimes, and sometimes art exhibits, and at Christmas a huge electric train setup, and always advertising. For some reason the South Station advertising is done on the European model, with all the placards the same. The last time I was there, the commodity advertised was Glenlivet single malt scotch: the one that started it all, the banners said.

Now, my sobriety is solid enough that an ad for Glenlivet does not send me trotting over to the nearest package store. But I was astonished at how vividly the pictured bottles recalled a smoky bar in Prestwick, Scotland, and the smoky, clean, sharp bite of neat, room-temperature unblended whisky. I could almost taste it, and feel the warm burst in my throat

and the certainty of the buzz that would follow.

The days when I would enjoy an expensive shot are long gone. I don't expect ever to taste scotch whisky again. But evolution gave us memory, that we might have roses in December. My memory keeps the taste of single-malt. Fortunately, it also keeps the experience of hangovers . . . the sensation that your hands are trembling but when you look at them, they aren't, the feeling that your eyes are trying to crawl together over your nose. It keeps the experience of blackouts . . . the necessity to cover when it becomes clear that other people remember things from the night before that you don't. I'm glad those days are over.

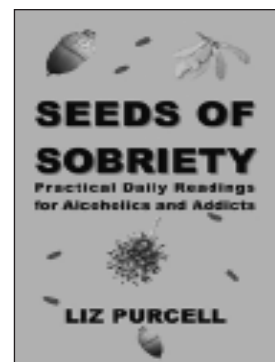
I recently came across an article ("The Toxicity of Recreational Drugs," American Scientist, May-June 2006) which ranked various recreational drugs according to the ratio between the amount of the substance necessary to have the desired effect and the amount of the substance that would kill you.

Not surprisingly the most toxic was heroin, where five times the recreational dose is enough to kill you. Psilocybin would take one thousand times, as would LSD. There is no reported case of a death from marijuana overdose. Alcohol is among the most toxic: just ten times the recreational dose can be fatal. The author comments, ". . . if alcohol were a newly formulated beverage, its high toxicity and addictive potential would surely prevent it from being marketed as a food or drug." Public policy about drugs and alcohol is waaaay overdue for revision.



SEEDS OF SOBRIETY: *Practical Daily Readings for Alcoholics and Addicts*

by Liz Purcell (Outskirts Press, 2006)
(396 pages, paperback)



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LIZ PURCELL is a freelance writer and long-time sober alcoholic. She is also a long-time member of Secular Organizations for Sobriety. She celebrated 25 years of sobriety on February 1, 2007.

A 'Net Note' from Duaine

Web Notes The Internet

The Internet has become an important part of the SOS recovery movement.

The Internet is here to stay. So we (SOS) had better use it or be left behind. Members, who have no contact with the Internet and no interest in learning how to use it, still are able to have a friend or family member locate SOS Web sites, print out articles written by Jim Christopher or SOS members, find meetings in their area, and keep up to date, etc.

SOS groups that want to promote their recovery groups, post times, dates and where a meeting is being held, can do it with a Web site. You can do this on your own if you know how or you can send the info to SaveOurSelves@msn.com and request a Web Site be put up for you—there are still good free Web Sites out there. Before it's promoted you will have a chance to check it out -make changes. It's your Web Site if you put it up yourself or have SOS do it. It's also easy for you to take over the Web Site at any time if SOS puts it up for you.

Real Time SOS Chat Meetings

Meetings at this time are on an as needed basis. We need volunteers to make this work. Join the SOS International E-Support list to help make this work.

A Heading to Promote Local SOS Groups on the SOS Links Page

SOS Groups E-Lists.

For the use of promoting the Group and giving Info to the local members. The idea being: The group can post meeting times and places. The group can post changes. The group members can post discussions of whatever the groups needs are at the time. The group members who couldn't make it to a meeting can still stay in contact with the group by posting. The group can send out reminders of meetings automatically. The E-Lists is easy to set up and will be promoted on the SOS Links page with the SOS family of Web sites.

SOS Australia E-support E-Group

au.groups.yahoo.com/group/secular_sobriety_sos_au/

SOS Netherlands E-Support Group

groups.yahoo.com/group/sossaveourselves_Netherlands/

SOS Chicago E-Support Group

groups.yahoo.com/group/SOSChicago

SOS Western New York E-Support Group

groups.yahoo.com/group/soswny

SOS Central Texas Temple E-Support Group

groups.yahoo.com/group/cen_tex_SOS

SOS Dallas E-support Group

groups.yahoo.com/group/sosdallas

SOS Austin E-Support Group

groups.yahoo.com/group/sossaveourselves

NYS-wide SOS E-Support Group

health.groups.yahoo.com/group/SOSNYS/

Your group or group in the making can be added to this list easily, just go into Yahoo and set up an E-Support

Group, let me know at SaveOurSelves@msn.com and it will be promoted worldwide.

An Article from SOS Friends and Families

by Hope

For every one addict you will generally find at least 2 people who love them and are affected by their addiction. Whether it is their parents, spouses, friends, or children, finding places for those loved ones to get support has been limited greatly, especially for those looking for a secular support group, but now that's no longer the case. . . .

SOS Friends and Families On-Line Support Group has been up and operating since July 12, 2005 and currently has 70 members. Our backgrounds, hometowns and stories may all be different but one thing is the same, we are in love with an addict.

I personally have a long history of addicts in my life. My parents were alcoholics; both my brother and sister are alcoholics. My ex-husband was a drug addict. I am a sober alcoholic who has been sober for 15+ years, and am currently fighting a food addiction.

My personal situation with my siblings is, I can count my parents, myself, my children, their children, our younger brother and their spouses as people that are affected by their drinking. That is 15 people affected by the actions of the both of them. That is not including employers, and/or friends. So the need for a group such as this is there, but so much of the time we are the forgotten victims of their addiction. We hear about hangovers, blackouts, vomiting everywhere, etc., but who do you think brings the aspirin, fills in the blanks of the blackouts, and cleans up the mess? Who makes excuses to friends, family or employers about why they may be late or why they will be unable to show up at all? Not to mention spouses that try to keep things from upsetting them during the time they are using or children who have learned the signs that mommy or daddy is "sick" so they can stay out of their way?

Let's not forget the 2 A.M. phone calls, the begging for money and the need for help that we constantly hear. Who do we turn to? Who listens when we are at the end of our ropes, or when we feel like failures?

The members at SOS Friends and Family listen. Every member here has had their lives greatly affected by the addictive behavior of a loved one and they need support, advice, understanding, the opportunity to share and learn. They need a safe place to do it, no matter what their spiritual believes are. We do follow the mission of SOS in that we are secular in nature and hold religion and spirituality as separate issues from our recovery, and the recovery of our loved ones. This particular SOS group was created to provide an alternative to other programs which are spiritually or religiously based, for the loved ones of the addict.

So much of the time someone dealing with a "high" friend or drunk spouse is too ashamed to look for someone to talk to. They are convinced nobody will understand why we can't just turn our backs on our loved ones. So, much of the time that makes it harder for us to deal with the problems in our world, not to mention in our minds, hearts and souls.

Hopefully this group will fill the needs of those people and help to get them through another day. . . .

http://groups.yahoo.com/group/SOS_Friends_and_Families



Duaine Metevia

The Place to be on the Web?

Where do I go to get the most from SOS on the web?
 A place where I can benefit the most as far as getting info and support from SOS?
 A place where SOS members from around the world meet?
 A place where new ideas are being tried?
 A place where I can be heard?
 A place where people will listen to what I have to say?
 The answer?

SOS Save Our Selves E-Support Group.

groups.yahoo.com/group/sossaveourselves
 This is an important part of SOS on the Web. This is the place where a lot of new ideas are tried and members give feedback. Become a part of the movement that never stands still, SOS. You may have something that works for you and want a place to share it. Here is that place.

This is a place to come for support in your recovery. It's also a place to give back or make the journey a little easier for the next person.
 New to SOS — Long Time Sober — Promoting an SOS Meeting — Thinking of Starting a Meeting — Looking for On-Line Support — Promoting a Web Site.

Also

SOS Women

groups.yahoo.com/group/soswomen
 This SOS E-support group is set up to meet the needs of women in SOS with lots of support.

Plus

SOS Friends and Families –

groups.yahoo.com/group/SOS_Friends_and_Families
 This E-support group is set up to meet the needs of friends and families of those who are or have been addicted.

SOS MARKETPLACE

Merchandise Order Form

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> "Avoiding the Relapse Mode" audiotape \$7.95 <input type="checkbox"/> "Empowerment Sobriety" audiotape \$7.95 <input type="checkbox"/> SOS Group Leader's Guide video \$39.95 <input type="checkbox"/> The Sobriety Priority video \$24.95 <input type="checkbox"/> <i>SOS Sobriety</i> \$16.95 <input type="checkbox"/> <i>How to Stay Sober</i> \$16.95 <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Unhooked</i> \$16.95 <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Escape from Nicotine Country</i> \$16.95 <input type="checkbox"/> SOS Group Leader's Guidebook \$2.95 <input type="checkbox"/> English <input type="checkbox"/> Spanish | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> "Your Sobriety Toolkit" brochure \$5.00 per 50 <input type="checkbox"/> English <input type="checkbox"/> Spanish <input type="checkbox"/> "Family and Friends" brochure \$5.00 per 50 <input type="checkbox"/> English <input type="checkbox"/> Spanish <input type="checkbox"/> "An Overview of SOS" brochure \$5.00 per 50 <input type="checkbox"/> English <input type="checkbox"/> Spanish <input type="checkbox"/> "Your First 30 Days" brochure \$5.00 per 50 <input type="checkbox"/> English <input type="checkbox"/> Spanish <input type="checkbox"/> "Sobriety Priority" brochure \$5.00 per 50 <input type="checkbox"/> English <input type="checkbox"/> Spanish <input type="checkbox"/> <i>SOS Newsletter</i> back issues \$5.00 each <input type="checkbox"/> <i>SOS Newsletter</i> back issues photocopies \$4.00 each |
|---|--|

Items with unchecked language boxes will be sent in English.

Add \$2.00 per item for postage and handling (except audiotapes and brochures). All brochures sold in bulk only. Minimum order: 50 copies.

Check or money order (payable to SOS/CSH in U.S. funds) TOTAL \$ _____

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City _____ State/Country _____ ZIP/Postal Code _____

Return to: **SOS, Box 5, Buffalo, NY 14215-0005**
 See *SOS Marketplace: Tools for Recovery, page 15.*

And SOS International Journal E-group

health.groups.yahoo.com/group/sosjournal

The purpose of this site is not to obtain feedback from others. It is, rather, a forum where people can write their thoughts and feelings as an alternative to pen and paper; can share their writing with others for the purpose of assisting those who are still struggling, or just to vent feeling about urges, possibly preventing slips and relapses.

Recovery Connections

www.sossobriety.org/meetings

Find a meeting in your area.

Looking at the Web site isn't enough. The Web site only tells part of the story. It lists meetings and gives contacts. The rest of the story is behind the scenes. It's the people who want to be a part of SOS but don't want to start a meeting at this time, people who don't want to have their contact info on the Web page or just want to be there for local people, people in the area—to give a supportive ear. Maybe they will meet you for coffee. They could be waiting for one more person in their area to start a meeting.

Help or a friend in recovery could be a phone call away. If you don't leave your contact info you could miss out.

The Way "Recovery Connections" Works

SOS@CFIWest.org

You leave your contact info with Jim Christopher. If there is someone in your area, Jim will link you up with him or her. If there is no one in your area today, someone could do what you have just done and tomorrow they will be linked up with you. It works if you become a part of it and make it work. To make it work you need to give Jim Christopher your contact info.

Watch our Face to Face meetings grow!

SOS@CFIWest.org

Green Wall of Growth

www.sossobriety.org/greenwall.htm

A place where SOS Members can sign in using their first name and initial or full name, country, state or province and date of their discussion to live their life alcohol/drug free

Check it out and see how much it has grown.

Thanks to Norm for the great idea of the Green Wall of Growth.

CFI/West

www.cfiwest.org/sos

CFI/West, the home site of Jim Christopher; it's always up to date. It's a great place to start your search to find what's going on with SOS.

SOS International

www.sossobriety.org

This Web site is filled with diversity. It has some writings by James Christopher and some by SOS Members from around the world. You will find lots of information on SOS and you will also find, printed thoughts of SOS Members. Many SOS Web sites have contributed to its making. By going through it you will find links to many of the SOS Web Family and get a flavor of other SOS Web sites. I encourage you visit all of the SOS Web Family.

Secular Sobriety

www.secularsobriety.org

Filled with info on SOS, up to date web links, lots to read.

SOS Behind Bars

www.sosbehindbars.org

With over 150 SOS Behind Bars meetings in Texas.

SOS Behind Bars was set up to meet the needs of SOS Members behind bars holding SOS Meetings and to help jail and prison staff better understand SOS. There are posts by SOS members. Printouts of suggestions on How to Hold an SOS Meeting Behind Bars.

Lots of SOS info!

Recovery Happens On Line

Recovery is valid wherever it comes from; online, as well as face to face or alone. Recovery is valid no matter where it happens.

SOS Save Our Selves E-Support Group

groups.yahoo.com/group/sossaveourselves

This was built as a safe place to come and share. This is the Home Group of SOS E-Support Groups.

SOS Women E-Support Group

groups.yahoo.com/group/soswomen

This group is set up to meet the needs of women in SOS. It was set up to have a safe place to share. To give and get support. To talk about the special needs of women in recovery.

SOS Friends and Families

groups.yahoo.com/group/SOS_Friends_and_Families

This E-support group is set up to meet the needs of friends and families of those who are or have been addicted.

SOS International Journal E-group

health.groups.yahoo.com/group/sosjournal

The purpose of this site is not to obtain feedback from others. It is, rather, a forum where people can write their thoughts and feelings as an alternative to pen and paper; can share their writing with others for the purpose of assisting those who are still struggling, or just to

vent feeling about urges, possibly preventing slips and relapses.

One Person

One person can build a meeting. Give your contact info to Jim Christopher at SOS@CFIWest.org. Become a contact person for your area. Become a group in the making. Build a Web site. Build it yourself or have Duaine M help at SaveOurSelves@msn.com. Promote your group or group-in-the-making with a Web page. Promote your group or group-in-the-making at

SOS Save Our Selves E-Support Group
groups.yahoo.com/group/sossaveourselves

Share what you're doing in SOS or want to do. You can make a change. You can make a difference. I'm looking forward to getting to know you.

New to Recovery? Some Thoughts from SOS Members

www.sossobriety.org/easy.htm

I found that early in my recovery I was missing lots of information. I went to a detox treatment center where I assumed I would be given all the info I needed. I found it difficult to sleep and went several nights with very little sleep. I thought there was something wrong with me. There was, I was going through a very natural process of relearning how to sleep.

So why wasn't I told about it sooner? Why did I have to go through it and then find out it was a natural part of the recovery process? So I decided to put together a Web page to address things that most of us already know or should know. This Web page is still under construction. We are getting lots of input from SOS members but need lots more. Your input is welcome. Please check it out and send your thoughts to SaveOurSelves@msn.com Duaine Metevia.

New Up to Date Search for SOS Meetings

www.sossobriety.org/meetings

A new Search page for finding SOS Meetings and SOS Contacts is the most up to date meeting and contact finder of any recovery support group on the Internet.

Updates are posted as they happen.

www.sossobriety.org/meetings

SOS Web Sites

<http://www.sossobriety.org/uptodate.htm>

SOS Clearing House

<http://www.cfiwest.org/sos>

SOS International

<http://www.sossobriety.com>

SOS Secular Sobriety

<http://www.secularsobriety.org>

Council For Secular Humanism

<http://www.secularhumanism.org/index.php?section=sos&page=index>

SOS Behind Bars

<http://www.sosbehindbars.org/>

SOS Women

<http://www.sos-women.org>

SOS Dallas

<http://www.sosdallas.org>

SOS Rochester-NY

<http://www.sos-rochester.org>

SOS Western New York

<http://soscanada.org/soswny/>

Madtown Secular Recovery

<http://mادتownsecular.tripod.com>

SOS Sarasota-Florida

<http://sossarasota.tripod.com>

SOS Tulsa

<http://www.sostulsa.org>

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- Please check one: *How to Stay Sober* *Unhooked: Staying Sober and Drug Free*
 SOS Sobriety: The Proven Alternative to 12-Step Programs
 Escape from Nicotine Country

Subscription rates are noted below, and extra donations are always gratefully welcome. **SOS relies on you!**

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V19/N4

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SOS E-Groups

Home E-Group of SOS

SOS Save Our Selves E-Support Group—Support and Information

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/sossaveourselves>

SOS Women E-Support Group—Set up to meet the needs of women in SOS

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/SOSWomen>

SOS Friends and Families—Set up to meet the needs of friends and families of those who are or have been addicted.

http://www.itsachoice.org/group_family_friends.htmhttp://groups.yahoo.com/group/SOS_Friends_and_Families

SOS International Journal E-group

<http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/sosjournal/>

The purpose of this site is not to obtain feedback from others. It is, rather, a forum where people can write their thoughts and feelings as an alternative to pen and paper, can share their writing with others for the purpose of assisting those who are still struggling, or just to vent feelings about urges, possibly preventing slips and relapses.

The Discussion Board

Allows us to open a topic and follow it through in some detail. <http://forums.delphiforums.com/sosdiscussion>

SOS Groups E-Lists

For the use of promoting the Group and giving Info to the local members.

SOS Australia E-support E-Grouphttp://au.groups.yahoo.com/group/secular_sobriety_sos_au/**SOS Netherlands E-Support Group**http://groups.yahoo.com/group/sossaveourselves_Netherlands/**SOS Chicago E-Support Group**<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/SOSChicago>**SOS Western New York E-Support Group**<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/soswny>**SOS Central Texas Temple E-Support Group**http://groups.yahoo.com/group/cen_tex_SOS**SOS Dallas E-support Group**<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/sosdallas>**SOS Austin E-Support Group**http://groups.yahoo.com/group/sos_austin**SOS Lubbock E-Support Group**<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/soswesttexas>**NYS-wide SOS E-Support Group**<http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/SOSNYS/>

SOS Group Site—for Real Time Support Meetings—Times and places for SOS meetings—Some info on posting—Some info on SOS

<http://www.sossobriety.org/sos/chattimes.htm>

SOS Meetings and Contacts to Start a Meeting

<http://www.sossobriety.org/meetings>

If there isn't a meeting in your area leave your contact info with James Christopher.

This is how many of our meetings start, it's hard to start a meeting if no one knows you're out there. Not all cities have a SOS Meeting—some have phone contacts—where you can talk with a SOS member over the phone in your area. In some cities SOS members meet as needed for coffee. This is why it's so important that you leave contact information with James Christopher. There may be someone in your area who wants to lend an ear and a voice. Someone who cares and wants to help.

There may be a meeting being formed. Please don't miss out.

<http://www.sossobriety.org/meetings>

Contact Jim Christopher

Jim Christopher (323) 666-4295

Save Our Selves (SOS)

4773 Hollywood Blvd

Hollywood, CA 90027

E-mail: SOS@CFIWest.org Attn: Jim Christopher

Let Jim know you are out there. This is how we grow.

***Don't forget . . .
our three primary
SOS Web sites are***

**www.sossobriety.org
www.cfiwest.org/sos
www.secularsobriety.org**

SOS

Building Recovery By Duaine Metevia

A guide to SOS meetings

The philosophy of SOS, Save Our Selves.

The nuts and bolts of SOS support meetings for the new member, longstanding member, counselors and care providers in the field of addictions.

Save Our Selves

An SOS member puts together information on holding SOS meetings in jails, prisons, treatment/detox centers and public meetings. You get answers to questions from his personal experiences.

There is lots of information in this book on SOS.

Questions and answers. Internet information with a list of SOS Web Sites. Information on how to find SOS Meetings or Contacts. International E-Support groups

Contact; itsachoice@gmail.com
Web Site www.itsachoicepublishing.com

Building Recovery



Questions and answers about SOS philosophy
information about starting support meetings

■ S A V E O U R S E L V E S ■

(Excerpts from *Nicotine Country*,
continued from page 7.)

ious, fearful, joyous, sad, thrilled, nervous, stressed, bored, jealous, intimate and happy-experience the full gamut of your emotions-without fearing you are in a "relapse mode." Connecting recovery to necessary emotional states is risky business. Connecting it to the realization you simply can't smoke makes a lot more sense. This approach fits the evidence; it's a lot less confusing, and it *works*. "Everything else" also means you can be a rascal, a pauper, a king, a democrat, a republican, a libertarian, a fascist, a socialist, or combinations of any of the above, and *still stay away from cigarettes*. In recovery, as each new day passes, we brush our teeth, comb our hair, succeed, fail, laugh, cry, argue, learn, experience setbacks, feel pain, think dark thoughts, regret losses, pity ourselves, accept ourselves, dislike ourselves and experience highs and lows. And in recovery, this all becomes new, as if done for the first time. Every day is a victory.

When we smoke, we tamper with our delicate neurological balance. Many times this alteration seems to be of minimal consequence; however, addiction to nicotine takes on a life of its own, and we literally become secondary, slaves, as the feeding of our "needy cells" becomes our number-one priority.

Scientists say that *Homo sapiens* is genetically programmed to be a creature of habit. When we learn things, we in a sense "own" them. Behavior is imprinted onto our brains, to be called up when related associations come along. For cigarette addicts, smoking tends to be associated with just about everything.

In my smoking days, for example, I associated smoking with butterfly wings, turkey legs, neon signs, world peace, good times, bad times, creativity, pathos, inhaling, exhaling, making dinner, making love-just about everything. My cigarette-to-mouth reflexes would oper-

ate "faster than my neurotransmitters could fire," as one friend said to me. However, addiction can be arrested, and associations can be weakened.

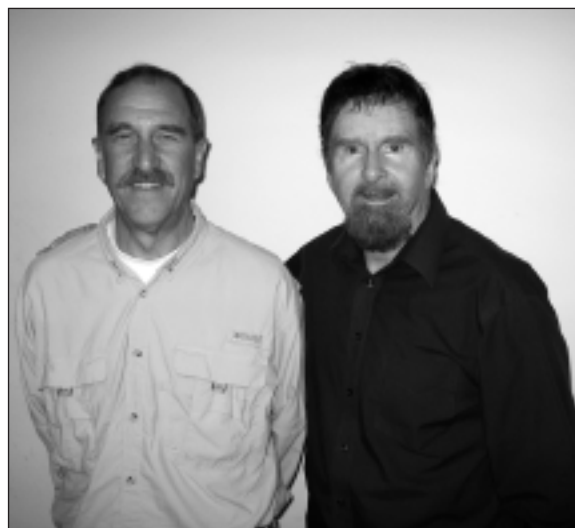
When viewing smoking from the cellular-addictive standpoint, two points emerge:

Once the cells are freed from cigarettes, it becomes crucial to keep these cells away from cigarettes.

If smokers smoke again, the cells will be "waiting" for their chemical fix. The original addiction

is once again fired up. Cellular need, primitive need, does not request compliance-it demands it.

(To order *Escape from Nicotine Country* see ad on next page.)



(L to R) SOS Maryland Convenor, Barry, visits SOS Founder, Jim Christopher, SOS International, Hollywood, CA, Thursday afternoon, April 5, 2007.

The SOS Marketplace: Tools for Recovery

Brochures

New Expanded and Revised Editions



“An Overview of SOS”

The basic overview brochure of the SOS movement. Includes the principles and the history of the Secular Organizations for Sobriety.

“The Sobriety Priority”

Excerpted from *How to Stay Sober*, this brochure explains the “Sobriety Priority” of the SOS program.

“Your First Thirty Days”

Information and advice for the newly sober alcoholic or addict. Includes list of suggested books to read.

“Your Sobriety Toolkit”

Based on Larry B.’s presentations at the SOS National Workshop series in San Diego and Los Angeles in 1992.

“Family and Friends Recovery”

A brochure offering recovery guidelines for families and friends of alcoholics and addicts.

All Brochures—50 copies for \$5.00

Books

New Expanded and Revised Edition!

SOS Group Leader’s Guidebook

All the information you need to start an SOS group in your community—all in one little booklet. Ideas on how to get started, where to meet, and how to promote your group. Plus tips on how to deal with problem people, a complete suggested meeting format, and much, much more. — \$2.95

How To Stay Sober: Recovery without Religion

The book that started an international grassroots movement! SOS founder James Christopher describes his own “recovery without religion,” focuses on the practical aspects of his triumph over alcoholism, and includes guidelines for the formation of secular support groups. — 191 pages, paper, \$16.95

Unhooked: Staying Sober and Drug Free

James Christopher recounts the evolution of SOS and details cases of recovery through the program. He invites the reader to sit in on a fictionalized SOS meeting and offers further strategies for achieving and maintaining sobriety and self-respect. — 184 pages, paper, \$16.95

SOS Sobriety: The Proven Alternative to 12-Step Programs

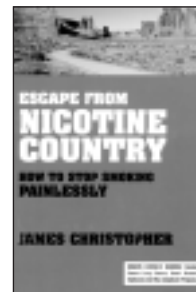
Sure to be controversial, SOS Sobriety lays bare the limitations of Alcoholics Anonymous while describing the proven methods of alcohol and drug abstinence advocated by James Christopher, founder of Secular Organizations for Sobriety (or “Save Our Selves”), the world’s largest non-12-step addiction recovery program. After answering basic questions about the nature and purpose of SOS, the success of the “sobriety priority” approach is documented through two scientific studies. Included are moving in-depth individual recovery stories, interviews



with addiction experts and legal professionals as well as a critique of “controlled drinking” programs and the insistence by AA and the liquor industry that alcoholism is a problem of behavior rather than one rooted in physiology and genetics. — 240 pages, paper, \$16.95

Escape from Nicotine Country: How to Stop Smoking Painlessly by James Christopher

“The prospect of stopping smoking is scary as hell. I know — I’ve been there.” So opens *Escape from Nicotine Country*, James Christopher’s unique and uplifting guide to quitting smoking without pain or weight gain. A thirty-year smoker, Christopher gave up cigarettes in 1993, after a gradual period of individual withdrawal, exercise, and proper diet. Now he offers his remarkable and simple self-help program to all those who want to kick the habit.



While not weighed down with “just say no” rhetoric, overused shock statistics, or religious undertones, *Escape from Nicotine Country* goes against the grain of stop-smoking polemics by empowering the individual through motivational chapters. Christopher tells his own story of addiction and success in quitting. At the same time he promotes understanding of nicotine addiction and offers a simple solution to breaking the habit through reduction.

Christopher’s program addresses many different types of nicotine addiction, the hunger that haunts those trying to quit, and the need for a healthy routine of exercise. The latter half of the book is an encouraging diary, which allows the reader to record the progress that will lead to a healthier, smoke-free life. — 360 pages, paper, \$16.95

Audiotapes

“Avoiding the Relapse Mode”

Powerful strategies are offered in this straightforward life saving approach to staying clean and sober “no matter what.” Jim Christopher shares his own recovery/relapse prevention techniques and relates anonymous case histories of triumph over potential relapse and achievement of a comfortable sobriety. — (30 min.) \$7.95, including postage and handling.

“Empowerment Sobriety”

A candid, indepth look at the Sobriety Priority/Separate Issue method in action. SOS founder Jim Christopher offers powerful strategies for achieving and maintaining ones sobriety through self-empowerment. Christopher relates his own recovery in this dynamic presentation. — (30 min.) \$7.95, including postage and handling.

Videotapes

SOS Group Leader’s Guide—The Video

The video based on our popular guidebook for new convertors. How to launch an SOS group, where to meet, how to promote your meetings, how to poise your group for growth. Plus complete suggested meeting format and special techniques for handling problem people, structuring group leadership, and more. Demonstrated on camera by experienced SOS convertors, role-playing a typical meeting for you! — (45 min.) \$39.95

The Sobriety Priority

This fast-moving, professionally produced video gives newcomers, outsiders, and professionals their first compelling look at SOS. Ideal for presentation to the general public or cable TV. The Sobriety Priority presents the purpose and methods of dynamic, fast-growing SOS. Includes simulated meeting footage and interviews with group leaders, SOS board member William London, and founder Jim Christopher. — (14 min.) \$24.95

See *SOS MARKETPLACE ORDER FORM*, page 10.

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