

TOP STORY

Jordan woman resolves to breathe easier

BY KARA HILDRETH khildreth@swpub.com Jan 3, 2017



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"I feel like I conquered something that was bigger than myself."

- Toni Walsh

Last year Toni Walsh made a New Year's resolution she kept all year long.

After 42 years of smoking, Walsh decided 2016 would be the year she would choose to be healthier and breathe more freely.

A recovered alcoholic for 27 years, Walsh traded alcohol for other addictions.

After she recovered from drinking alcohol, she found herself drinking a 12-pack of Mountain Dew everyday, but then she gained 60 pounds. Smoking cigarettes became an okay justification, Walsh said, because smoking was better in her mind than drinking or overeating.

"When I quit drinking, my thought process in my head was I quit drinking and so I had to have one thing like cigarettes that I could lean on," said Walsh.

HALF A CIGARETTE

Before this veteran smoker decided to pursue a smoking cessation plan, Walsh was smoking about a pack a day of Marlboro ultra lights.

"I only smoked half the cigarette, but I saved them everyday and sometimes I had a pack or a pack and a half a day," Walsh said.

Why did she ultimately decide to kick the habit?

"I had a grandma who was a heavy smoker who had emphysema," Walsh said. Another family member had lung cancer and another family member kept reminding her how she needed to quit smoking. This person would not let her forget or let her off the hook.

"I made the decision when I got back from Arizona," Walsh said. She stopped smoking on March 10, 2016.

LASER THERAPY

This was not her first attempt to stop smoking. She tried all the smoking cessation programs on the market, including gum, patches, medications, prescription anti-depressants and even hypnosis.

"None of those methods or programs worked for me - the longest I sustained from smoking was 60 days and then I screw up and I smoked again and I justified it back then," Walsh said.

After hearing a radio endorsement for a new laser therapy anti-smoking program, she went to visit Breathe Laser Therapy in Minnetonka ready to explore this natural smoking cessation method.

The natural smoking cessation method gives users a relaxing, calming spa type of experience, Walsh said. "They put a lighted laser on you and you do not feel it - it just feels like someone is lightly touching your hand," she said.

Before she went in for the first one hour long breathe therapy session, she intentionally decided she would have her car detailed so it smelled like a brand new car.

"I felt like it was cool if I could be smoke free in my car and at my desk at work and home - all the places I wanted to smoke," Walsh said.

She was a little nervous about the drive home after the first session because the car was a place she enjoyed smoking.

"The first night I was a little irritable, but nothing huge," she said.

The next day she went through a second light therapy session for 30 minutes.

"After I went through the second day 30 minute session, I was telling a friend I have no cravings to smoke - none at all," she said. She felt so relieved and empowered.

After the third 30-minute session, she had another obstacle to encounter: A long road trip and going to a casino where smoking is heavy. She recalls even scheduling a follow-up laser light therapy appointment for the Tuesday after her road trip, just in case.

"When I got in to the casino, everyone was chain smoking and when I got up, I just stunk and I thought I have got to move and I thought is that how I smelled?" Walsh said.

This ex-smoker said she finally understood the strong smoke smell that clings to a smoker's clothes, and she felt almost nauseated to smell the smoke smell herself.

"That was my biggest accomplishment in 2016 by far," Walsh said.

She has not needed any further laser therapy treatments. Walsh admits she holds a strong willpower and fierce determination to make her life better and add years to her living.

MAKING CHANGES

This former smoker came up with a personal statement to act as a motivator if she wanted to smoke or felt weak again.

"My statement was "I can, I will and I am done," Walsh said.

Besides keeping her promise to herself and developing a strong willpower, Walsh found herself changing some of her lifestyle patterns. Instead of lighting up a cigarette first thing in the morning, she would go to the bathroom and brush her teeth. She also began chewing gum in the car.

In 2017, Walsh plans to continue down a pathway toward better health and a longer life.

"I want to get my weight off in 2017 and I love walking - a year ago I lost 80 pounds with a trainer but I put back 40 pounds when I stopped smoking because food sure tastes good when you don't smoke," Walsh said.

Being smoke free has given Walsh a new lease on life and all that is possible with willpower and discipline.

"I feel like I conquered something that was bigger than myself - I plan to stay positive," Walsh said.

Happy to share her New Year's resolution story, Walsh encourages anyone working to change their life to seek a healthier one in 2017.

"If I can help one person stop smoking, then I have done what I needed to do," Walsh said.

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