
Nicotine Confesses. ‘It’s not you. It’s me’

Joseph DiFranza, 2012, lulu.com, USA, 136 pp., \$11.33 USD, ISBN 978-1105577604

DOI: [10.1017/JSC.2014.19](https://doi.org/10.1017/JSC.2014.19)

This book for smokers by Professor Joseph DiFranza unravels the mystery of nicotine addiction in plain English and then guides the reader through a personalised, evidence-based quitting plan.

The first part of the book is amusingly narrated by the character ‘Nicotine’ and describes the biological basis of the addiction. ‘Nicotine addiction is a brain disease of nerves and chemicals, not a sign of weak character’. As a result, some people can stop smoking easily and some can’t, because their biology is different. This insight alone will help to diminish the self-blame and sense of failure experienced by many smokers after repeated unsuccessful attempts to quit. As Nicotine explains reassuringly, ‘It’s not you. It’s me’.

Based on Professor DiFranza’s own ground breaking research and the work of others, Nicotine explains how it hijacks the brain and controls the smoker’s behaviour. As the addiction progresses, the time between cravings (latency) shortens and smoking becomes more frequent. The smoker progresses from wanting a cigarette to craving, and ultimately needing to smoke just to keep the brain in balance and maintain normal function.

The second part of the book builds on this explanation to provide clear, evidence-based advice on how to quit. The importance of carefully planning a quit attempt is emphasised and strategies are presented, based on addressing the three pillars of withdrawal, cue-induced cravings and the psychological dependence on nicotine.

Dr DiFranza explains that every smoker is unique. Each has a different intensity of withdrawal, different reasons for smoking, a different latency period and different responses to stop smoking medicines, and thus each person requires a personalised treatment approach.

As it is only 136 pages, the book does not claim to be a comprehensive manual. The issue of weight gain is conspicuously absent and there is only cursory coverage of the health issues. Instead, Dr DiFranza focusses on the common myths, misinformation and barriers to quitting,

based on his 30 years of clinical practice and research in the field.

For example, smokers are reassured that nicotine withdrawal is temporary and does not last forever, as many fear. Misplaced concerns about the danger of nicotine and the myth that smoking helps people cope with stress are debunked.

There is detailed advice on the key issue of using nicotine replacement therapy correctly, at adequate doses and for a full course to get the best results. Dr DiFranza also addresses the common barriers to using medication. For example, some smokers have the view that using medicines is cheating and that quitting should be a test of character. However, he explains that this is like refusing antibiotics when you have pneumonia.

In summary, the book explains the complex science of addiction in simple, easy-to-understand language and gives practical advice on how to quit. It is written in an empathic, reader-friendly and entertaining style that would be suitable for most smokers.

This book is a valuable resource for smokers who are struggling to overcome their addiction. It is also a useful read for Tobacco Treatment Specialists who want to keep up-to-date with the latest research on nicotine addiction and evidence-based cessation strategies.

Declarations

I have received payments from Pfizer Australia, Glaxo-SmithKline and Johnson & Johnson Pacific for consulting, teaching and conference expenses.

Dr Colin Mendelsohn

The Smokers’ Clinic

The Sydney Clinic Consulting Rooms

Bronte, 2024 Australia

E-mail: mendel@bigpond.net.au