



*NOTE TO MEDIA: Additional "Success Stories" and corresponding photos for different regions of New York State are available to read or download at the New York State Smokers' Quitline's Online News Room: <https://nysmokefree.com/newsroom>. Please reach out to us any time for interviews to enhance your coverage of New Year's resolutions and wellness stories. Tobacco cessation experts are available locally and via Zoom; clients may be available upon request.*

#### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **TWO LONGTIME FORMER SMOKERS FROM NYC SHARE TOBACCO-FREE TIPS FOR THE NEW YEAR**

*With assistance from the New York State Smokers' Quitline, Kathy R. and Mike S. are living proof 'it's never too late' to stop smoking*

**NEW YORK CITY – December 30, 2021** – The beginning of a new year is a popular time to make resolutions for improved wellness. For those who use tobacco products, the New Year provides an opportunity to seek assistance to become tobacco-free. The **New York State Smokers' Quitline** (Quitline) understands the challenges involved to stop smoking for good, and reminds all New York State residents free resources are available seven days a week at 1-866-NY-QUITS (1-866-697-8487) and [nysmokefree.com](https://nysmokefree.com).

Kathy R. of the East Village in Manhattan and Mike S. of Staten Island both reached out to the Quitline in 2021 to extend gratitude for past support. Each became tobacco-free with the Quitline's assistance in the 2000s and have remained tobacco-free since. While they have different backgrounds and represent different generations, their tobacco-free journeys have many parallels. Kathy and Mike hope by sharing their stories, they can inspire others to become tobacco-free in 2022.

Kathy, age 62 (*pictured*), experimented with cigarettes at age 9, began buying packs by age 12 and became a regular smoker for more than 35 years. The addiction gripped hard for Kathy; she smoked up to four packs a day and nearly lost her job due to frequent smoke-breaks.



Recognizing her struggles and wanting to do better for her two children, Kathy contacted the Quitline soon after its inception and worked with Quit Coaches over a period of five years to cut down on tobacco use. She also received free nicotine patches and nicotine gum to control her cravings. Finally, on December 1, 2005, Kathy smoked her final cigarette and has maintained a tobacco-free lifestyle ever since.

"I sometimes called the Quitline twice a day for moral support," she said. "Never once did they tell me I was calling too much. Every single interaction has been friendly and supportive. This was the hardest thing I've ever accomplished in my life. Being tobacco-free is fantastic, amazing... simply indescribable."



Mike, age 43 (*pictured*), did not begin smoking until his 20's but quickly became a pack-a-day smoker due to stress and mental health issues. As the 2000s progressed, he had tried quitting "cold turkey" but had no success. Then a turning point came at age 29.

"A friend of mine, age 42 at the time, went to the emergency room and was diagnosed with COPD," Mike said. "It was also right around then that I had woken up one morning, finished a pack of cigarettes, smoked a whole new pack and then began opening up another one. I suddenly had a moment of reflection and asked myself, 'What am I doing?' That's when I contacted the Quitline for extra support."

Mike spoke with a Quit Coach and discussed his goals and smoking triggers. With a listening ear on the other end of the phone, Mike felt empowered to develop a quit-plan and set a date to begin using the nicotine patch, which the Quitline shipped for free to his home address to help curb nicotine cravings. He quit gradually and had one relapse along the way but remained focused. Mike smoked his last cigarette on June 1, 2008.

Kathy and Mike both describe feeling like "new people" ever since becoming tobacco-free, and their overall health continues to improve with each passing year. Kathy once suffered from chronic high blood pressure and now is stable. Mike is able to exercise without losing his breath and shed 40 pounds with a workout routine throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mike and Kathy uniquely understand the challenges of becoming and staying tobacco-free, and offer the following tips for those seeking to make a quit-attempt in 2022:

Mike: *"Cigarettes aren't really calming you down and certainly don't help your health. They're just stimulants that trick your mind."*

Kathy: *"Find a distraction and substitute for cigarettes. Wintergreen mints are my go-to item. The bottom line: keep your hands, mouth and mind busy."*

Mike: *"Recovery is not linear; relapses and slip-ups are often part of the process."*

Kathy: *"If you slip up, give yourself a day to regroup. Then get right back at it."*

Mike: *"The tobacco-free journey is really a biological, psychological and social phenomenon that requires tackling all three areas. Medications can help with the cravings. Meditation can get your mind right. And finally, it's about learning to manage social stressors without reaching for a cigarette."*

Nearly all New York State adult residents who contact the Quitline are eligible to receive a free starter supply of nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) via mail, typically in the form of nicotine patches and often with supplemental nicotine gum or nicotine lozenges. When used as instructed and in combination, NRT products can double or triple the odds of becoming and staying tobacco-free.

The Quitline also recommends all tobacco users – whether they are practicing their first or tenth quit-attempt – to visit the CDC's "Benefits of Quitting" website at [https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/quit\\_smoking/how\\_to\\_quit/benefits/index.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/quit_smoking/how_to_quit/benefits/index.htm). This resource offers a thorough compilation of health benefits at any age, regardless of how long or how much one smoked.

**The Quitline wishes everyone a happy, healthy and tobacco-free 2022.**

### **About the New York State Smokers' Quitline**

The New York State Smokers' Quitline is a service of the New York State Department of Health and based at Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center in Buffalo, N.Y. It is one of the first and busiest state quitlines in the nation and has responded to nearly 3 million calls since it began operating in 2000. The Quitline encourages nicotine users to talk with their healthcare professionals and access available Medicaid or health insurance benefits for stop-smoking medications. All New York State residents can call **1-866-NY-QUITS** (1-866-697-8487) for coaching and resources, free of charge, seven days a week beginning at 9 a.m. Visit [www.nysmokefree.com](http://www.nysmokefree.com) for more information.

**About Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center**

Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center is a community united by the drive to eliminate cancer's grip on humanity by unlocking its secrets through personalized approaches and unleashing the healing power of hope. Founded by Dr. Roswell Park in 1898, it is the only National Cancer Institute-designated comprehensive cancer center in Upstate New York. Learn more at [www.roswellpark.org](http://www.roswellpark.org), or contact us at 1-800-ROSWELL (1-800-767-9355) or [ASKRoswell@roswellpark.org](mailto:ASKRoswell@roswellpark.org).

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