

## Dave's Story

Dave Crake of Wasaga Beach wouldn't wish the motivation that led him to quit smoking on anyone.

What helped him break his two-plus pack-a-day addiction was a heart attack at age 43 that resulted in 11 days in intensive care, angioplasty, collapsed veins and almost dying as a result of things going wrong during that whole terrifying episode.

He says quitting smoking was the hardest thing he has ever done and credits the support he got from others with helping him stay smoke free.



"My wife smoked a bit and so we quit together," he said, adding he quit cold turkey but spoke to all kinds of people to get tips, encouragement and to help him to stay on track.

The support he got from the local health unit where he was living at the time was critical, he said, describing the assistance as similar to the support a person can get from groups like Alcoholics Anonymous where other people are going through the same thing so they get it.

He says you have to recognize that a cigarette won't help when things get stressful.

"No point in having a cigarette – the original problem will still be there but now you will have a smoking problem again, too."

He started chewing gum and did that for three to four months, but he credits a tip from his younger brother to chew on a toothpick that really help him deal with the habit of having something in his mouth. He says he'd have one in his mouth from first thing in the morning until the last thing at night for more than a year and a half.

Dave says there were lots of unexpected benefits to quitting that he hadn't expected.

"After about a year being smoke free I felt 10 years younger. I lost 60 pounds because I had so much more energy after I quit that I started riding a bike and working out. When I was smoking, all I did was sit on the couch and smoke."

He also got rid of headaches that he experienced pretty much every day when he was smoking. "I used to take Tylenol seven days a week when I smoked because of bad headaches. They went away after I stopped smoking!"

Now an active 66-year-old, Dave says he feels sympathy for people who smoke because he knows how debilitating it is. His advice is to take advantage of helplines and tips from everyone and anyone to help get you through the tough times to become smoke free for good.

*If you need help to get started on your quit journey call Health Connection at 1-877-721-7520 Monday through Friday. Visit the **Tobacco-Free Chatter Facebook page** and hear from others in Simcoe Muskoka who have quit or are working to become tobacco free.*