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The Serenity Prayer for Nicotine Users ©

“God, grant me the Serenity to Accept the things I cannot change, Courage to change the things I can, and Wisdom to know the difference.”

* Selected from text written by Reinhold Niebuhr—1926

God, grant me serenity to accept the things I cannot change...

As nicotine users, we cannot change our craving for nicotine, but even if we can't change the craving for nicotine, we can accept it. The truth is that until we can *accept* our craving for nicotine, we will not stop the repetitive behavior. Using some form of a nicotine delivery system is what we will do if we decide we cannot accept the craving.

It's that simple. If, for example, you are a nicotine user and you will not accept the craving, then you will surely light a cigarette, vape, or use nicotine in some form. Maybe you will have “one puff” or “one pinch” if you chew to get you through, but even one puff or one pinch is *not accepting* the things that you cannot change.

Accepting the craving does not mean we want the craving or like it. Accepting it means, first, recognizing the craving for what it is: a strong desire, physical and psychological, not a real need, for nicotine. That's all. We do not fight the craving; rather we look at it, letting it be, not getting panic stricken or feeling sorry for ourselves, but saying, “Yes, I really am craving nicotine right now.”

We do not practice self-deception and try to trick ourselves into thinking we don't want nicotine. This is an honest program. Nor do we try to hate the “habit” (or ourselves) so

much that we quit. While we are actively using, we cannot make our bodies stop craving nicotine, but we *can* live with a craving until it passes, and so we pray for...

Courage to change the things I can...

The thing that we can change is our unwillingness to live, even for a short time, with the craving for nicotine. We can, with God's help and the support of the group, change our old way of dealing with craving, and deal with it in a new way: We become willing to live with the craving; we no longer use nicotine to get rid of the pain of craving. If we use nicotine in any form to relieve the craving, this shows we have not accepted what we cannot change and have not acted with the courage to change the things we can.

Of course, living with the craving is hard, sometimes very hard, but you are not alone. With the help of a Higher Power you can do it. That is what the Serenity Prayer is all about.

So we ask God to help us accept the craving, and then we ask God to give us the courage not to take care of this craving—as we have always done—by using nicotine once more. Thus, we need the serenity to accept the craving, and the courage to just let it pass...

And wisdom to know the difference.

The wisdom we ask for here is to become aware of the difference between our old way of handling the discomfort of craving in the past (for example, by compulsively lighting up) and the new way of dealing with cravings: accepting the craving until it passes, uncomfortable though we may be for a few moments, understanding that a craving will pass whether we use nicotine or not.

The strength and courage to live as former nicotine users with this initial discomfort does come if we ask for it, even though it may take time. What we receive is not raw will power, but a Power that comes from our Higher Power, from the group, and from our innermost self. The power we actually want is love! It is only with this kind of power that we can become ex-nicotine users and receive a new life free from nicotine addiction.

The reason we did not become ex-nicotine users years ago is that we chose not to live with the craving. Every time we craved, we gave in and used nicotine. We kept hoping that in some magic way a day would arrive when the craving would disappear or we would find an absolutely painless way to stop being addicted. That day never came. Each of us kept repeating our favorite rationalizations or excuses for using tobacco, our own justifications for not living with the craving. And we kept craving and using, craving and using, year after year.

But now we can change all that. The moment we can accept what is—"I want nicotine"—and face it with the courage God gives us, we can say, "I choose not to handle this craving by using nicotine," then we become ex-nicotine users!

If you continue to use nicotine even though you say this prayer, then say it again, and again, and keep saying it while you reflect what it means to you, a nicotine addict. Eventually it will work. It will not work if you are not sincere, but if all you can do at first is to say the prayer without believing it, then at least do that! Some time may be needed for you to receive the power to live with the discomfort that comes from craving, but eventually it will come. In time, the craving will diminish greatly, and someday, we trust, it will disappear altogether. However, if you have a slip, and for example, you are a smoker and light one up, accept yourself reverently and say the prayer again the next time!

Remember, it is not really the stress, frustration or even the craving that causes us to keep using nicotine again, but rather our lack of serenity and courage to deal with the craving. Help comes from your Higher Power, from the group, and from your own healthy inner self! May God be with you now!

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