

I'm a 31 year old British male, I was easily a 30 a day smoker from the age of around 15. I've grown up in a family of smokers, my Grandparents on both sides were smokers, my parents were heavy smokers, my brothers both smoked ... it was ingrained in me from the day I was born, I had been around it all my life, to me it was the norm.

Over the years I had tried everything to give up, even went down the hypnosis route, but nothing stuck and I came to the conclusion that I would smoke until the day I died, even if it was the cigarettes that would kill me. My father was the same, easily smoking two packs a day. We had discussed it when he came to visit me from the UK.

One Sunday night, my parents and I had arranged our usual weekly skype catch-up, I positioned myself on the balcony with my drink, pack of smokes and a clean ashtray ready. As my parents picked up the call and we started to tell each other about how our weeks had been, I lit up a cigarette and something didn't seem right ... I could see that they were both sat in the living room, with their pot of tea and cups, but with no cigarettes, no ashtrays, the windows were closed ... I stopped the conversation and asked where their smokes were.

My Dad looked at my Mum and my Mum looked at me. "We've given up" she said with a big smile, "it's been 6 days since we both had a cigarette". My Dad turns and looks to me, "we've started vaping" he said. I was shocked, these are the people that could go through 3 packs of cigarettes a day between them. This was the man that I had discussed smoking to our graves with, and now after only a week of not seeing them, they'd given up.

My Dad went on to tell me how they had been to the doctor for a check-up, both of them had always been completely open with our family GP, he knew our family well, I'd even grown up with one of his daughters. The GP had told them of this new thing called vaping and e-cigarettes. He'd said how the Royal College of Physicians (RCOP) had produced a study on vaping and the effects and concluded that they were 95% safer than smoking, maybe this was something they could consider. That afternoon, my Mum had a look around on the internet and did some research, she explained how they worked to my Dad and found a Vape store in the next town over from our village. They both decided to go and see what all the fuss was about.

The store owner was fantastic, he went through everything with them, they were there for a few hours with this guy and walked out with their new e-cigarettes, a couple of different brands of nicotine e-juice and a hope that it might work.

I was so intrigued with the whole thing I started to do some research myself, I found forums online that gave me heaps and heaps of information, I found a store in South Australia that sold everything I could ever think I needed, they were very supporting as I found out about this new and exciting product and the idea that I could be tobacco free, and then the bombshell "We can't sell you Nicotine e-liquid" the lady typed in an email to me. "I'm sorry" she said, "its illegal here in Australia". I was dumbfounded. So, I can go into a store and purchase a pack of cigarettes, which are known to be slowly killing me, I can go into another store and purchase Nicotine in the form of a patch, or gum, or mouth spray ... but I can't get Nicotine in liquid form for use in e-cigarettes? Even when the UK's RCOP had just told the entire world of the benefits of all this? Really??

At the bottom of the email, she went onto to say that I could quite easily order Nicotine e-liquid from overseas, but that it was at my own risk and I needed to check the laws and regulations in my state. It shocked me.

At our next skype, I told my parents exactly what had happened, they couldn't understand it either. My parents, who had now been smoke free for three weeks and hadn't lost the will to live with their cravings, both of who were sleeping better, my mother had all but stopped snoring during the night (if you grew up in our house you would understand that when she snored the tiles on the roof did a little dance!!), my dad was tasting things when he ate and my mum had warm hands for the first time in 30 years!! They were both sat there listening to me tell them about the law and decided that they would help me. They sent me the Nicotine e-liquid. I ordered the e-cigarette setup from the lovely guys at the store in Adelaide and I thought how I was going to explain all of this to my partner. I wanted to try it first, to see if I could actually do this on my own, I didn't want the

added pressure of people knowing and then having to explain that I'd failed ... again, if this didn't work.

About a week or so later, everything had arrived. My partner was working night shift this particular evening and wouldn't be home so I could sit and try it. I put it all together, following all the instructions from the store in SA and the instructions from the Vape store in the UK, the guy had given to my parents when they explained what was happening with me here, and I tried it. "Oh my gosh ... wow" was my original thought. I spent that evening, trying it out and went to bed. I woke up the next morning and made a coffee, grabbed my packet of smokes and went out onto the balcony and then remembered the e-cigarette from the night before. It was like I'd grabbed the smokes out of habit. I went back inside and grabbed my e-cigarette and vaped with my coffee. I drove to the car park where I left my car when I went to work and I decided that I wouldn't take my cigarettes with me to work, I'd leave them in the car and only take my e-cig – I wanted to give this a real try. Well to cut a long story short, that packet of cigarettes is **still** in the glove box of my car.

I went home that evening and told my partner, I haven't smoked ALL DAY, in fact, I hadn't smoked since yesterday. The look on the face of my partner was one I hadn't seen before and the words "REALLY??" felt out of their mouth. I spent a good hour or so explaining EVERYTHING. I brought up the RCOP articles from the UK and how the GP had told my parents to try it. Explained how they had now been smoke free for just over a month. Well my partner was shocked, and excited. "You don't smell" was one of the things he said to me, "I can smell your aftershave from this morning!!"

All that was almost a year ago, I gave up smoking completely in that one day. I feel amazing! My taste is back. I don't snore anymore. I wake up feeling refreshed after I sleep. I don't smell. I used to cough up the most awful stuff in the mornings, that's stopped. My mouth ulcers, which I'd suffered for years with, have disappeared. I have more energy. I don't feel like I'm trying to catch my breath all the time. I don't get breathless when I walk or climb stairs ... the list could go on of all the changes that have happened since that day.

But still, the industry here in Australia hasn't changed. It is still as difficult for me to receive e-liquid from my parents in the UK, the parcels my mum sends are always being delayed and opened at customs. If only the government would legalise low strength nicotine e-liquid here, like they do in the UK.

The industry itself, from what I can see here in Australia, is already very self-regulating. E-juice vendors already put their e-liquid into child-proof bottles, they already have warnings on the bottles warning of its contents and they do not sell to anyone under the age of 18 ... this is a) without nicotine and b) without Government regulation. The Government would be doing the industry a disservice if it were to try and regulate / legislate it without taking this self-regulation into account and not work with groups like the New Nicotine Alliance to build the appropriate regulatory framework for E-cigarettes, personal vaporisers and e-liquid in Australia. The health impacts of e-cigarette use have already been proven around the world, we need legislation that doesn't prohibit the use of them, but promotes how amazing these products are and how they can save the lives of millions of people.

Thanks
Matt.