

## **Mr. Mohammad Chehab**

My journey with smoking started in my early 20's while I was at College, a great place to meet new people and catch habits. Unfortunately, this habit persisted until last spring when I finally decided to quit smoking after relentless reflection and consideration. There were a number of reasons behind my decision, mostly ones related to my family, work environment, and setting an example.

Being a father of three, I started thinking about my family future and health, what my position would be in case my children wanted to smoke, like me. A simple question that I could not answer as whether I will be able to convince them not to do the same mistake.

In April-May 2017, I was at UHS for a regular physical check where I first saw a leaflet for the smoking cessation program. During that period, I was planning for a trip abroad with my colleagues where I had to stay in a non-smoking campus for three weeks. I thought about it and considered that the timing is perfect. With all of these indicators in mind, I was extremely encouraged to quit smoking.

I started with the program and timed it so that day one corresponds with my first/ second day abroad. I used to take cigarettes with me whenever I am travelling, but in order to facilitate my quitting decision, I made sure not to take with me more packs than the one I already had on me. I was willing to force myself knowing that it will not be easy.

I did not stop smoking on day one, as planned, I was in a foreign country and when you are on travel then things are not the same. I was about to drop-off from the program. However, on day two, I received the phone call that changed everything. It was Rana Chehab on the other side checking out on me. Rana is the Registered Nurse working in the program along with Dr. Romani, the director of the Health and Wellness Center. Taking into account my determined nature, I admitted to Rana what I was about to do. In return, she did a great job at advising and encouraging me to overcome the urge to smoke. I immediately threw away the last two cigarettes and went out for a walk.

Throughout my stay away from home, I focused on changing my life style, sleeping and waking up early, daily exercises, and drinking lots of water. To be honest, it was hard at first to let go of the habit, but I was lucky to have good friends and colleagues with me. They encouraged, supported me, and respected my decision.

I will not be telling the truth if I say that there were times that I did not feel the need and desire to light up a cigarette. When in tension, I always remember a peer who advised me not to surrender to smoking whenever under pressure, he advised me that I should wait for few minutes until the urge fades away.

After three weeks, and on my way back to Beirut, I had a layover in Paris where I had a weak moment. I bought a cigarette and lit it up, but the second I inhaled my body resisted it completely and I ended up discarding it. I kept the pack with me till date as a souvenir.

After only one week of quitting, I noticed that the morning cough and phlegm were gone. These health changes were major transformations for me considering how much I suffered from them.

I believe what helped me the most in my journey towards a smoke-free life were the regular follow-ups and counseling sessions, which I consider principal contributors to my success in overcoming this habit. It made me realize that the smoking cessation program was very serious in its mission to help its participants. Not to mention, the timing and the support of my family and colleagues played a supportive role.

Life now as an ex-smoker has never been better; I am exercising daily, and changed most of my habits. I became more self-confident about myself and more importantly, I feel like I'm a better role model for my family, especially my children since a big part of my decision was linked to them. Above all, I felt like I have accomplished what I aimed for.

On a final note, I can certainly say that the smoking cessation program has helped me in achieving my goal by a long shot. I have recommended it to my friends who wish to quit and I encourage all the smokers who are eager to stop smoking to join the program.

I realized lately, that the Health and Wellness Center (HWC) has also made some changes to support the program, for example, there is now a dedicated extension number to call and enquire on the program, thus providing more privacy. Add to that, I also knew, that the HWC is offering support for the medication, which was a challenge to obtain previously.