

I am a thirty year smoker turned vaper. I am much healthier and happier for the switch. I am so thrilled about vaping that I opened a vape shop to support those who vape and better yet to help those who are considering switching from cigarettes to vaping.

My staff and I see and serve thousands of customers each week and they all seem like perfectly normal people. Yes, many of us who vape have a nicotine addiction. Yes, we would probably be better off if we didn't. But we are still who we have always been in spite of our habit.

Sadly, most public communications about vaping treat people who vape as impersonal objects who should just go cold turkey and quit smoking. We are a statistic, or a menace to society, or _____".

Politicians seem to think that we are objects they can tax, or worse yet that they should ban the technology. Really? Real research shows that vaping is one of the most significant potential contributors to public health since penicillin. Vaping could very easily cause millions of smokers to switch to a much healthier habit thereby saving our society billions in social service medical expenses. It's a public health miracle. Unfortunately all they see is their tobacco taxes going away, which they purportedly enacted to discourage smoking.

I can tell you from personal experience that it is relatively easy to quit nicotine through vaping. Vaping allows us to control the amount of nicotine we inhale. I originally vaped with liquids containing 24mg of nicotine, as much puff per puff as a swisher cigar. But once I decided to cut down on the chemical, I started reducing the nicotine strength of the vapors I used.

In time I reached the point where I use e-liquids with no nicotine, and without those crippling withdrawal symptoms. I continue to vape, perhaps partially because I am in the business, but mostly because I enjoy the visceral pleasure of inhaling and exhaling tasty clouds. I occasionally return to low levels of nicotine and then drop off again when the mood strikes me. It's been an absolute joy to watch the technology advance, making it both easier and more satisfying to vape. It's also been wonderful to watch the creativity of juice companies coming up with better and better flavor combinations.

I feel better than I've felt in decades. I'm overjoyed I was able to stop smoking. I have no intention of stopping vaping, nor do I feel any guilt or shame about it. However, the "powers that be," pressures from government, abstinence-only health groups, tobacco and pharma funded media, and random do-gooders in the environment

seem bent on making vapers feel the same "outcast from society" we suffered when we were smoking. That is not acceptable. They said "smoking makes you ugly," "That's going to kill you," "You stink," "You're unhealthy for people around you," "Go outside in the rain," "You need to quit." We did quit. We don't stink. We're no longer killing ourselves. We're not dangerous to others. And if you still allow people who bathe in perfume and cologne in your building, use scented dryer sheets, use Glade plugins, or any other such nasal assault, I shouldn't have to go outside.

Don't deny smokers an opportunity to get what they're looking for in a less-harmful, less expensive, enjoyable way. It just doesn't make sense. For them, or for society.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my story.