

Lisa Hamidi feels “liberated” after kicking the habit with the help of the Alabama Tobacco Quitline

Lisa Hamidi was 10 years old when she smoked her first cigarette, stolen from a pack belonging to her stepfather.

Soon the fifth-grader was buying cigarettes from a nearby convenience store and hiding them under a bridge near her house. She smoked the cigarettes with her best friend from school, “knowing that we were doing something bad,” she said.

Hamidi smoked off and on “for a very long time,” she said. The 46-year-old said she was never a heavy smoker and could make a pack of cigarettes last about a week. “I was always the nonsmoker that smoked that didn’t have a habit,” she said.

She quit on numerous occasions, once for six months, once for a year and again for several years when she became pregnant and gave birth to her son. She started smoking again when he was four years old.

Each time, stress would cause Hamidi to start using tobacco after she quit. “In any crisis, the first thing I would grab for is a cigarette,” she said. “Stress and cigarettes seemed to go hand-in-hand,” she said. “Now I know they just fuel the fires of stress.”

Health is the main reason that Hamidi gave up smoking. Her husband has had two corneal transplants and smoke irritates his eyes. Her 16-year old son “absolutely despises” cigarettes. When her best friend dropped dead from a heart attack at 45, Hamidi is certain the three packs of cigarettes he smoked daily played a major part in his death.

Hamidi quit tobacco “for good” August 1, 2008 using the Alabama Tobacco Quitline. She saw a television ad telling viewers to call 1-800-Quit-Now for help quitting tobacco, so she did.

From her counselor, Hamidi learned to deal with stress without turning to cigarettes. A nature person, she likes to take her three collies for a walk. Even “just going outside and taking it all in,” is a calming process for her.

Her counselor “was fabulous,” Hamidi said. “I felt connected to her. Because her counselor was an ex-smoker, Hamidi knew she understood how hard it was to quit tobacco. “You feel like a failure if you continuously quit,” she said. But with counseling and nicotine replacement therapy patches, Hamidi was able to quit for good this time. “I don’t think it could have been done without them,” she said of the Quitline’s one-two combination of counseling and free nicotine patches.

Hamidi said she has recommended the Quitline to at least six other people, including one who has called the Quitline and started counseling sessions. The best part is knowing you’re not doing something harmful, not having the addiction and being able to see other people smoke and knowing I can say no.

“I feel absolutely liberated,” she said. “I’ll never touch one again. I’m so glad I’m a nonsmoker.”

For additional information, visit our website at www.adph.org/tobacco or call Susan Altman at (334) 206-2776.

